LOVE AND DEATH IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

by

John J. Fritscher, Ph.D.

February 1968

VITA

John J. Fritscher was born on June 20, 1939, in Jacksonville, Illinois. He atteneded primary schools in Peoria, Illinois, and received his secondary education in Columbus, Ohio. In June of 1961 he received a B.A. in philosophy from the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio. In 1964 he entered a three-year graduate program at Loyala University of Chicago. He received his M.A. degree in June, 1966, and taught as a Graduate Fellow 1964-1967. His dissertation, *Love and Death in Tennessee Williams*, was completed in September, 1967, when he began teaching as assistant professor at Western Michgan University, Kalamazoo.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Literature is itself not only product but expression of its engendering context; its present force, coming from the past, thrusts formatively into the future. The writer writes not in a vacuum, but is collector of his past heritage, spokesman for the present moment, and seminal reintegrator for the future. Thomas Lanier Williams, the writer in point, personalizes in historic and psychic biography the bent of the American Experience since the first unsettlement of this country. Williams himself is profoundly aware of the parallel between his own biography and the unfolding of the American Pilgrims' progress. Indeed, it may be adjudged, that the experience with which Tennessee Williams works has certainly been explained more abstrusely, technically, or dogmatically; but yet life humanistically unexamined in not worth literature. To deny such a four-decade interpreter of the mid-century scene is to deny generic esthetic witness in favor of specific sociological clinicians. To one lamenting the lack of the latter there can best be offered the comfort of the intuitive esthetic which includes its own sociology.

This dissertation is apologia neither for Williams nor for America, but endeavors to say something about the latter through examination of the former. The study concludes that Williams is chronicler of the tension existing between what he considers the truth of the human condition and the paranoiac myth of his country. His romantic lyricism pleads for optimum perfectibility of the individual in society; his neo-romantic jaundice, confronted with absurdity, subtracts from society his individuals who, confronted with social alienation, question shaking verities of love and God, life and death.

The first chapter surveys New England Calvinism's translation to the American South where natural theological depravity transmuted to literary Gothicism. The Edenic Garden of America becomes Williams' rain forest where the individual is not, as in Calvinism, in single relation to God, but is merely singular and alienated. Williams sees his ancestry of maternal Puritanism and paternal Cavalierism paralleling the components of national paranoia. He focuses this Angst in his protagonists who are shredded in the great tradition of Calvinism which by dogma kept man in tension; this tenseness he builds to a questioning inclusive of both the American Experience and the human condition. Calvinism, for Williams, is after-dogma of an a priori human situation: guilt is universal; election to a restored Eden is never a surety. Thus Williams' dramas of human failure inductively characterize Calvinized America; for the failure of every Eden is the American inevitability belaying the ethic that the virtuous are here and now rewarded. This matter marries well Williams' evolving from: his early selective lyricism, while it has not yet become the full species of absurdity, is nevertheless maturing toward a Gothic-American form well within the genus of dramatic existential revolt.

Chapter two explicates Williams' twentieth-century urban metaphor; his concern with cities is reducible to the basic society of two people in communication. If ever the lost Eden is to be recovered it will be the well-manicured urban-garden recovery where people have broken the bondage of their isolation. For this reason, Williams' time and place are both metaphorically "Southernmost" as waning urbanity faces the archetypal horror not only of the South of the United States but the south of the human condition. His settings are ubiquitous non-places: parsonages of

spiritual journey, movie theatres of narcotizing escape, hotels of literal travelers. The place of the Pilgrim road is peopled by his dispossessed wanderers. No shelter is all his characters' problems--from Amanda to Goforth. The port of *Camino Real* is his quintessential way-station of all evanescence: it is only the moon-out-of-time in Williams' existential geography that gives any solace. The world is condemned property; evanescence has condemned it. Place, up to a point, is commandable; time is not, except in art, where the traditional romantic can freeze for better examination the change generally accepted as a good. Neo-romantic Williams, however, works life's destroyer, time, into the very context of his plays: beds--distractions from evanescence--he sharply reveals as biers. The eschatological time of the pragmatic wasteland ravages any incarnational time of love; thus thematically in time and space Williams performs always in a Southern Garden-Park before the stone statue of Eternity.

Chapter three investigates the poet's vocation in terms of Williams' imagery units: the artist is to be the Lawrentian fox of commotion in society's chicken coop. Art is a socially irritating vocation which makes personal evanescence meaningless; art exposes personal corruption and social mendacity in a salvific way. The persona of poet-guru in each Williams play exposes and gives in a self-consuming act of sacrifice. The metaphor is artist versus merchant and leads inexorably to Williams' hospital imagery of violence. The poet-maker is by Violet Venable's definition a man looking for God and order; his tension arises from the diffraction caused by mercantile society's organized opposition to the individual. As Chris Flanders tries to do for Sissy Goforth, the poet must try to bring some salvific order through art. Of course, Williams sees all his creative incarnational people fail; for in season and out these are the fugitive kind on his Calvinistic via. His poet-women are fragilities past their time; their images--when not whiteness, glass, music, or lyric animals--coalesce to the dark animal imagery of the wasted garden. The constant fire imagery is metaphor throughout Williams' work for more internal existential smolders. Williams' world, in short, is an orgasmic vision; his lyric moment, through cinematographic juxtaposition of image, imposes the analytical order of poetry on what he sees increasingly as the decaying existential reality.

Chapter four details Williams' basic alienation metaphors of violence and sex. Williams' neo-romanticism views change not always as a good but as too often a violent corruption. The external violence, often called sensationalism by critics, Williams uses as metaphor of the subtler violence he diagnoses in all mankind: existential rot is like all rot, the alienation of parts within a whole. The violence of the Passion of Christ is sexual-religious archetype for Williams' males journeying through garden locales of unsatisfactory Ways Out: drugs, liquor, sex. The sado-masochism of act and language chronicles the alienation of persons from other persons, of the isolated from themselves. Williams' violence is about the collapse of the individual particularly in the society of the family. Sex is violent in Williams when it is *use* not *love*. His sex, like his violence, is a social shock treatment and both are literarily functional to this end. The sexual hysteria of his ladies is a metaphor for a more basic existential hysteria. Since Williams' view of truth is often his audience's view of violence, his matter and form thus perfectly violate stock responses of judgment and feeling so that his act of theatre becomes in itself a very modern act of transgression. As Williams portrays the dis-integration of self in society, one remembers that his very art theory is not non-violent. In the

end he turns his existential rage no only on his fellow men but on the Divine duplicity he sees as the Western God.

Chapter five concerns this God and His institutional manifestation as experienced by Williams and his characters. The ceremonial ritual of his plays is explicated to the end that the institutionalized religious ethic sickens his persons' healthy creativity in relation to God as creator. His anti-clericalism becomes more delineated as his characters are subjected to the tension resulting from a preached-about Old Testament God of Wrath versus and esthetically intuited New Testament God of Love. Williams' own biography is of interest as the God-father projection on *God* is colored by the father-son relationship established by the father. God is ambivalent at best: either the senile delinquent carnivorous in the Encantagas or the sensitive Christ-character bearing love. The wrathful God in Williams' economy often inverts to the castrating bitch, the vagina dentata, who cannibalizes existential weakness. Because he is created, each man ultimately realizes his essential passivity; Williams attempts atonement of this existential insult, creaturehood, by dramatizing an acceptance of life that can change the inevitable Divine consummation from use-cannibalization to love-communion. The individual, not the institution, must salvifically become God to another, and he must become it alone and non-institutionally since Providence is not there for man or iguana. Williams' theology in the face of the Double Divine is active acceptance of man's passive limitations; sin in Williams is not an offense against this ambivalent God but is rather an establishment of alienation between people which keeps them from meaning God to each other. God exists for Williams but at long distance from the menagerie He created; and Williams fears that because of His long silence the whole world is lost unless men each to each give voice to that God.

Chapter six summarizes Williams' textual posture of love and death. Death, the ultimate alienation, he transfigures to a symbol of the worse death of the living isolato. Over Williams' whole *Camino* hangs the pun of the Southern Cross. Sex in such a climate is best performed as an assurance of life. Lady-Myra's irony empties even this hope, for she couples sexually with Death. She, like all Williams' women, awaits the incarnational seed-bearer to redeem both her sexual and existential hysteria. Yet no one in Williams is fully relieved, for death is the ultimate visible expression of mankind's guilt at alienation from his creator. In it the general sin of the race is revealed. And while Williams is not quite sure of the nature of individual resurrection, like the Deity about whom he is likewise uncertain, he is sure it exists and exists most surely in art. Ultimate art, love, is to help others break through the terror of literal death into the acceptance of existence expansion; for on Williams' scale, love--not groin-centered but other-centered--is stronger than death.

The study concludes by recapitulating certain major points. The end is to suggest that Tennessee Williams has, indeed, not only matured organically if form and theme, but is by even the most stringent literary standards fully credentialed dramatic spokesman for mid-century America.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is itself not only product by expression of its engendering context: its present force, coming from the past, thrusts formatively into the future. The writer writes not in a vacuum, but is collector of his past heritage, spokesman for the present moment, and seminal re-integrator for the future. Thomas Lanier Williams, the writer in point, personalizes in historic and psychic biography the bent of the American Experience since the first unsettlement of this country. Williams himself is profoundly aware of the parallel between his own biography and the unfolding of the American Pilgrims' progress. Indeed, it may be adjudged, that the experience with which Tennessee Williams works has certainly been explained more abstrusely, technically, or dogmatically; but the retort is that a life esthetically unexamined is not worth literature. To deny such a forty-year interpreter of the mid-century scene is to deny generic esthetic witness in favor of specific sociological clinicians. To one lamenting the lack of the latter there can only be offered the comfort of the intuitive esthetic which includes its own sociology.

Williams gives example:

> America was built of paranoia by men who thought themselves superior to the common lot, who overlooked the ignominy of death, who observed the mysteries by did not feel belittled by them, who never paused to consider the vanity of their dreams and who consequently translated them into actions.[1]

Anxiety, Tennessee Williams writes, is the "occupational disease, of the American Experience; the tension between what he considers the truth of the human condition and the paranoiac myth of his country has proved the matter of his four-decade literary career. His work chronicles the tension consequent upon a basic Puritan-Cavalier antagonism whose artificial dichotomy belies the mixed realities of balanced human existence. It is Williams' duty as a romantic writer to expose for eradication any imbalances which hinder the optimum perfectibility of the individual and society. It is, however, his lot as neo-romantic dramatist to reflect that not only is perfectibility impossible, but that the individual is basically an almost incurably alienated isolato. The romantic in Williams opts for enough improvement to cure the existential jaundice in the neo-romantic. But in his latter day and age Williams, tending more to the jaundice, has written: "Of course, America, and particularly the Southern states, is the embodiment of an originally romantic gesture....Then of course, the businessmen took over."[2]

The fact is that the playwright's experience recreates in personal scale the basic tensions of his choice focus: soul-body, good-evil, introvert-extrovert, material spirituality versus forthright materialism. He is a product not only of his family home, but of the whole cultural and literary heritage of his country. The fact that his familial background parallels the nation's cultural experience serves only to make him an even more sensitive observer of the later. Even more is this the case, if the common report is true--as Parrington would have it, that Puritan New England was "the native seat and germinal source of such ideals and institutions as have come to be regarded as traditionally American.[3] For the insularity of New England was never better matched geographically, ideologically, or religiously than by the American South. The essentially romantic sensibility of each, which saw the beginning of each as utopian Eden, ran headlong into a deflating realism. The

South, for instance, has not yet recovered morally from the Civil War; and while New England survived the Revolutionary War, the unlimited potential the Founders projected has not been without its compromises. For Williams, life has likewise been alternation of promise, alienation, and partial adjustment to frustration.

But while the origin of Williams' promise was maternal, the myth of America had a source that was biblical. The popular tracts of the Age of Discovery characterized the new Continent as the New-Found Eden. For the Puritans the new Eden became the Promised Land of the Old Testament, the new Elysian Fields. Harassed and exiled, bred on scripture, the Puritans easily identified with the ancient Hebrews.

> Had they not also in establishing their church entered into a "covenant of the Lord"? Were not Israel's experiences strikingly similar to their own?...Had not England been their Egypt? James I their Pharaoh? The Atlantic their Red Sea?[4]

Such living metaphor accomplished, certain inherent tensions became obvious: The Puritans were not the Hebrews; God was not a direct interventionist--the influence of William Bradford's "providential" history notwithstanding;[5] and America was certainly no unspoilable Eden. Nevertheless the initial belief that the apple was good has long withstood the reality it can no longer withstand: the unspoiled goodness, if not the very apple, is a myth and the romantic new Adam is overmuch like the old. But before this discovery, the momentum of the biblical analogy asserted itself quite vocally in the early Puritan concept of Calvinistic culture.

> Culture is just another name for the duty of mankind to develop the raw materials of this world as found in nature and in man himself, to demonstrate the great possibilities inherent in creation, which the Creator has put there, and make them serve the purpose which God has intended they should....It is Christianity which gives to sinful man the regenerative power of the spirit [which enables him to seek out and ennoble a new order. The task of regenerating the world is very much] the task assigned to Adam when God caused the animals to pass by him. It was Adam's business to discover the nature of each animal, the essential idea of it, and then name it accordingly.[6]

Americans have ever after worked within this regenerative dimension, although the Adamic act of naming things has become more generic: now it is the more subtle things which are to be named up and out of their primal darkness, the nameless remaining no longer nameless. This finer "naming" has become precisely the province of the artist whose duty it is to impose some order, some meaning, some name upon the disconnected moments of his perceived reality.

This naming, because it is a communicative gesture of man in society, is radically at variance with the basic Calvinistic isolation of the individual. For in strict Calvinism the worshipper, in individual communication with God, endures virtual alienation from his fellows. The early American experience, however, initially liberalized this to a more democratic communion of saints. There remained indeed the Calvinistic elect, but they became nameable in small and vocal congregation. These identifiable colonial congregations of spiritual election involved almost invariably communal

business associations whose material success was judged to be proof of the spiritual election.

> From the Puritan conception of the stewardship of talents came a new ethic of work that provided a sanction for middle-class exploitation, by supplanting the medieval principle of production for consumption with the capitalistic principle of production for profit; and from the conception of the dignity of the individual came the sanction for the self-pride of the merchant that sustained him in his encounters with a domineering aristocracy. A prosperous merchant who accounted himself a son of God...was no mean foe to be awed by the rustlings of a Cavalier.[7]

Thus the Calvinistic theological isolation became a righteous Yankee individualism; thus the identifiable elect were able to name the spiritual myths of which their mercantile successes were witness; and thus, through logical fallacy akin to circular definition, was initiated the paranoia so schizophrenic to the embryonic American sensibility.

However, with the Enlightenment the colonial rationalizing of material success changed from basically religious tones to a more political semantics concerned with general social toleration, civil rights, and comprehensive government. Jonathan Edwards and Ben Franklin, few recall, were contemporaries. Because the new Americans were reading Lock and Shaftesbury, Quesnay and Rousseau, the semantics changed while the sensibility covered did not. The political theory of socially contractual government grew, as John Quincy Adams intimated (recalling the Pilgrims' *Compact*), out of that Lutheranized Calvinism, the priestly congregation of believers; in addition, hard against the rise of American Deism collapsed the providential exceptions of Puritan myth; God was evident no longer in his exceptions, but in his immutable harmonized machinery. Yet the rationalistic revolution quickly waned cool on the new and alien shore; the immediate reaction was a warmer romanticism whose germination in life and literature is seminally traceable back to the hebraicized Puritans. They had seen the whole land as existent metaphor of the paradise lost. From such a literate base sprang the essence of the American romantic sensibility which tried to will the "broken world" of Eden into new perfectibility.

Irving, Cooper, and Bryant innovated a native romantic tradition and in terms of the American experience glossed the hard core of man, nature, and society. What other concerns are there for the romantic unless they be some explanation of this tripartite reality? Melville emphasized the symbolic dimension as Emerson had the ethical.[8] Every Stoic was a stoic, Emerson said, but where is the Christian in American Christendom? This he asked as he tried to establish his morally all-encompassing Over-soul, the fundament of man thinking and artist creating. For him Whitman would prove to be the ideal American poet; for with his curious ambivalence, Whitman attempted to establish the romantic American identity in an encompassing Over-personality explanatory of much in the diffracted new Eden experience of the Children of Adam.

Seven years after Whitman's death, Hart Crane was born. The ideological connection is not nebulous, although the coincidence of biographical dates might seem tenuous; for while Crane's poetry is often closely allied to his fellows in the wasteland, it is by his own admission joyfully in the Edenic tradition of Whitman. Perhaps what has been called the Pound-Eliot bias in Crane can be easily explained by a more essential reciprocity: the other side of any Eden's coin is necessarily the wasteland. Whitman, for example, beyond the paranoiac optimism traditionally imputed to him, vocalized his glimpse of the other America in the nadir of *Drum Taps*. For him at his time, the Civil

War had been the puberty rite ending America's seemingly endless adolescence. But while Whitman's rather manic-depressive Over-personality recovered to a placid if not self-satisfied maturity, others saw the process of American change not as one of maturation but as one of rot and desiccation. The Brooklyn Bridge image of Hart Crane is a composite location for viewing the American experience in a truly focussed Whitmanesque way, although the purgatorial tone of "The Tunnel" section is more specifically allied to the depressing under-pits of the wasteland poets.

Of his poem, "The Bridge," in its early stages of composition, Hart Crane specified his aim:

> Very roughly, the poem concerns a mythical synthesis of America. History and fact, location, etc., all have to be transfigured into abstract from....The initial impulses of our people will have to be gathered up toward the climax of the bridge, symbol of our constructive failure, our unique identity, in which is also included our scientific hopes and achievements of the future.[9]

"What I am after," he said in 1927,

> is an assimilation of this the American experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present....What I am really handling, you see, in the Myth of America....I am really writing an epic of the modern consciousness.[10]

For Crane, man was the creative namer, the master and architect of the American dream.

Tennessee Williams' admiration for Hart Crane is hardly masked. Not only was a volume of Hart Crane the only book Williams carried with him in his hobo days, but his *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* carry epigraphs from that poet; *You Touched Me*, this 1945 romantic comedy suggested by a D. H. Lawrence short story and written in collaboration with Donald Windham, has a heroine who has published certain poems:

Hadrian:	[Opening the scrapbook] Poems!
Matilda:	[With embarrassed pride] They're clipped from various papers that printed them.
Hadrian:	[Reading at random] "How like a caravan my heart--Across the desert moved toward yours!" [Looks up, grinning.] Toward whose? Who is this H. C. it's dedicated to?
Matilda:	...Hart Crane. An American poet who died ten years ago.
Hadrian:	Well, that's all right. A perfectly safe romance.[11]

Hadrian in the context of the play may rightly have judged the romance of small import; however, what is of wider significance is that Matilda, a Britisher, specifies Crane as American. Williams has acknowledged that Crane, like Whitman--the professional American--was interested in the organic American experience. Both poets exude, to much debate, an artistically functional sexual sensibility which in Williams matures to existential alienation metaphor. In the roundrobin

of influences, Whitman was a forerunner of another influence on Williams, D. H. Lawrence,[12] in his redeeming "the phallus and the orgasm to the imagination."[13] Leslie Fiedler pinpoints and nationalizes what is a peculiar dissociation in Whitman: "How careful he is in separating sex from sentiment (*Children of Adam*), and sentiment from sex (the *Calamus* poems)--and how American.[14]

The point at this juncture is that within the polarized tensions of the national experience, American writers in imposing some order on reality have worked with the various dissociations in one of two basic ways. Like Dos Passos or Steinbeck or either Crane, they have externalized into tractable social study the more difficult dichotomies of the interior American experience; or like Williams they have made direct advancing retreat into a more internalized character study. The former is rather much artistic comment by sociological induction--and this, precisely, is Williams' province.

To examine the setting Williams' country is to study a geography that is spiritual, intellectual, and emotional: intuitive. The present study intends neither to reproduce American literary history as leading to-then-from Williams nor to retread already trod critics. Both are necessary as incidental. The emphasis is placed upon the very pages of Williams' poetry and prose; for as a map is not the ground so are the critics not the text. This study, therefore, hopefully precariously, intends to be not a relisting of recommended and beaten paths but rather a fresh run across Williams' wild terrain.

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN BLUES: WILLIAMS' HERITAGE OF TENSION IN MATTER AND FORM

Very much a child of his own time and place, Thomas Lanier Williams experienced personally the basic American tensions. Born of a "Puritan" mother Edwina Dakin) and a "Cavalier" father who did not boast that he was descended from the American romantic poet Sidney Lanier, Tennessee early retreated from his father's insulting gibes at his interiority of his mother's more comforting and protective security. His mother also retreated from the father into her own parents' home, an Episcopalian rectory. Here "his mother's delicacy and his grandfather's work...made him a little Puritan."[15] In his parents Williams found wide personification of the basic imbalances he was later to exhibit in his characters: his mother, genteel and high-strung, still savored of the ante-bellum aristocracy; his father, cavalier and footloose, was the sensual epitome of the traveling salesman. His mother, though she denies it literally, is Amanda, Big Mama, Aunt Nonnie, and the early Blanche DuBois. She is the pre-bitch Williams woman. His father is the drummer of "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches"; he is the sagging life-force of Big Daddy and the prototype of Boss Finley in *Sweet Bird*. He is the older men in Williams' plays. His clerical grandfather, unlike either of his parents, was never transferred literally by Williams to a play; nevertheless, Williams' intimate knowledge of both the ministry and of parsonage life contributed greatly to his clerical drawings: the Reverend Guildford Melton of *You Touched Me*, the Reverend Winemiller of *Summer and Smoke* and *Eccentricities*, and the defrocked Larry Shannon of *Night of the Iguana*.

Mrs. Edwina Williams sounds only hollowly sincere in disclaiming connection with any dramatic character;[16] for if the esthetic, subconscious, and associational truth be stated, the artist takes his own experienced reality and transmogrifies it to his own creative vision. One story, "The Yellow Bird," gives example; it is the initial sketch of Alma Winemiller of *Summer and Smoke* and *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. It beings:

> Alma was the daughter of a Protestant minister named Increase Tutwiler, the last of a string of Increase Tutwilers who had occupied pulpits since the Reformation came to England. The first American progenitor had settled in Salem, and around him...had revolved one of the most sensational of the Salem witch trials.

In Alma, the last of the Tutwilers, "the puritan spirit fiercely aglow" had traversed the distance "from Salem to Hobbs, Arkansas." Living in the parsonage, sorely repressed, (a feeling not unexperienced by Williams), Alma began to cut loose. She began to smoke. Her father threatened denunciation; but her mother, viewing life in truly Ramian-Puritanic opposites,

> would scream and go into a faint, as she knew that every girl who is driven out of her father's house goes right into a good-time house. She was unable to conceive of anything in between.

The fact is that Alma took to smoking and peroxide and jooking and worse "—as if someone were with her, a disembodied someone, perhaps a remote ancestor of liberal tendencies who had been

displeased by the channel his blood had taken till Alma kicked over the traces and jumped back to the plumed-hat Cavaliers."[17] Williams, in a context he has related specifically to the colonial American, dramatizes a basic paranoia whose imbalance he had quite personally experienced, at least obliquely, very early in his own life.

Alma Tutwiler in her degeneration pinpoints the unbalanced extremities between the mythical image and the existential reality, the difference between some kind of idealized ethical standard of repression (which has become associated with the puritanical) and the opposite standard of an expressive, or at least reactionary, mode of "cavalier" conduct. Because neither extreme plumbs true, Williams chooses to work within the spectrum of the extremities; for he thinks to employ a kind of dissociative hyperbole to examine the myth of America that he might clarify what is really happening here. He places no one in balance—except maybe the pregnant Serafine of *The Rose Tattoo*; and he lets few live at the absolute end of the desolate wasteland: perhaps only the unredeemable Sissy Goforth of *The Milktrain Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*.

He more often illustrates the extremes by bottling the opposing tensions into a central character who, after an interior recognition scene, finds the *Angst* of his opposing values sliding into ripe paranoia. For instance, Amanda Wingfield, pathetic as she reveals the difference time has wrought in her socially, provides pre-clinical prognosis of the Williams women to follow. Blanche DuBois, however, hard on the heels of Amanda, becomes prototype for Williams' vicious gynolatry. She embodies the puritan appearance of the virtuous female (the Edenic myth) as well as the ultimately revealed reality of her febrile nature. Alma, whose name in Spanish means *soul*, likewise makes the movement—which in Williams has become repetitive—of the puritanic individual who discovers the body and finds in its existence a frustrating schizophrenia. For Williams, in a kind of Platonic Calvinism symptomatic of the culture, does not allow his characters to envision body and soul as an organic unity forming one whole personality.[18] Instead, they experience within their very existences a deadly war of estrangement and alienation between parts that should be in organic unity were not the theological myth withstanding.

Chicken, in *Kingdom of Earth*, says:

> It's like the preacher says, the gates of the soul is got to close on the body an'keep the body out or the body will break down the gates and overrun the soul and everything else that's decent in a human.[19]

Alma in *Summer and Smoke* tries her best to make John Cuchanan see humans as a balance of body and soul; but in describing the moral relationship of a man and a woman she oversells soul so that ironically by the time her body has broken down the gates and overrun her soul making her ready for physical union with John, he has awakened to a new reverence for her that makes the union impossible. Isn't it funny, he tells Alma: "I'm more afraid of your soul than you're afraid of my body."[20] This disparity between soul and body pinpoints precisely what is, within the individual psyche, the heritage of moral imbalance which the Calvinistic tradition has bequeathed a major part of the western world.

James Baldwin in his study of American identity, *Nobody Knows My Name*, focusses exactly on the tension between religion and reality in America, examining the relation in terms particularly

Williamsian:

> I...felt how the Southern landscape—the trees, the silence, the liquid heat, and the fact one always seems to be traveling great distances—seems designed for violence, seems, almost, to demand it. What passions cannot be unleashed on a dark road in a Southern night! Everything seems so sensual, so languid, and so private. Desire can be acted out here; over this fence, behind that tree, in the darkness, there; and no one will see, no one will ever know. Only the night is watching and the night was made for desire. *Protestantism is the wrong religion for people in such climates; America is perhaps the last nation in which such a climate belongs*. In the Southern night everything seems possible, the most private, unspeakable longings; but then arrives the Southern day, as hard and brazen as the night was soft and dark. It brings what was done in the dark to light. It must have...for those people who made the region what it is today...caused them great pain.[21]

Williams says the same but more obliquely in terms of character and setting. His South is regional precisely to the end of universality. He writes using the metaphor of the South as springboard to a questioning inclusive of both the American experience and the human condition. The validity of this is not only that European Calvinism developed a peculiarly American strain, but that the Calvinistic tension itself is symptomatic of the broken side of man's very nature. Calvinism is an after-expression of an *a priori* human condition. Williams writes in the Forward to *Sweet Bird of Youth*:

> Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt. If there exists any area in which a man can rise above his moral condition, imposed upon him at birth and long before birth, by the nature of his breed, then I think it is only a willingness to know it, to face its existence in him, and I think that at least below the conscious level, we all face it. Hence guilty feelings, and hence defeat aggressions, and hence the deep dark of despair that haunts our dreams, our creative work, and makes us distrust each other.[22]

Thus Williams sees the artist's role as a willingness to show this tension, a willingness to name it up to a level of consciousness where it can be dealt with. He sees the violent exposure of this tension as a moral duty. "If there is any truth in the Aristotelian ideal that violence is purged by its poetic representation on stage, then it may be that my cycle of violent plays have had a moral justification after all."[23] Thus does the Puritanism of his temperament exhibit itself in seeking such utilitarian apology for his writing; for the Calvinistic ethic has long not only found *ars gratia artis* untenable, but has made art without moral content seem impotent if not irrelevant. For the proto-Calvinists

> God's beauty was all sufficing, and works of nature and of art could be only weak reflections thereof. In addition, the intense conviction of earthly transience further discouraged painstaking artistic creation and concern with form. Emphasis was on ideas and themes rather than on beauty of expression.[24]

Tennessee Williams, ambivalating between this dogmatic purity and his own esthetically expressive personality proved at the very least a working artistic marriage of both sensibilities present in the American culture. Repeating the lines of Hart Crane used as epigraph to *Streetcar*, Williams, quoting, explicates his peculiar duty:

> And so it was I entered the broken world
> To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
> An instant in the wind (I know not whiter burled)
> But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

Thus Williams has in common with Crane the Whitmanesque gift of emancipator; but unlike Whitman who so directly sings of himself, Williams' injection of self into the American identity is less auto-erotic, is more the Calamus sensibility of social responsibility, although his social concern rarely boils over to obvious thesis drama. Perhaps about Whitman and Williams it can be observed that both, after enduring personal crucifixion, pulled out the nails and found they still could walk, although Williams, healing less well, resents the wounding more. Whereas Whitman saw an ultimate evolution of hope for the generic race though the specific man might fail, Williams' malaise is broader. He sees interwoven among the red-white-and-blue threads of the American cliché a tense alienation of the individual. As the new pattern of this individual alienation emerges, one can trace it seminally back to the proud Calvinistic isolation of the individual in private communication with his God. As this theological individualism evolved into Yankee independence and frontier democracy, it more and more acquired materialistic overtones. Where else could the Puritan ethic evolve than to a material rewarding of the spiritually elect? Practice, however, belied the theory; war and death and life, time, made all the material promise lacklustre. Individuals turned to one another, in more than political democracy, to construct social reform exhibiting the unity of individuals who in caring for one another, as Whitman had suggested, would not be so much alone. Yet the modern existentialist philosophers have articulated the failure of even the attempt; they have, in fact, articulated it so well that nowhere more than in the literary arts has their influence been felt.

In this his fourth decade of writing Williams has finally assimilated this modern philosophic stance into his metaphorical vocabulary. His Blanches and Almas of the 1940's dramatized their terrible isolation as a failure of love; they used the metaphor of their failure at physical sex to illustrate their aloneness. Building on this, Williams of late has further isolated his characters. Although sex remains the great poetic symbol of union and alienation, Williams has tended to become more explicit in statement of theme. This might perhaps make him less a subtle dramatist, but as a reporter of ideas it makes him from another point of view more interesting. Laura's isolation in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) was poetic, almost without any ideological *raison*. "All she does," Amanda says of her halt daughter, "is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records." Tom, her brother, tries to leave her in her isolation, but memory does not dissolve in time and space. Nothing for him can blow out his guilty memory of Laura, though he briefly intimates a justification for himself in that her candle-lit world has been by-passed by the "adventure" of modern lightning. Theirs is a poetic metaphysics without overt philosophical complexity. Tom Wingfield is only feeling his way to some rationale of their isolation. The great war outside is only

beginning to illuminate the great war inside. By contrast, two Williams heroines of the 1960's are more philosophically articulate about their isolation. Sissy Goforth plaintively asks:

> When is it considered ridiculous, bad taste, *mauvois gout*, to seriously consider and discuss the possible meaning of life....I've wondered more lately...meaning of life..., and meaning of death, too....What in hell are we doing? ...Just going from one goddamn frantic distraction to another, till finally one too many goddamn frantic distractions leads to disaster.[25]

Out of her daily alienation, Sissy Goforth on the second last day of her existence, fears more than ever the total isolation of death, having become in life so alienated from others that all she can tell them about their relationship to her is, the train they're on no longer stops for her to be milked.

In the latest of the Williams vaudevilles, *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, the woman named One, suffering like Laura, but much more articulate, paints the small apocalypse of the isolato:

> Dragon Country, the country of pain, is an uninhabitable country which is inhabited, though. Each one crossing through that huge, barren country has his own separate track to follow across it alone. If the inhabitants, the explorers of Dragon Country, look about them, they'd see other explorers, but in this country of endured but unendurable pain each one is so absorbed, deafened, blinded by his own journey across it, he sees, he looks for, no one else crawling across it with him. It's up hill, up mountain.[26]

It's all the blocks on the Camino Real.

Williams in 1953 distinguished "thinking playwrights...from us who are permitted only to feel."[27] He added, however, that he appreciated their closet dramas. He declared that his own creed as playwright is similar to the artist's creed in Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*:

> I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquex and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting and the message of art that has made these hands blessed. Amen.

"Art," Williams says, "is a blessing...and that it contains its message is also certain."[28] He admits he writes for the stage and let those who wish to examine him in print be hanged, although he does often admit to a certain moral-philosophical edge. Of *Camino Real*, his Strindbergian dream play, he claims that is melange was meant the most of all his plays for the "vulgarity of performance."

> More than any other work that I have done, this play seemed to me...nothing more nor less than my conception of the time and world that I live in, and its people are mostly archetypes of certain basic attitudes and qualities with those mutations that would occur if they had continued along the road to this hypothetical point in it.[29]

If here Williams is not laying claim to more than an artistic interpretation of the American experience, then he certainly takes a stand a dimension beyond the purely esthetic when he says, "I

hope...the philosophical import that might be distilled from the fantasies of *Camino Real* is the principal element of its appeal."[30]

Any spokesman ought to be objective as well as interpretive. Williams in assuming philosophical comment, therefore, necessarily subtracts himself and his plays from the general consensus to gain a telling perspective. Of theatre-goers who of late have let their "domesticated tastes" (the phrase is Williams') lead them out the exits at his plays' midpoints, he says:

> A cage represents security as well as confinement to a bird that has grown used to being in it; and when a theatrical work kicks over the traces with...apparent insouciance, security seems challenged and, instead of participating in its sense of freedom, one out of a certain number of playgoers will rush back out to the more accustomed implausibility of the street he lives on.[31]

This "cage" of paranoiac security is really Williams' American blues; this is what the theological individualism, the dichotomy of "moral" spirit and "sinful" body becomes.

The measure of paranoia is taken in America by a building whose size, whose great rear wall, dwarfs the village bank, outlooms the town hall, and outattracts the local temples: the Delta Brilliant and Joy Rio movie palaces. For at the motion pictures, America has shouted with Blanche: "I don't want realism. I want magic." And it is precisely the movies that have glossed the American schizophrenia behind a securely caged two-dimensional silver illusion. The tension of the Calvinistic disparities and the resulting frustration told in Lawrentian terms is illustrated by the former movie-usher-turned-playwright no more directly than in that expressionistic truth play, *The Glass Menagerie*. The narrator, Tom Wingfield, as character in the episodic plot is torn between his mother's interpretation of responsibility and his own personal instinct. The Puritan-Cavalier debate continues in the mouth of mother and son:

> Tom: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse!
> Amanda: Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from! It belongs to animals! Christian adults don't want it![32]

Amanda's puritanism is for her a liveable proposition; Tom, howevermuch forced to Amanda's mold, feels differently, yet basically submits to her puritan tyranny—with one exception:

> Tom: I go to the movies because—I like adventure. Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies.
> Amanda: But, Tom, you go to the movies *entirely too much*!
> Tom: I like a lot of adventure.

For a time the movies divert Tom, relieve vicariously the pressure of his personal tense frustration by the "cavalier" distractions which Stanley Kowalski called all "This Hollywood glamor

stuff";[33] but finally the magnificent opiate of the twentieth century wears too thin to mask the epic malaise:

> Tom: I'm tired of the movies....All of those glamorous people—having adventure—hogging it all, gobbling the whole thing up!....People go to the *movies* instead of *moving*. Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America, while everybody in America sits in the dark room and watches them have them! Yes, until there's a war. That's when adventure becomes available to the masses! *Everyone's* dish, not only Gable's! Then the people in the dark room come out of the dark room to have some adventures themselves....I'm not patient. I don't want to wait....I'm tired of the *movies* and I am *about to move*![34]

As for the women, fed on the national mania for movies and unable to go off to war, their declaration of aggression—and aggression is the psychic emotion subsequent to frustration—is in Williams a characteristic turning to sexual adventure. For instance, it is no unthematic coincidence that in Act Three (entitled significantly "A Cavalier's Plum") of *Eccentricities*, Alma surrenders to John's physical advances after "going to a Mary Pickford picture at the Delta Brilliant."[35] For Williams, the dramatist who was once fired by Metro Goldwyn Mayer and whose stage works are amazingly adaptable to and successful as films, sees a reciprocity of disservice between the movie-bred public and the public-bred movies.

Gable came a cavalier to the dark-room puritans vicariously adventuring beyond the insecure limits of their inherited Calvinistic bias. Calvinism, by dogma, kept man in tension, so that, unsure whether saved or not saved, he had recourse only to the response of blind faith for comfort. The disservice of the movies, with their reneging emphasis on materiality, emotion, and sex, is that they do not solve the tension; they simply confuse and thwart attempts of the collective national psyche to achieve balanced identity. Depravity equalled the body for Calvin and Williams wants to break the equation.

Chicken, the unelected Calvinist in *Kingdom of Earth* says: "Lookin' at them screen stars don't close the gates on the body....After the show it's worse than before you went in. You come back out and there ain't one inch of you not overrun by those longings."[36] For him the depravity is complete; he no longer engages the tension of contest. For one, however, who chooses an uncalvinistic optimism, there remains much tension. "The Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, D.D.,...son of a minister and grandson of a bishop, and the direct descendant of two colonial governors" runs headlong in *Night of the Iguana* against his theological heritage by holding against even the odds of the Baptist Female College a deep "faith in essential...human...*goodness*."[37] Yet his history of nervous breakdowns tells the tension he feels as his doubts about man's regenerated nature increase. He views essential goodness and essential depravity as "two unstable conditions [that] can set a whole world on fire, can blow it up, past repair."[38]

Shannon's vision is the essential violence that from the first has been surface symptom of the deeper American malaise. The Pilgrims had to adjust the theological isolation of Calvinism into a pragmatic social order that physically saved the individual for individualism. Adjustment in the Age

of Discovery was physical survival. Now the period of adjustment has extended to a more subtle try for a balanced identity, and its very subtlety has driven the mass psyche back to superficially simpler times: "Will you look at that?" George points to the television in *Period of Adjustment*, "a western on Christmas eve, even! It's a goddam NATIONAL OBSESSIONAL." "Yep," Ralph answers, "a national homesickness in the American heart for the old wild frontiers with the yelping redskins and the covered wagons on fire" when everything was simpler: the elect congregation versus the depraved Indians.[39]

Thus perpetuated are the myths of the American Eden; thus created are the real American blues: all the romantic promise of the new Adam's perfectibility clashing with the heritage of a brittle adaptation of imported German theology, and both romantic and theologian in contretemps with four-square reality. From within this tension comes Tennessee Williams' peculiar and savage *gestus*—that Brechtian word for the thrust, point, direction, gesture, and timing of the matter in a dramatic work. As a result, Williams' esthetically articulate examination of the mid-century American sensibility is particularly valid.

> A playwright, more than any other literary artist, must search for proper forms to fit new subject matter and philosophies....No other art form has to depend on technique so slavishly as the drama, for drama is meant to be seen on a stage, not to be read in the quiet of the study.[40]

The form of the drama must be immediately communicative; its value of exchange must be judged on the compatibility of the matter and form tendered. A playwright must not only determine the most appropriate form for the subject matter his time suggests to him, "but he must also successfully marry this form to the stage itself—his sole medium of communications with his audience." The proper marriage can generate great drama; conversely, "the eras of poor drama...reflect the opposite principle—a divorce of form from subject matter." In the latter instance, the incompatibility most often arises because the pertinent subject matter has evolved beyond the capacity of the traditional forms.

Tennessee Williams, as a University of Missouri undergraduate, caught the Alla Nazimova touring company of *Ghosts*. "It was," he recalled later, "one of the things that made me want to write for the theatre."[41] In addition, like Ibsen, who at Bergen redeemed the artifact of the well-made play to serve realistically the concerns of the time, Tennessee Williams endured a similarly serviceable vagrant apprenticeship which took him from the St. Louis Mummers to Hollywood's MGM. Again like Ibsen, Williams set out to destroy the rotten edifice convention had reared; but unlike Ibsen (whose time's proper marriage demanded a well-made realism) Williams has not hesitated to vacillate between, as well as combine in a unit, elements of a more imaginative theatrical form. Modern American realism has tended to blend itself with a poetry of the theatre. The truth of everyday life has recognized the complementary truth of the imagination.

> Our most significant playwrights [have had] to mediate the requirements of realistic description and of the creative imagination....When our theatre arrived at maturity, it absorbed two originally divergent aims of the modern European theatre—that of the realists and naturalists and that of the symbolists and expressionists.[42]

The circumstance of this combination is that the Movement of Form away from Realism (that is, the search for the form most expressive of the mid-century matter: the re-articulation of the traditional imbalances into terms of modern existential philosophy) in America with Williams has taken a peculiar turn. One expects the resolution to be totally in accord with the brilliantly absurd cannonades of Ionesco, Beckett, and especially Genet, or at least—to keep the delicate balance of expression American—on Edward Albee. However, if proportion be kept, Williams—who hardly springs to mind as a dramatist of Absurd Theatre—has done a more than creditable service in evolving the marriage of "American Existentialism" to the most suitable dramatic form. He writes in his Preface to *The Slapstick Tragedy*:

> I believe that the peculiar style of these two short play is accurately defined by their mutual title. They are not "Theatre of the Absurd"; they are short, fantastic works whose content is a dislocated and wildly idiomatic sort of tragedy, perhaps a bit like the feature stories in that newspaper, the *National Enquirer*, which I think is the finest journalistic review of the precise time that we live in. The style of the plays is kin to vaudeville, burlesque and slapstick, with a dash of pop art thrown in....I think, in production, they may seem to be a pair of fantastic allegories on the tragicomic subject of human existence on this risky planet.[43]

> Despite such recent statement about his plays' possible themes, Williams had earlier stated:

> I have never been able to say what was the theme of my plays and I don't think I have ever been conscious of writing with a theme in mind....Usually when asked about a theme, I look vague and say, "It is a play about life."[44]

This vague generality if not particularly informing is nonetheless serviceably true. Williams is concerned with life, but not with life in the American social tradition of Odets, Hellman, and Miller. "They are concerned with [more exterior] social problems, with how man gets along with the world around him. Williams is worried, as is O'Neill, with how man gets on with the world inside him.[45] Specified even more, this reads how the mid-century American gets on with the old interior world for which the post-war existential awareness has given him new names. Alighting on this interiority, Williams in his inductive dramas confronts the tense substance of the times. He has spoken of "a combination of Puritan and Cavalier strains in my blood which may be accountable for the conflicting impulses I often represent in my characters."[46] The characters in turn express the tension which exists between the puritan conscience and the fugitive cavaliers; sometimes even the New England allusions are maintained, as when Sandra says to Myra: "They've passed a law against passion....Whoever has too much passion, we're going to be burned like witches because we know too much.[47]

In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* Brick's "big howl against American life is 'mendacity' which includes his greedy brother, the church, the luncheon clubs, and his wife's craving to have a baby."[48] Through all the disparately imbalanced ideals of all the American institutions Brick fumbles, trying to rip his way to the graver questions of the balanced interior self. The mendacity he despises is the

lived lie forced by the unreal but existent forces of a puritanism and cavalierism which deny the balance in human nature. "Mendacity is a system that we live in. Liquor is one way out an' death's the other."[49] Both ways he knows well, the one from his own experience and the other from the death of his friend, Skipper. For interior reasons he rejects "twenty-eight thousand acres of the richest land this side of the Valley Nile,"[50] just as Kilroy, the "young American vagrant"[51] of *Camino Real*, and Tom Wingfield of *The Glass Menagerie* had both more vaguely rebelled "against something in America that might be described as the crass American dollar.[52] Despite Signi Falk's wisecracking about "the grim valley of greenbacks" which drives these boys into an indulged "self-pity and lovemaking,"[53] their reaction to the mercantile mores of a materialism that slights the graver questions of the self received a lamenting and reluctant confirmation as far back as Cotton Mather who saw the paranoiac sport that the Calvinistic view of the human condition had most unhumanistically sprouted.

Consequently Tennessee Williams' plays, inductively representative of his view of the American culture, can most easily be classed as dramas of failure; for failure is the great American bugaboo which belies the ethic that the virtuous are here and now rewarded; the wider and more terrible implication in the concept of failure is that it carries within itself the realization, the admission even, that Eden has once again not been found. Williams captures this modern claustrophobia and it is no accident that the form to which he seeks to wed his contemporary matter is a curious mixture of stage and film techniques. In fact, one often feels that the majority of his works makes better scenarios that plays; for the film can literally approximate the poetic synapses of the creative mind with more facility than can the stage, itself encumbered by space and time. Individual stage versions notwithstanding, the reading imagination needs only a brief comparison to determine that the filmy gauze of the memory play *Glass Menagerie* or the episodic reportage of the dream play *Camino Real* withstand—at least technically—the rigors of impersonation better as films than as stage pieces.[54]

Today's quest for appropriate form revolves around whether the dramatist is to be confined to the traditional boards; or whether in his search for new and relevant forms in which to vitalize his matter, he be allowed to evolve into the physical extensions of his art which the technology of his age affords. Never minding Marshall McLuhan, however, Tennessee Williams is, and would call himself a writer for the "vulgarity of the boards." This should not be construed that the filmic thrust which may bring the American drama to a quite interesting parturition is not very much present in Williams; on the contrary, the film, with its vast technology, is the (so-far) ultimate art form, synthesizing all previous arts not only into unity but into recorded permanence. Indeed, Williams' very filmic sensibility is one of the clearest indications of the slow and evolutionary matchmaking being done to drama's matter and drama's form.

This however, is to be read as comment on Williams rather than on the evolution of the film; in short, maugre Williams' eventual influence of the motion picture, the fact is that the film has influenced Williams. The reality of the films would have delighted Ibsen; the facility of reduplicating irreality would have delighted Strindberg; in either case the medium in a kind of latter-day compliment underwrites with a certain ease of expression the particular sensibility of each playwright; in either case, the film yet may record only what is placed before the camera, so that, as always, the form makes bow, albeit only reciprocal, to the informing matter.

It is safe to say that Williams' matter is contemporarily indigenous; for his documentation of failure, his dramatization of the frustrations of failure are both quite typical of modern existential drama. It is important to an understanding of Williams to recall Brustein's evolutionary theory of theatre:

> In the last stage of the modern drama, *existential revolt*, the dramatist examines the metaphysical life of man and protest against it....The drama of existential revolt is a mode of the utmost restriction, a cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human....Existential revolt is the dominating impulse behind the plays of Williams, Albee, Gelber, and Pinter—not to mention Beckett, Ionesco, and the entire "theatre of the absurd."[55]

Brustein, therefore, does keep Williams separate from the species of absurdity but does not subtract him from the genus of existential revolt. This is quite revelatory of Williams' attitudes towards and selection of his matter. If the existential revolt is founded on the "fatigued and hopeless, reflecting the disintegration of idealist energies—[their] exhaustion and disillusionment,"[56] then it should come as no surprising psychological bent in a playwright whose region's ideals had been physically and morally destroyed by civil war, whose country—beyond a too confining regionalism—had found the new Eden's promise as poisoned as the old. The clue revealing the disintegration is the tension; and it is at this cardinal point of *Angst* that Williams has set stake as dramatist; for he records the failing messianism which promised a free new Eden just as he records its opposite, the frustrating and unbreakable reality of the human bondage in as wasteland of space and time and mostly in death.

> Existential revolt represents Romanticism tuned in on itself and beginning to rot....One of the strongest identifying marks of the existential drama is its attitude towards the flesh....Gusto, joy, and sensuality give way to dark brooding and longings after death—[the tension arises between] the ideal of human perfectibility [and]...a vision of human decay.[57]

Williams, whose romantic affinities have often been explicated, is more than romantic; he is neo-romantic: he affirms the gusto and sensuality of the life force in order to cavalierly counteract the predominantly puritan denial. However, neither extreme rings true: man is neither totally perfectible nor totally depraved. As a result, from out of this schizophrenic stand-off Williams dramatizes the arising tension using the basically Chekovian drama of attrition—people are not always eventfully destroyed, but they are eroded.

Williams' major people bear this out: the Wingfields, Amanda and Tom, in their continual debate between puritan responsibility and cavalier long distance, personify both unsatisfactory extremes at a draw; Blanche, like Amanda, is a woman who has out-lived her times. Both are extinct romantic characters, wandered in from some archetypal Chekovian orchard. Puritan Blanche and Cavalier Stanley, however, do not sustain the draw; they do not part ways as do Amanda and Tom. Blanche and Stanley, typifying the extremes, crash head-on, giving in this reading exact and inevitable meaning to that house-tittering line: "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!"[58]

Williams, recognizing the growing force of the new existentialism, here dramatizes that the old stand-offs must finally come to grips with one another. Puritan Blanche resultant insanity is Williams' bleak comment that she cannot be regenerated by the encounter, cannot be named to the new election. Cavalier Stanley, however, enjoys in the Williams world a temporary success as the new animal elect; but in his erotic descendent, the tawny gold and nearly nude Hollywood-Indian Joe of *The Slapstick Tragedy* it is not the bullish Indian who ultimately predominates; it is the *gnädiges Fräulein*, the merciful young woman, who allows her lover to raise her above both the selfish and selfless extremes of imbalance. In feeding the animalistic Joe, the blind and bleeding Fräulein says to him: The fish "just landed in my jaws like God had thrown it to me. It's better to receive than to give if you are receiving to give: isn't it,...mein Liebchen?"[59]

This is an answer that other Williams extremists could do well to consider. Brick and Chance and Val Xavier want to escape their imbalance: Brick through a clarification that his love for Skipper was balanced, was not so cavalier as the puritans accuse; Chance through a rejection of his animal coupling with the Princess and a retrieval of his Heavenly love; Val says in *Battle of Angels*: "How do you get to know people? I used to think you did it by touching them with your hands. But later I found out that only made you more of a stranger than ever."[60] With this he rejects purely cavalier animalism. He talks of the *dispossessed*, his word for the existential isolation that either extreme proffers. In the later play, *Orpheus Descending*, Val adds: "We're all of us...under a lifelong sentence to solitary confinement inside our own lonely skins for as long as we live on this earth."[61] To this rather Emersonian sentiment he appends a sequence obviously suggestive of Beckett's *Godot*:

Val: When I was a kid on Witches Bayou...I felt I was—waiting for something!
Lady: What for?
Val: What does anyone wait for? For something to happen, for anything to happen, to make more sense....I've lost it now, but I was waiting for something like if you ask a question you wait for someone to answer, but you ask the wrong question or you ask the wrong person and the answer doesn't come....Day comes after day and night comes after night, and you're still waiting for someone to answer the question....
Lady: Then what?
Val: You get the make-believe answer.
Lady: What answer is that?
Val: Don't pretend you don't know because you do!
Lady: Love?
Val: [placing hand on her shoulder]: That's the make-believe answer. It's fooled many a fool besides you an' me, that's the God's truth....[62]

Here Williams, in the midst of the bourgeois Broadway theatre business, neatly parleys questions of existence (what Tom Wingfield had called "adventure") and tinges of modern nihilism under the commercially successful gloss of the sexual metaphor. Lady should have answered *sex* not *love* as the make-believe answer; for Williams himself makes the distinction. It is not sex but love that sustains the gnädiges Fräulein; it is sex without love that destroys Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*; it is sex without love that runs Brick from Maggie the animalistic Cat to love without sex

with Skipper; it is sex without love that drives Blanche into insanity; it is sex without requited love that drives Alma Winemiller into prostitution; it is animal sex without love that unnerves the Reverend Shannon at the Costa Verde Hotel: but it is physical sex balanced with genuine love that saves *The Rose Tattoo's* Serafina from the living death of isolation. Not only does she have a new husband, but she has conceived: "Two lives again the body! Two, two lives again, two!"[63] The solitary confinement of Val's everyone-in-his-lonely-skin is this once broken; for Serafina is not only one of the few Williams women able to conceive, she is the only one whose pregnancy is not terminated.

Sissy Goforth of *The Milk Train* is engaged in another kind of pregnancy, one that is to be aborted: the dictation of her memoirs. She and Alexander del Lago, like their male counterpart Chance Wayne, see their youth—the great American good—flying away. Alexandra and Chance try to conceive a permanence for themselves in the movies; Sissy Goforth, however, investigating the meaning of life decides that "life is all memory" and so she tries to capture it all into the permanence of words:

> Mrs. Goforth: Practically everything is memory to me, now, so I'm writing my memoirs....Four husbands, all memory now. All lovers, all memory now.
> The Witch: So you're writing your memoirs.
> Mrs. Goforth: Devoting all of me to it, and all of my time.[64]

Time is what erodes the Williams people. It is time that destroys them; they go down in an attrition eventful only its accidentals: Val is burned, Chance castrated, Sebastian devoured, Blanche committed, Big Daddy swindles. But the fact is they were each destroyed, eroded, before the violent concluding events. Williams, as neo-romantic playwright, exhibits all his characters living in "High Point over a cavern," waiting out the period of rarely-arriving adjustment.

> Ralph: I guess all fair-sized American cities have got a suburb called High Point....High Point is built over a great big...cavern and is sinking into it gradually....But it's not publicly known and we homeowners...have got...to keep it a secret till we have sold out....[65]

So bleak is the American dream in Williams that his protagonists are generally incapable of any significant salvific action: after their erosion they simply submit, like Chance to the castrators; indeed

> ...without action, there can be no tragedy; yet existential drama is, *in tone and atmosphere*, the most tragic of the modern genres;...it is tragic in its perception. It lacks a tragic hero, but it evokes a tragic sense of life.[66]

Williams, moving in this context, dramatizes the paralysis growing from the basic *Angst* the American Project has put upon the human experience: the two Vals, Brick, Shannon, Chance, all give in; Lady-Myra, Amanda and Laura, the two Alma's, Blanche, and Catharine Venable are each

tendered a trick of life that allows them only a passive waiting for time to bring them the final alienation, the isolation of death.

Sissy Goforth, for instance, after a lifetime of painters who didn't paint and writers who didn't write, meets the "point of no more pretenses" and needs "somebody or something to mean God to" her.[67] She articulates the ultimate cry of isolation; and the irony runs deep, for the basic Calvinism seminal to the American experience denied its social side, insisting only on man's solipsistic relation to God. Such isolation has always run counter to the social psychology of America where, especially in the early times of adjustment, the group was necessary for the individual's survival.

The tension consequently generated has virtually enfranchised the American literary imagination. For out of "the great breakup of New England Calvinism" came a tense "Spiritual logjam" that yet requires much adjustment.[68] Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, as well as Melville and Tennessee Williams' ancestor on the Chattahoochee, Sidney Lanier, each weaned his own romantic sensibility out of the heritage of native culture initiated by the Puritans. In their time of the nineteenth century "the Puritan temperament and psychology remained, but were no longer imprisoned in dogma. Out of Calvinism cam Unitarianism and the transcendentalism, more hospitable to literary growth."[69] It has not been the theologians, but the romantic men of letters who have dealt with the other side of the vision, the disintegrating idea of Eden. Emerson and Whitman, representative of this strain, saw the Lords of Life and heard the Drum Taps; they, like Chance Wayne, saw that despite their hope the innocence was gone and despite their knightly quest it could not be regained. Each in his own way asks what mistake was made in the Garden.

So centripetal to this chronicling is Williams that his matter's setting is more often than not some garden district, some precise jungle evolved from the trope of the biblical garden where flesh first encountered spirit. In his garden districts Williams constantly explores and exposes the duplicity of the new Eden idea. His South, with its ancient roots of puritan and cavalier, is metaphor for the whole of America, is even display base for the universal human condition.

> Williams considers himself a member of a school, which he terms the Gothic, uniting in a specific American combination, expressionist, impressionist, surrealist, symbolist, and naturalist elements....The disappointment, repression, and poverty of the South have...[made] it the natural ground for the "American Gothic." Tennessee Williams considers this movement akin to French Existentialism, except that the "motor impulse of the French school in intellectual and philosophic while that of the American is more of an emotional and romantic nature." The common link between the two movements, he says, is a "sense, in intuition, of an underlying dreadfulness in modern experience." This "dreadfulness" he finds impossible to explain. [It is a] "kind of spiritual intuition of something almost too incredible and shocking to talk about...."[70]

It is, quite likely, this very *Angst* of falsely polarized human nature that he finds so inarticulately "dreadful." And it is his America, the last Eden, which has become the newest wasteland, the "Terra Incognita" of his *Camino Real*.

In this Strindbergian dream play of 1953, *Camino Real*, Williams comes virtually to an anthological statement of his matter.[71] The quest of Kilroy, Williams' American Everyman, is to

travel down the Camino Real of life. His duty is to recover the Edenic time when the street was royal before the loss of innocence made it the present real. He had known the royal time when he had the true love of his one, true woman. Yet his *Angst* at being washed up—at having a body he may not use—drives him from his Eden. Marguerite says to him, "Then you have been on the street when the street was royal" "Yeah...," Kilroy answers, "when the street was royal."[72]

Now, however, all these people live in "the real not the royal truth...terrified of the Terra Incognita."[73] "Humanity," the Gypsy tells Kilroy, "is just a work in progress."[74] Everyone must seek his balance to save his body from the street cleaners when the soul has parted. The only balance to the alienation of death is the balance of love. The election of love is the only means of regeneration. Love is the phoenix that resurrects Kilroy of whom it was said at his death:

> This was thy son, America....He was found in an alley along the Camino Real....Think of him, now, as he was before his luck failed him. Remember his time of greatness, when he was not faded, but frightened.[75]

There is, therefore, a possible alleviation of the tension: the ideal combination of spiritual and physical love which resolves into unity the falsely polarized soul and body of man. Williams insists that *Camino Real* "is not a document of despair, but of eternal idealism." It served for him

> ...as a spiritual purgation of that abyss of confusion and lost sense of reality that I, and...others, had somehow wandered into....What the play says through this unashamed old romanticist, Don Quixote, is just this, "Life is an unanswered question, but let's still believe in the dignity and importance of the question."[76]

Thus can Marion Magid say:

> Williams is American in his passion for absolutes, in his longing for purity,...in the extreme discomfort with which he inhabits his own body and soul, in his apocalyptic vision of sex, which like all apocalyptic visions sacrifices mere accuracy for the sake of intensity. Intensity is the crucial quality of Williams' art, and he is perhaps most an American artist in his reliance upon the mastery of surface techniques for achieving this effect.[77]

It is precisely to this intensity of technique, to this intense personal experimentation with form that Williams' matter has driven him. The marriage of form and matter has always been the essential concern of relevant drama; and at no time more than in the past hundred years has there been such uneasy search for the proper dramatic form. Ibsen moved from poetic drama to realism to symbolism in a realistic framework; Strindberg, chafing under the yoke of the well-made play, escaped to expressionism only to return to his initial naturalism. "In recent years this search for mode appears most clearly in the plays of Tennessee Williams where symbolism and realism are always juxtaposed."[78]

This juxtaposition of forms is precise barometer of the juxtaposition that Williams finds within his matter. In fact, A. B. Kernan finds the tension between Blanche and Stanley in *Streetcar*

an analog for the modal vacillation not only within Williams but within the evolvement of modern dramatic form. Their "conflict and its resolution dramatize very clearly Mr. Williams' own struggle with dramatic form."[79] *Streetcar* presents, basically, two polar views of experience: the realism of Stanley and the non-realism of Blanche. The tension is immediate.

Blanche asks about the run-down Elysian Fields:

> "Out there I suppose is the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir!" He sister, Stella, replies, "No, honey, those are the L & N tracks." This is the basic problem which has kept the modern theatre boiling: If the modern world best described as a "ghoul-haunted woodland" or a neutrally denominated something like "The L & N tracks"?[80]

The movement of the play is to show "the limitations of realism as an approach to experience": Stanley mistakes paste for jewels; Blanche looks old and cheap only when the eyes alone are the measure of things' reality. When "realism" rapes "romanticism," it is Stella—"born kin to the 'romantic' and married to the 'realistic'"[81] —whose currently stoic position between the poles is most typically the American stance.

> Her moral sense is still active, for she points out to Eunice that "I couldn't believe [Blanche's] story and go on living with Stanley." Eunice's answer contains the dreadful truth of our times, "Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going."[82]

This perseverance in pressing ever onward to some equilibrium is Williams' ideal "truth." For he articulates a basic moral hope, characteristically American, that the wasteland of Weir will somehow regenerate to the true Elysian Fields of the First Garden District. He vacillates between the real camino and the Camino Real, between realism and expressionism. He approximates in his mixed and mixing form and varied ambivalencies in the modern psyche. He is a romantic whose optimism has been tempered by reality. He is a neo-romantic bearing all "the paradoxes of the rebel dramatist. He would exalt the ideal, yet he is imprisoned in the real. He would vindicate the self, yet he must also examine the claims of others."[83] The polarities tug at him till he must come to some balance to relive the tension. He would sing of love and deny death. He would exalt Cavalier optimism, "ecstasy, wildness, and drunkenness, yet he must cope with the tedious, conditioned world" of an indigenous puritanism. He writes at the heart of the American existential where the accident of tension has become functional essential: the "touch of paranoia," he says, "is necessary to individual felicity in this world." Of the American, who—beyond Williams' understanding—accepts as salvific election in itself this tense mode of existential paranoia, Williams writes: "Who can doubt, meeting him, returning the impulsive vigor of his handshake and meeting the lunatic honesty of his gaze, that he is the *one*, the *man*, the finally *elected*?"[84]

CHAPTER II

PLACE AND TIME:
ALWAYS TOO LATE AT MOON LAKE

> A European whose knowledge of America was gained entirely from the collected works of Tennessee Williams might garner a composite image of the U.S.: it is a tropical country whose vegetation is largely man-eating; it has an excessive annual rainfall and frequent storms which coincide with its mating periods; it has not yet been converted to Christianity, but continues to observe the myth of the annual death and resurrection of the sun-god, for which purpose it keeps on hand a constant supply of young men to sacrifice. Its young men are for the most part beautiful....Its women are alternately in a state of heat or jitters....The sexual embrace...is as often as not followed by the direst consequences: cannibalism, castration, burning alive, madness, surgery in various forms from lobotomy to hysterectomy, depending of the nature of the offending organ.[85]

Such selective appraisal obviously does as much injustice to geographical America as it does to Williams; but then the Sixties' pop-culture sensibility has found Williams strangely out of vogue[86] and has much too easily oversimplified him:

> The subject matter of *Summer and Smoke* is a little anecdote about two people, a preacher's daughter who represents spirit and a doctor's son who represents flesh. Each influences the other and so they wind up exchanging roles: she becomes a loose woman and he becomes a dedicated selfless man....Sometimes Tennessee Williams seems to think with the mind of Stanley Kowalski.[87]

There is the currently free-floating attitude toward Williams' place in American literature that might be rectified a bit by establishing what is American place in Tennessee Williams. Because every artist, to communicate, must tangibly present the intangible universals of his mind, he is bound to use particulars. Nothing establishes the universal dimension better than a well crafted inventory of selected detail. In the evolution of thought, however, as *ism* has replaced *ism*, the peculiar turn for the modern mind has been to an all-inclusive esthetic. For the modern mind the esthetic has become the ethic, the metaphysic, the phiosophic, the geographic. Williams is no purist saint of this esthetic, but he is no more functionary either; he has, through a basic theory of place, matched the matter of the modern era to its most complementary esthetic form.

This means, in short, that Williams deals with the American dream of cities (that is, perfect community) in an art form that is a peculiarly urban phenomenon, the drama. It is significant that Williams, reared in the rural South, began as a poet, dealing as most poets do with the personal feelings of the isolato; it is significant that his first dramatic success dealt with the widening autobiographical experience of his family's migration to urban St. Louis. And it is, perhaps, even more significant that when in 1964 New Directions collected all the Williams poetry to that date, the poet—better known as dramatist—insisted on naming the collection of personalia under the more social title, *In the Winter of Cities*.

Williams writes in the city for the city; he explores its possibilities, its implications. Yet by a strange inversion of subject, a treatment of theme by indirection, he takes as his setting more often than not the country or some countrified place in the city. Western culture has long observed the rural *pagani*, the heathens form the heath, the *rustici* who are the *villani*; and it has observed them with all the wariness that the latter term has come to demand. The rural mind has usually been more resistant to change than the urban. Historically it was the *pagani* (with all the alienation their name has come to imply to a basically Christian society) who resisted the greatest change in Western culture: the shift from the Old Testament legalist ethic of fear to the New Testament ethic of love. Christianity was, in fact, firstly and since characteristically, an urban phenomenon. Christ and the Apostles, especially the Apostle Paul, traveled from city to city, only passing through the desert rural place. Consequently, Christianity's urbanity established an archetype in the City of God. The pagan areas became subtle equated with the ruined Eden's wasteland where heathens lived in isolation; these outposts of alienation, deserts and jungle, threatened by their very existence the establishment of the archetypal City. And for Christianity, as well as for Williams, the basic city is simply two people in the communication of love. This if fundamental society.

Williams intimates that if the lost Eden is ever to be recovered, it will be a well-manicured urban-garden recovery where people have broken the bondage of their isolation. Williams' very inversion of thematic treatment here parallels his basic esthetic inversion of romanticism into neo-romanticism. This basic negation is part and parcel of the modern esthetic which has been so heavily influenced by existentialism and functional absurdity. Just as being has become more important for having encountered non-being, so does Williams define urban life—which is an absurdist's enlargement of two people communicating—by delineating outside the cities the paralysis of his Gothic landscape. An appropriate parallel to this peculiar kind of modern inversion is this: just as Southern Negroes do not move to Chicago but to Chicago's South Side (thus joining, while missing, the most important urbanization process of this century), so also Williams' people do not move to St. Louis or New Orleans or Nice. They move to claustrophobic back alleys and to unmanicured garden districts and to cliffside lairs far from the urbanity of the Cote D'Azur. Williams is saying that if the *pagani* live in an isolation that opposes change, then the wasteland is still a threat to the Garden City; for now the rural threat may enter the city gates.

Blanche, for instance, ruined in the country, arrives in New Orleans in a faintly hysterical humor. "Her appearance is incongruous to...[the] setting." Looking repeatedly at a slip of paper, she is asked by Eunice if she is lost. Blanche then reads to her the directions on the sheet of paper: "They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!"[88] Williams here, in specifying his particular urban place into a universal, owes at least a coincidental debt to Thornton Wilder's urbanely titled play *Our Town* in which the post office is given certain directions to a specific address:

> ...on the envelope the address was like this: It said: Jane Crofut; the Crofut Farm; Grover's Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire;...United States of America; Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God.[89]

Despite all their talk of Blue Mountain and Glorious Hill, Mississippi, near Moon Lake and its Casino, the Williams people live on a map the same as Wilder's.

Williams does attempt geographical changes that do not, however, affect the universal climate. At least ten of his play and short stories are set specifically in the epitome of the South, New Orleans, its French Quarter, its Vieux Carre, its Garden District.[90] *Adjustment* occurs in a suburb of Memphis, Tennessee, and *Glass Menagerie*, of course, in St. Louis. More often than not, however, the locales are "small towns in the deep South," sometimes specified as Blue Mountain or Glorious Hill. Sometimes, as in *Baby Doll*, only the county is specified and called Two Rivers, which incidentally is the name of the Enterprise into which Williams has incorporated himself. His geography widens to include the Gulf Coast in both *Sweet Bird* and *Rose Tattoo*; and then without really leaving the American South, various works show American transplants on foreign soil: *Iguana* in Mexico's Puerto Barrio, *Milktrain* on Italy's Divina Costiera. Yet neither place is any more foreign that *Cat's* Mississippi's Delta Plantation; and while he sometimes uses New Mexico, Manhattan, and Santa Monica, as well as undesignated industrial towns of the midwest,[91] the only time he truly leaves America behind is in the highly derivative *You Touched Me,* which was also a collaboration.

In short, with Williams, geography is at first quintessentially American with a climate that is metaphorically southern, even at times to absurdity. Polly in *The Gnädiges Fraulein* distills it all:

> What is my position? Why I'm the Southernmost gossip columnist *and* society editor of the Southernmost news organ in the Disunited Mistakes....Everything's Southernmost here, I mean like this morning I did the Southernmost write-up on the Southernmost gang-bang and called it Multiple Nuptials which is the Southernmost gilding or the Southernmost lily....Yais, everything's Southernmost here, like Southern fried chicken is Southern*most* fried chicken. But who's got a chicken? None of us Southernmost white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are living on fish and fish only because of thyroid deficiency in our Southernmost systems, we live on fish because regardless of faith or lack of it, everyday is Friday, gastronomically speaking, because of the readjustment of the economy which is Southernmost too.[92]

On the wider level, Williams drains every place in the human condition of any specific import in *Camino Real*, where everyplace is just this side of the inevitable wasteland of the *Terra Incognita*, the ultimate non-place. And in the countdown to non-place, towns for Williams are cities that failed; they document the increasing disintegration of the basic urbanity of two people in communication. *The Knightly Quest's* town of Gewinner (based superficially, but darkly, on the space transformation of Cape Kennedy *nee* Canaveral) is any small American city gone berserk under an impersonal, institutionally inspired, government program that forbids communication on any but the most inane and/or professional level.

In the town of Gewinner the Red Devil Battery Plant has been converted into The Project, and "The Project was engaged all day and all night in the development of some marvelously mysterious weapon of annihilation." And along with the new religiousness" for the Methodist Church's swimming pool. "All the world population of friendly Caucasians" would pitch in and keep the "fuck-offs like the sissy Pearce brother" straight on "tolerance and individual right" about which

"You got to draw a line somewhere."[93] This, like Serafina's South is not only the American South; it is the European South; it is by implication the South of the Human Condition, proving that any place can be a place of auto-da-fe.

Williams knows through personal and cultural experience that the Old Testament Garden Place is lost and that a wasteland brought in from the Old Testament and not well mixed with a New Testament sensibility presents certain tensions: in the only Garden Christ entered he sweat blood and upon a Calvary wasteland, created in some Old Testament necessity, he died. Thus in Western thought has the death of the Son of God reinforced the basic Calvinistic sense of existential horror. The truly remarkable feat of Calvinist psychology is that those subject to it never know where they stand; they are kept so in a tension between damnation and election that they can only make a trustful act of faith. In a complementary tension, Williams keeps his people at a level of marginal urbanity. They remember—like Catharine Holly and the Episcopalian minister of "One Arm"—the terrifying jungles, and in their marginal urban gardens that manicuring has not erased the suggestion of the archetypal terror.

The set directions for *Suddenly Last Summer* are typical of this radical nightmare: the place is a Victorian mansion in the Garden District of New Orleans.

> The interior is blended with a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle...in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scale to skin. The colors of this jungle-garden are violent, especially since it is streaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of a savage nature....[94]

This is such stuff as bad dreams are made on and a place such as this has its greatest reality (greatest because it is highly suggestive metaphorically) in the underside of the human psyche. Urbanization was supposed to have tamed and jungle and chopped down the wilderness, just as Big Daddy, like some Old Testament Patriarch, under Straw and Ochello, had clipped his Delta Plantation out of the heathen rain forest. But Brick, wondering for Williams, questions whether the domestication has gone far enough or too far, in fact.

With his Calvinistic penchant for naming things, Williams names the dark rural geography of isolation, the Dragon Country. Where once the romantic earth-mother rose dreamily out of the Gardened Land, in neo-romantic inversion she has become the emasculating bitch-goddess. The female is the dragon, based on myth based on some prehistoric reality, who obstructs the way to the city of God, the city of love-communication. But she is not solely responsible for mankind's incomplete evolution from *paganus* to *urbanus*; for the cities are not the ultimate goal of the human animal. The cities in Williams tend to coalesce in his *Ur*-city, the last station of the *Camino Real*. Here against the Terra Incognita he distills the one city that looks like all the cities. He focusses on the plaza in "a tropical seaport that bears a confusing, but somehow harmonious, resemblance to such widely scattered ports as Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca, Shanghai, New Orleans."[95] It is significant that Williams' quintessential city of cities, is like its sources, a port city. For all of

Williams' people are the fugitive kind, driven from some rural garden; they are all transient, like Christ, the archetypal love-wanderer of the Western world; they are unhappy in their displacement, in their dispossession (Val Xavier's word) and they are unhappy in any static settlement: they feel trapped, claustrophobic, until like Gewinner Pearce they—in some less absurdist, or perhaps more absurd fashion—blow up their particular Project and take off in a space ship.

All of the Williams people have fallen in love with long distance, at least metaphorically, for none of them is content where he is. Place in Williams is, rather, most often the Calvinistic concept of the Pilgrim road: this is both basic cartography and basic metaphor. He achieves thereby the ultimate esthetic freedom, for he has created the non-place that is every place: parsonages (place of spiritual journeys), movie theaters (places of narcotizing escape), hotels and rooming houses (way stations of literal travelers).

His wanderers coalesce in Kilroy and Val Xavier. While the former is a kind of Everyman, Val Xavier (savior) is a well identified Christ-figure who as wanderer is externally a rough customer but internally is a sensitive esthete about to finish his first book. In him Tennessee Williams characterizes the same hopelessness, the same dispossession of the creative mind in this country that Emerson had chronicled in *The American Scholar* in 1937. Yet the esthete is a Williams' subtlety that his rough customers most often mask. As much as Broadway audiences love Williams' musky glorification of young men's muscles which can chop down the literal wilderness to make the city or the woman, and as much as Williams himself (who confesses much of what he writes he writes as personal exorcism and therapy) admires the fighting Oliver Winemillers, the Dionysian John Buchanans, the sweaty Stanley Kowalskis, he is on quite another level more concerned with esthetic muscles. For he sees in esthetics the ultimate axe to destroy the wilderness, the ultimate way to hack the alienated jungle into a manicured mode of communication whose blossom, love, surpasses every locateable garden.

Eden's Garden is the archetypal happy home of mankind. Driven out and made fugitive, its occupants were cursed to wander in pain and toil, their security of home dissovled into a vast alienation. The things they had named no longer responded to the names they had been given. It is precisely this problem of place, this concept of home that troubles the Williams people. For them there is no shelter. Amanda tries desperately to establish a home for Laura; she knows that a home is the security of love and she knows how fragile love can be. She can almost define home in Sissy Goforth's terms as a place where someone will "mean God to you." Chance returns to his birthplace of St. Cloud to find his home dissolved around him; the Princess he has in tow (significantly named Kosmonopolis, Beautiful City) confesses to her own flight, her own "interminable retreat from the city of flames" into the "endless, withering country in which" she "wandered like a lost nomad."[96] Baby Doll, Williams' Chaucerian bard, is the most infantile of his adults; she defines her security within a crib. Vacarro with his pathetic phallus, the whip of the quasi-primitive, joins her there to enter the world, both of them thumb in mouth, to set up their own little society-of-sorts, their own little city, which ends with the two of them up a literal tree whose shadow from Eden indicates what route their cuckolding little society has traveled.

In his essential play, *Camino Real*, Williams matures all the places of all his wanderers. All the transients in *Iguana's* Costa Verde Hotel, all the refugees of the *Fräulein's* Southern-most rooming house, the traveling Venables, Tom Wingfield and Christopher Flanders, all must agree

with *Camino's* displaced Marguerite; she recognizes that it is the basic evanescence of the human condition that makes any

> perch...we hold...unstable! We're threatened with eviction, for this is a port of entry and departure, there are no permanent guests! And where else have we to go when we leave here? Bide-a-While? "Ritz Men Only"?...We stretch out hands to each other in the dark that we can't escape from—we huddle together for some dim—communal comfort—and that's what passes for love on this terminal stretch of the road that used to be royal.[97]

From all the town and semi-cities that did not dispel the primitive dark there is only one possible place of refuge. Williams makes it the sanctuary of the mood; but even at its best the moon provides only an ambivalent security of place, perhaps because it was after the setting of the moon (the traditional love symbol), at dawn, that the Adam and Eve of the myth were driven from the archetypal security of Eden. Williams' plays are so littered with moon references that after a while the proliferation becomes trite. This does not, however, devaluate the basic function of the moon as symbolic place in Williams' existential geography.

The moon is a place of light, not the harsh bone white light of the sun, but a softer absence of darkness, a more moderate light that blurs the harshness of even Williams' Gothic landscape. Williams sees the moon as the traditional female symbol (it is the moon, for instance, that restores the virginity of the Gypsy's daughter in *Camino Real)* hence more a symbol of the home left behind; for it is the masculine part of man that is the wanderer. This has wider consequences, particularly at Moon Lake—which is more than liquid moonlight poured over a Casino's garden. At first, for those who experience it, Moon Lake is the elemental garden, a place of love, of real joy, of real security, a place where water and soft darkness coalesce into a warm memory of every person's proto-time.

Moon Lake is a female womb of waters which all men regret having left, regretting most of all the violence with which they were expelled into cold wasteland of Dragon Country. The illustration is this: Blanche had been quite in love with her young husband until at Moon Lake she accused him of his homosexuality and he killed himself at the water's edge. Then, for her, there was no longer the liquid soft dark, for his death flashed across her reality a searchlight so blinding that around her "never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this—kitchen—candle."[98] It was then that Blanche began her wanderings, her "dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching."[99] Myra, fulfilled because she has conceived, dies violently, raving of Moon Lake where she a long time before had experienced love then been jilted by a boy named David Cutrere. In short, Moon Lake is a place where reality is tested and illusions destroyed.

If Williams gives the likes of Blanche and Myra any prescription it is to find oneself a place in society, a homeplace where "sometimes—there's God—so quickly."[100] The moon itself works only in a bittersweet way: it restores the virginity of the Gypsy's daughter only to the end that—in the values of Williams' economy—there is sure to be pain as well as joy in any physical encounter. Just so had all the joys Williams' women experienced at the Lake turned to sorrow.

The Princess Kosmonopolis, her youth and fertility gone, talks of her retirement:

> RETIRED! Where to? To What? To that dead planet the moon....There's nowhere else to retire to....So I retired to the moon, but the atmosphere of the moon doesn't have any oxygen in it. I began to feel breathless, in that withered, withering country....[101]

As the princess senses the failure of the moon as place of refuge, so does Carol Cutrere in *Orpheus Descending* note the failure of the rural area ("This country used to be wild, the men and women were wild and there was a wild sort of sweetness in their hearts..., but now it's sick and neon..."[102]), just as Val in the same play articulates the failures of the cities ("I went to New Orleans....It didn't take long for me to learn the score....I learned that I had something to sell besides snake-skins....I was corrupted."[103]) It is no wonder that all of Williams' Kilroys yearn to catch the next flight of the Fugitivo, the plane that will fly them to a new place.

But in truly neo-romantic disillusion, Williams counsels that flight and wandering do no good:

> Val: Myra, you know the earth turns.
> Myra: Yes.
> Val: It's turning that way. East. And if a man turned west, no matter how fast, he'd still be going the other way, really, because the earth turns so must faster. It's no use to struggle, to try to move against it. You go the way the earth pulls you whether you want to or not.[104]

Thus heartily is Williams' metaphysical determinism intimately rooted in his sense of place. The earth is a place as inescapable as the archetypal ruined garden and the expelling womb. These are places a man comes from; he cannot return to them. The wise realize the human condition of being trapped in claustrophobic space and they repeat stoically with Quixote the message of *Camino Real*: "Don't! Pity! Your! Self!"[105] It is only the foolish who do not understand there is not going back to the Moon, the Lake, the Garden, or the womb.

Amanda, in a sense, participates in both this foolishness and this wisdom: Go then!" she curses Tom at her play's end, "Then go to the moon—you selfish dreamer."[106] Tom, the cities sweeping by him like dead leaves, has only one answer! "I didn't go to the moon, I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places."

This statement truly focusses the basic relativities of the human condition; for man's problems while very often perceived as spatial are wider. Matters of space are subject like man himself to a more generic, more inevitable evanescence, time. "He who runs against time, "Samuel Johnson wrote, "runs against an enemy who suffers no casualties." Once, therefore, that Williams' esthetic of place is established, it becomes like everything else a chronometrable subject; it is, in short, not only very often impossible to return to Moon Lake, in Williams' economy, it is always chronometrically too late to return.

The world then is an existentially condemned property and it is evanescence that has condemned it. Place, up to a point, is commandable; time is not, except in art, where particularly for the romantic the esthetic can freeze for better examination the change that is generally accepted as a good. *Orpheus Descending* illustrates Williams' poetic use of place, the stage set, to suggest the

problem of evanescence:

> The hell into which Orpheus descends is a dreary dry-goods store in a small Southern Town. It is, of course, an image of the ordinary life, sterile and commercial, which offers us but "dry goods" at best; a life which is, in fact, a hell, populated by the shades of the doomed, presided over by a dying and vengeful proprietor from his sickroom upstairs.
>
> Yet partly seen through a wide arched door is a "shadowy and poetic" confectionary hung with colored lanterns. Closed at present, it is being redecorated by the proprietor's wife, in imitation of her father's ruined wine garden [that had been at Moon Lake]. This is a typical Williams image of the poetry of life; contrived out of memories of the past, it is a kind of [restored] Eden, offering "sweets" not dry goods, color instead of drabness.[107]

Naturally Myra, the wife, fails in her attempt to recover her Moon Lake Eden; but through her, Williams documents man's attempt at remodeling and renaming place as a way to go back through evanescence to recover the Edenic time.

In a very Keatsian attitude toward the art object, Williams wrote a much-reprinted essay entitled "The Timeless World of a Play."[108] Needless to say, his attitude toward time in art differs from his characters' attitudes toward evanescence in their own lives. Williams is probably more concerned with this latter problem which is theirs and his and everybody's, but he nevertheless has ventured—somewhat embarrassingly for the reader—into a less intuitive examination of time in art.

In a drama, Williams feels, it is "the *arrest of time* which has taken place in a complete work of art that gives to certain plays their feeling of depth and significance." He discusses, not one of his own plays, but as case in point Miller's *Death of a Salesman.* "Contemplation is something that exists outside of time, and so is the tragic sense." Therefore it is because of time, because time is money, that Howard Wagner looks at this wristwatch and tries to push Willie without a hearing from his office. Williams contends that if wristwatches did not exist, Willie would be granted an opportunity to receive compassion. It is precisely because the audience—who, one supposes, cut someone short in order to make it to the theater on time—has no wristwatch involved in Willie's problem, that they are able to *see* Willie's problem without the urgent complication of evanescence cutting their interview short. "Facing a person," Williams contends, "is *not* the best way to *see* him!"

He adds that "the diminishing influence of life's destroyer, time, must be somehow worked into the context of [the]...play....In a play, time is arrested in the sense of being confined." Through a kind of static freezing that works as well on a play as on a Grecian urn, "events are made to remain *events*, rather than being reduced so quickly to mere occurrences" as happens in the disconnected moments of everyday evanescence.

> If the world of a play did not offer us this occasion to view its characters under that special condition of a *world without time*, then, indeed, the characters and occurrences of drama would become equally pointless, equally trivial, as corresponding meetings and happenings in life.

This is his esthetic of art (if that is not redundant) and such an esthetic he finds equally helpful on a personal level of existence:

> The great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power...to live...as if he, too, like a character in a play, were immured against the corrupting rush of time. Snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting is the greatest magic trick of human existence. As far as we know, as far as there exists any kind of empiric evidence, there is no way to beat the game of *being* against *non-being*, in which non-being is the predestined victor on realistic levels.

It is interesting to American romantic thought that in this essay Williams uses examples of sculpture's visual lines, painting, and photography, the while he emphasizes, even to the strength of italics, the need for transcending time to *see*; for this use of the visual as transcendent leap to freedom is characteristically Emersonian. In *Nature* Emerson asked men to go beyond the relativities of time and space.[109] to establish an existential freedom that would strip time of its illusion and enable men to look at the world with new eyes.[110] Williams' use of the Emersonian visual is at best probably only coincidental (in the radical sense of that term) since both partake of the same general romantic sensibility. Their personal problems of expression are, however, mutually inverse. Emerson wished to be a poet, but succeeded best as essayist; Williams succeeds in the wide poetry of drama far better than he does as analytical essayist. Emerson was more the integrated philosopher; Williams the more intuitive dramatist whose analyses of basic problems are more satisfactory in dramatic form than in either his prose essays or short fiction.

Jacob Adler, for instance, feels that Williams (as well as Lillian Hellman) stands for falls as a dramatist rather than as a purveyor of folklore and cultural history after the manner of Paul Green. He cites, however, *Summer and Smoke* to show how Williams transcends a confinement of place and how he manipulates his esthetic of time to achieve, beyond either of these particularizations, "an allegory both of the South and of all mankind," Adler declares that the boy and girl of *Summer and Smoke* could be from any small American town. The Fourth of July Celebration appears where a pure local colorist would have used a Southern Memorial Day; yet the play because it is about America and about mankind, is by sheer inclusion also about the American South.

> This story is unmistakably an allegory of body and soul....The pastness of the play concerns it both as play and as allegory....The pastness makes Alma [and her prudery] more [readily] believable....To concentrate...on the allegory [Williams]...had to gain audience acceptance of Alma by a minimum of means....Williams had to choose his past with care. Give an audience the antebellum South, or the Civil War South, or the Restoration South, and it will expect all the elaborate apparatus, part real, part mythical, with which it has become familiar. But the South of the turn of the century? And, moreover, a middle-class South, neither aristocratic nor poor white nor Negro? A forgotten world, from which all needless detail can be stripped away; an island, lost in space and time, which is what allegory seems to require[111]....Williams' allegory is an allegory both of the South and of all mankind. It is...not only timely...but timeless; and the timelessness...fits poorly with the actuality of the now....*Our Town* achieves it through pastness plus fantasy; Williams achieves it through pastness plus allegory. The statue of Eternity may brood over the past, and by implication over the present; for to brood over the present would be less believable. Hence the use of the

past helps Williams in various ways: it assists belief; it helps strip away the details useful to realism but detrimental to allegory; and it directly assists the allegory, both Southern and universal.[112]

Extending out from an allegorical use of time in *Summer and Smoke* is Williams' temporal allegory of existence. T. S. Eliot, for instance, found the wasteland redeemable by incarnational time (although he felt that mankind had not yet accepted its redemption, thus continuing the waste). Williams, however, runs his clocks on eschatological time, on Old Testament time, the wrathful time of the wasteland. Such time if existence for Williams is primitive time, which surfaces out of the dark past into the modern consciousness. *Camino*'s Gypsy asks Kilroy: "Date of birth and place of that disaster?" She adds, "Baby, your luck ran out the day you were born."[113] On telling Sebastian's story, Catharine in *Suddenly Last Summer* says, "I think it started the day he was born....I DIDN'T invent it. I know it's a hideous story but it's a true story of our time and the world we live in."[114]

After experiencing the Lords of Life, Emerson, himself traversing the neo-romantic route, also became eschatological: Everyday is doomsday, he summarized. Williams' eschatology is in his own way highly Calvinistic. Calvin preferred eternity to time, minimally recognizing that regeneration may only occur in time. *Camino*'s Byron calvinistically makes his grand exit shouting "*Make Voyages*! *Attempt them*!—there's nothing else."[115] Far less than Eliot does Williams extend the incarnational redemption; Williams' regeneration is limited like Calvin's but in a different way: Williams sees, not Christ redeeming selected individuals, but individuals regenerated by an encounter with another human who can mean God to them. Sissy Goforth, for instance, is so busy "working against time" on her "timely" book of memoirs which is to "rank with and possibly even outrank the great Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*" that she misses her dying opportunity to have Christopher Flanders bring God to her. Thus she misses her incarnational regeneration and loses her bout to eschatological time, dying in her bedroom which, as she says, "is full of historical treasures, including myself!"[116]

For Williams the bed is nearly always a bier. Nowhere is this more essentially demonstrated than in *Sweet Bird of Youth* whose entire first and third acts occur in a bedroom setting dominated by the outsized property of a great bed. If in Eliot time is philosophically functional, in Williams time's main function is as base for character motivation by neurosis. This is particularly true of Williams' bedroom athletes who see diminishing sexual returns as time's sign of advancing age. The bed is the bier of their youth.

Williams' exposé of time is strong throughout his work, but is nowhere more summary than in the thematic minuet of *Sweet Bird*'s Chance Wayne and Alexandra del Lago. Chance's "ravaged young face" is, at the play's opening, immediately confronted by his hometown, which no longer wants him. Alexandra, meanwhile, rises from the huge bed of their travelers' hotel room. She is dying for oxygen and for the pills and vodka that make her forget. "Can you control your memory like that?" Chance asks. She answers, "I've had to learn to."[117] They continue to dance, the feinting-then-aggressive movements of becoming acquainted. She asks him if he is young and what time it is; he answers,

My watch is in hock somewhere. Why don't you look at yours?

Princess: Where's mine?
Chance: It's stopped, at five past seven.
Princess: Surely it's later than that....(355)

And then she recalls "the goddam end of my life" that only drugs and liquor and sex can blot out. She begins one of the long speeches characteristic of this play, a not-young refrain, bewailing that her comeback (an attempt to regain the former time) had failed because "the legend of Alexandra del Lago couldn't be separated from an appearance of your."(361) She screams at the aging Change: "BEAUTY! Say it! What you had was beauty! I had it! I say it with pride, no matter how sad, being gone now."(335) She throws his memory of what-once-was with his girl Heavenly back into his face, cynically asking if Heavenly was "Something permanent in a world of change?"(378) Chance becomes monstrous in return; he lowers accusingly at Alexandra's cynicism: "I understand. Time does it. Hardens people. Time and the world that you've lived in."(381)

Then like supporting dancers after the principals' vicious pas de deux the minor characters come into Williams' focus which remains thematically based on evanescence. There is high irony in the Youth for Tom Finley Clubs, for Finley by his mistress' admission is "too old to cut the mustard" and as his daughter Heavenly, whom he insists on dressing in virginal white points out: "Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean...." The abortion and hysterectomy her father forced her to have she claims "cut the youth out of my body, made me an old childless woman. Dry, cold, empty, like an old woman."(396,399) Her cry is very unlike the beginning of her sexual love with Chance when she was a fruitful fifteen and he was seventeen and he cried in her arms for the "youth, that would go."(407) Finley's mistress, Lucy, confirms this prediction. She sends splinters under Chance's fingernails in pointing out that he is balding and older. Chance counters that he is about to star in a film.

Bud: What is the name of this picture?
Chance: ...Name of it? "Youth!"
Bud: Just "Youth?"
Chance: Isn't that great title for a picture introducing young talent? (421)

No one believes him and he becomes so busy in fighting the ravages of eschatological time, he misses his chance (an irony perhaps) at the incarnational; for Alexandra comes to him, after waiting forever, to tell him of the wonderful thing: she loves him and brings her love to him. She wants to redeem him, regenerate him, take him out of the time of his terror (368) because he is lost in the eschatological place, "lost in the beanstalk country, the ogre's country at the top of the beanstalk the country of the flesh-hungry, blood-thirsty ogre."(426) It is significant that she comes to him on Easter Sunday, the day the incarnational time is proven, the day when proof of regeneration is given. But Chance does not allow Alexandra to bring any New Testament love to him, does not allow her to mean God to him, does not allow the incarnational time to break through the terror of his eschatological dementia. As a result, he not only remains the monster Alexandra had named him, but he also returns her to the eschatological monster shape. Frustrated and scorned she screams at

him:

> I came up alone, as always. I climbed back alone up the beanstalk to the ogre's country where I live, now, alone. Chance, you've gone past something you couldn't afford to go past; your time, your youth, you've passed it. It's all you had, and you've had it.(447)

She equates him with Franz Albertzart, the gigolo who was old before his time because he missed his chance for love. "You were crowned with laurel in the beginning," she shay, "your gold hair was wreathed with laurel, but the gold is thinning and the laurel has withered. Fact it—pitiful monster."(448) Because he has failed to respond to her, because his rot from the wasteland would not respond, would not become regenerate and incarnate at her touch, she fails too. "Princess," Chance admits, "the age of some people can only be calculated by the level of—level of—rot in them. And by that account I'm ancient."(450) Since both fail to achieve that incarnational time of love, both remain doomed by the relentless eschatological clock. Chance is to be castrated by his townspeople; Alexandra is to be castrated by the menopause of time. Their beds thereby become places of meaningless encounter, unfertile biers of lost time. Chance can only turn to the audience, "rising and advancing to the forestage," as the castrators close in on him: "I don't ask for your pity....Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all."(452)

Time is the great eroder; it creates fading women and fading virility. For Williams the problem of evanescence is bound up in the duplicity of pastness; for the "past...is impossible to recapture but also inescapable."[118] Amanda is *Glass Menagerie* has outlived the social time of her Southernmost Cherry Orchard. "In the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely! I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me."[119] More widely the erosion is of time versus the Life Force. Not only are all of Williams' golden young seed-bearers struck down, but so also is a raging life force like Big Daddy. He stands foursquare against time's erosion, but is nevertheless existentially entrapped by time; for time's duplicity adds to mankind's basic paranoia: the fullness of time ages, but the lack of time is life's extinction. Williams' mankind lives like Baby Doll under the aegis of the Pay as You Go Furniture Company with all the terrible fear of Val Xavier's ultimate dispossession even if the payments are made.

The essence of evanescence, of change and time, is insecurity.

> 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 fact it or not....Such things happen to people, all people, ne exceptions, the short time limit runs out, it runs out on them and leaves them high and dry.[120]

Amanda says to Tom: "You are the only young man I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret...."[121] This paranoiac unadjustment to evanescence is problem internal to his view of American society. His apologia, his encompassing esthetic, for this equation is that

> ...the nervous system of any age or nation is its creative workers, its artists. And if that nervous system is profoundly disturbed by its environment, the work it produces will inescapably reflect the disturbance....Deny the art of our time its only spring, which is the true expression of its passionately personal problems and their purification through work [how Puritan!], and you will be left with a soul of such aridity that not even a cactus plant could flower upon it.[122]

He assures a view of this equation under the perspective of esthetic objectivity; for in his theory of esthetics, "a convention of the play is existence outside of time in a place of no special locality." This achievement of non-place and non-time allows the audience in a perspective of non-involvement on spatial and temporal levels to see the events and the characters disconnected from the evanescent rush of their normally perceived disparate moments of reality. Williams, like Keats, thinks that art allows people to attain a view that transcends the clock which is in every room where people live.

Thus not only do *Summer and Smoke* and *Eccentricities* take place before the fountain of Eternity, but so in a thematic sense do all of Williams' plays; for his constant tragic motif is that for those who prefer the past or who do not adjust to the demands of evanescence, real life is disastrous. The stone statue of Eternity (Williams' symbol of the art object that freezes evanescence for inspection) is the constant reminder that time is the gauge of everyman's existential reality; and illusion that man's existential is not threatened with impermanence leads simply to a paranoiac denial not only of love that could transcend at least psychically and emotionally the evanescence, but also of death, the one undeniable reality that proves the very insatiable existence of the voracious evanescence.

CHAPTER III

WILLIAMS' ART THEME OF POESIS, POET, AND POEM: SOME UNITS OF HIS IMAGERY

> "Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them" It can, in short, serve as the most active and effective communicator among men.[123]

This statement of Tolstoy, a common assumption of art criticism since ancient Greece, is penetratingly true of the Williams esthetic whose purpose of aft and of existence is to find the signals which will end the impersonal isolation of individual from individual. Williams agrees with Tolstoy that

> ...a real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freezing of...personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art.[124]

It is to this end of community that Williams has directed his *poesis*, his ordering and manipulating of reality by symbol; his view of the *poet's* qualifications and duties; and his theory of *poema*, the technical composition of the poem itself.

As W. J. Bates maintains, the organic philosophy in art is usually characterized by some kind of transcendentalism which can be either an incomprehensible reality beyond experience or, as is the case of Williams' organic poesis, simply the human mind working in a way which "transcends" the artist's personal experience by imposing on his moment of personal lyricism a certain order which makes his experience communicable to others.[125] Thus the artist necessarily "transcends" the disconnections of a literal view of life; he manipulates instead the communally suggestive and evocative symbols of metaphor. Aristotle complements that "the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor...; it is the mark of genius—for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances."[126] Williams' own esthetic demands that the literal "facing [of] a person is *not* the best wasy to *see* him!"[127] It is precisely this victory of the metaphorical that creates the communicating artist out of the isolated individual.

Literal poesis is as impossible as it would be unintellible, for each individual's differentiated existential precludes any one-to-one correlation. It is necessary, therefore, that the communicating artist's ordering of his personal reality be done on a ratio of one-to-two; his must be a poesis of metaphor, for the point of cummunity between artist and receiver must be a point that is not only within both but also with-out both. Williams finds this place of urbane poesis-communication to be the stage. In his case, however, the poesis of the modern drama has become "interpenetrated with

poetry. And as a result of [his] imaginative techniques, a poetry of the [modern] theatre...[has come] into being."[128] Tennessee Williams is, if not completely distinguished as a dramatic maker, at least highly distinguishable as a poet of the drama; for in his ordering of reality he often superadds a lyric component which recalls that "the drama...is a concentrated form and a highly selective art...aspiring inherently to the state of poetry."[129] The shade of difference is immediately apparent in the comparison of Williams' plays with their earlier blocking versions as short stories. Whether it be "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" into *The Glass Menagerie*, "Three Players of a Summer Game" into *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, "Man Bring This Up Road" into *Milk Train*, or most recently "Kingdom of Earth" into *Kingdom of Earth*, the metamorphosis of Williams' almost execrable prose into a poetry of dialogue and drama is nothing short of proof that his poetry is no mere decoration but is esthetic essence of his poesis.

Williams has, for instance, transcended his literalist's obfuscating attachment to the closely autobiographical characters of *Menagerie*; he has achieved the metaphoric poesis which detaches him enough to locate them beyond his own experience in an ordered time, place, and necessity.[130] In addition, he is able to integrate into modern theatre more than this minimally classical poesis. He gives the theatre *poema*; for as he is subjective writer and realist, he is also dramatist and poet. This he does at no small expense to himself; for personally to be born as an artist he had to survive the tension between the ethic and his America's Calvinist background and the esthetic of his heart's desire. For the Calvinist, God's beauty had been enough; for the esthetic mind, however, God is no sufficiency. The esthetic in one way or another subsumes every theology, for there is no altar that cannot use some polishing.

As a result of surviving the liberating battle—though his war between the ethic and the esthetic drags sporadically on, Williams has established a theory of art which he pursues in his prefaces, articles, and interviews. This prose explanation of the relationship of his art to life is, when analytical, most often less perceptive than his more intuitive theory made through indirection by his plays' characters, many of whom are themselves artists. Their remarks not only distill Williams' esthetics, but give evidence in his work of a constant and basic art theme.

The Williams of the prefaces, articles, and interviews sees art as something wild:

> ...art is a kind of anarchy, and the theatre is a province of art....Art is...anarchy in juxtaposition with organized society. It runs counter to the sort of orderliness on which organized society apparently must be based. It is a benevolent anarchy: it must be that and if it is true art, it is. It is benevolent in the sense of constructing something which is missing, and what it constructs may be merely criticism of things as they exist.[131]

He uses the metaphor of the oyster and the pearl to show the social service of art, likening creative work to the grain of sand which must irritate society within society's shell.[132] or cage, as he called it in *Camino*'s Foreword; for "the nervous system of any age is its creative workers, its artist."[133] He reinforces the disturbing place of poesis in society in his Preface to *Orpheus* when he describes Val Xavier, the artist of that play, as "a wild-spirited boy who wanders into a conventional community of the South and creates the commotion of a fox in a chicken coop." This fox image is used often to delineate the sensitive soul who disturbs an otherwise insensitive environment. This is even so in

the highly derivative *You Touched Me* in which the charity boy Hadrian is constantly associated with the fox.[134]

This irritating vocation of art Williams further elaborates in *Cat*'s Preface, "Person-to-Person": the poesis, he says, must attract more than observers. It must attract "participants in the performance."[135] To insure this the artist must elaborate upon the abstract, but real, problems of life by presenting the particulars of time, place and necessity; "for the particular is sometimes as much as we know of the abstract."[136] The ordered poesis of art, in his case, writing, Williams sees "as something more organic than words, something closer to being and action."

Part of the organicism which Williams obviously claims for himself is the transcendence by the art object of space and time. Art makes personal evanescence meaningless. It gives the viewer of the object of a frozen moment in which to reflect upon his own rushing, evanescent existence. Art, Williams contends, can supply "the crying, almost screaming, need of a great world-wide human effort to know ourselves and each other a great deal better."[137] Exposing the corruption of self-ignorance is, therefore, in Williams' mind the function of his art; for corruption, he admits, he has "involuntarily chosen as the basic allegorical theme of...[his] plays as a whole."[138] Thus Williams, reading the problems of the world in a way personally reflective of his own personal existential, sees his art as a Tolstoian service occupation.

His personal creed of organic art explains much about Williams, particularly why his prose and poems generally fall so far short of his poetry of the theatre. His heart is only in the latter; for in the former, as in the reading version of a play, he feels that only the words on paper exist. While such posture is true for few but Williams, it is for him true enough to allow him to say of his particular art:

> In my dissident opinion, a play in a book is only the shadow of a play and not even a clear shadow of it....The color, the grace and levitation, the structural pattern in motion, the quick interplay of live beings, suspended like fitful lightning in a cloud, these things are the play, not words on paper, nor thoughts and ideas of an author, those shabby things snatched off basement counters at Gimbel's.[139]

The implications of this, raised out of Shaw, are fairly precise:

> My own creed as a playwright is fairly close to that expressed by the painter in Shaw's play *The Doctor's Dilemma*: "I believe in Michelangelo, Velasques and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting and the message of art that has made these hands blessed. Amen."
>
> How much art his hands were blessed with or how much mine are, I don't know, but that art [poesis] is a blessing is certain and that it contains its message is also certain, and I feel, as the painter did, that the message lies in those abstract beauties of form and color and line, to which I would add light and motion.[140]
>
> Thus for dramatist Williams the poesis is an ordering of reality that is more real than the

realists'. I his Preface to *Glass Menagerie* he wrote that:

> ...unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not...trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are....Truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.[141]

Thus does Williams lay claim to be a metaphorical; for art for him is a matter of mind expansion, a freeing from the literal's simplistic confusion. He envisions "a new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted [presentational or literal] theatre of realistic conventions."[142] And since metaphorical transformation begins within the personal,

> ...the playwright is concerned with the objectification of subjective vision, with its transformation into concrete symbols....Like the objective expressionists, the playwright regards art as one of the great life forms, as an instrument of reconciliation no less important than religion, philosophy, politics, or human love.[143]

The esthetic, in fact, becomes more important than the latter values simply because Williams makes it so by emphasizing throughout his works the salvific action of the art theme. The poet for Williams is *guru*, the one who organizes poesis into a lyric *poema* sympathetic to the human condition. In *Cat*'s Preface, "Person-to-Person," he said: "Personal lyricism is the outcry of prisoner to prisoner from the cell in solitary where each is confined for the duration of his life." This "personal lyricism" to be meaningful, that is, truly communicative, must rise "above the singular to the plural concern, from personal to general import."[144] This implies that the vision of the poet-guru is a giving, self-consuming act of sacrifice. In *Night of the Iguana*, Nonno receives the ultimate moment of poetic vision and in communicating his moment of personal lyricism dies with his completed art object on his lips; but personally (literally) dead or not Nonno has reached out beyond his existential confinement through his art which communicates to the frightened Hannah the consoling word of *courage*. and *courage* is the right word for a poet who in the tension of maintaining the salvific esthetic versus the literalists' eschatology must pay the violent price of the sensitive person in a generally insensitive society.

To chronicle such alienation the poet must find suitable metaphor. In Williams' case the metaphors aptly specify the hostilities between the creative individual and the urban corporate personality: in short, it is constantly art versus business, the creator versus the merchant. And Williams obviously sees the angels' side as the poets'; for while he sees an animality in everyone, there are animals and there are animals. In his poem of soul-body tension entitled "The Comforter and the Betrayer," the animal in man is not only the betrayer of the whole personality into blackness, it is also the only comfort that uncourageous man has in facing "each day's / bland reassurance of a simple existence."[145] Williams once again opts for neither extreme. Consequently his animals are

divisible: the sensitive people are associated with sweet birds, the never-landing *rondini* of *Roman Spring* and *Orpheus*; they are associated with glass animals which do not defecate, or with elusive gadfly foxes which draw their society along by their Lawrentian bootstraps—as in the poem Cried the Fox."

The destroyers, merchants like Jabe Torrance, Big Daddy, Boss Finley, and salesman Kowalski, are associated with a baser animal imagery of apes, bulls, and ravaging lions. This leads directly to the constant Williams fare of eating imagery whose coalescence into a major unit of imagery proves that although the nature of God may be an open question, Mammon is most definitely a beast of a monster.

The result of these opposing forces coming into dentine tension is Williams' Hospital Imagery of Violence. The sensitive confront the mercantile with clinical results: Laura vomits at the Rubicam Business College; Blanche is raped by her apish salesman brother-in-law; Alma is rejected by a playboy doctor and prostitutes herself with traveling salesmen; Myra, Lady, Val Xavier, and the Wop from Mood Lake are shot or burned to death by a drygoods owner; Chance and Heavenly are both castrated by a two-bit political boss; Catharine Holly is to be lobotomized, and Kilroy's corpse goes to an impersonal laboratory. Williams chronicles that by violence the Edenic garden was remodeled to be only a low-rent dormitory for cripples.[146] He feels that the chance gained for America's Eden, was lost in fact, in a Faustian business deal with some mercantile devil.[147] If he had been outraged at the dichotomies of Puritan Calvinism, he is even more angry at that Calvinism's righteous evolution to a Yankee mercantilism which slights the graver questions of the self. His confusedly sensitive Brick sums up the hatred of materialistic mores under the epithet of *mendacity*.

In Williams' economy of art in life, therefore, these questions which can be pursued only with courage, are the province of the poet. Consequently Williams' intuitive and scattered definitions of a poet can be collected to clarifying advantage. In general, if the poet's duty is to retrieve from the eschatological wreckage of Eden some creative incarnational glimmer, it is significant that Williams' most dramatic portrait of a poet (*Suddenly*'s Sebastian who has not visible life on stage) lives in "a well-groomed jungle....[where] nothing was accidental, everything was planned."[148] Sebastian, within the corporate city buys retrieval of a garden part of Eden; his mother, not really comprehending the truth she speaks, says:

> His life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and—vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet, I mean you can't separate the, I mean—well, for instance, a salesman's work is one thing and his life is another....The same thing's true of —doctor, lawyer, merchant, *thief*!—But a poet's life is his work and his work is his life in a special sense....Poets are always clairvoyant![149]

By *clairvoyant* Mrs. Venable and Mr. Williams mean the same thing: the poet is a man who achieves the vision-expansion of metaphor. In addition, or perhaps because of this, "all poets look for God, all good poets do, and they have to look harder for Him than priests do since they don't have the help of such famous guide-books and well-organized expeditions as priests have with their scriptures and churches: which are all too often institutions of business that obfuscate the human, personal element under their own brand of mendacity.

> Mrs. Venable: All right! Well now I've said it, my son was looking for God. I mean for a clear image of Him.[150]

This for Williams is the poet's knightly quest: to find the ultimate image, the metaphor of the divine which can save the sensitive who have been wounded in the jungle-hospital of the mendacious world. But the poet, too often weakened by the cultural crippling done his humanity by his society, is often distracted and diffracted the most;[151] for in society's organized opposition to the individual, the poet because he is the individual par excellence is extremely vulnerable. Of Venable the poet, Williams says: "A poet's vocation...rests on something as thin and fine as the web of a spider....That's all that holds him *over*!—out of destruction....Few, very few are able to do it alone! Great help is needed!"[152]

Drawing obliquely from the inexhaustible theatre of the bible and looting various mythologies, Williams fills out his picture of a poet and more than a poet—that is, a poet who has succeeded by giving of himself to others—in *Milk Train's* Christopher Flanders. This poet breaks mercifully into the private property (a mercantile good) of Sissy Goforth; she ignores him as a human being while she contemplates the possibility of his bringing a lawsuit against her and her attacking dogs. The fact is that because Chris is a poet of life, a poet who no longer needs to *write* poetry, Sissy is confused. She misses what Williams fully intends as the complete vocation of the complete poet. After marrying three men for money and a poet for love, Sissy's eye—principally because she succeeded financially (to the detriment of her basic artistic sense)—mistrusts writers who don't write and painters who don't paint. Blackie, Sissy's secretary who has the name of a dog but is no dog, interrogates Chris about his mobiles and why he gives them away. "Some things," he answers, "aren't made to be sold."[153] Some things, he means to say, are to be given; it is for this reason that he climbs Sissy's mountain, reminiscent of her "sister Karen Stone's game of isolation, King of the Mountain.[154] It is for this reason he climbs the sensual goatpath as all Williams poet do; but unlike Sebastian he is not at all randy. His poetry, his message of the salvation which art in life contains, eludes her in her mercantile judgement of sex and money.

> Mrs. Goforth: Mr. Flanders, you have the distinction, the dubious distinction, of being the first man that wouldn't come into my bedroom when invited to enter....Man bring this up road, huh? [She has snatched up his book of poems.]....Your book of poems, your calling card? Y'must be running short of 'em. Here take it back!....I haven't read it but I can imagine the contents. *Facile sentiment*! To be good a poem's got to be tough and to write a good, tough poem you've got to cut your teeth on the marrow bone of this world. I think you're still cutting your milkteeth, Mr. Flanders.
>
> Chris: I know you better than you know me....You're nobody's fool, but you're a fool, Mr. Goforth, if you don't know that finally, sooner or later, you need somebody or something to mean God to you, even if it's a cow on the streets of Bombay, or carved rock on the Easter Islands, or—
>
> Mrs. Goforth: You came here to bring me *God*, did you?
>
> Chris: I didn't say God, I said someone or something to—
>
> Mrs Goforth: I heard what you said, you said *God*. My eyes are out of focus by not

> my ears! Well, *bring* Him, I'm ready to lay out a red carpet for Him, but how do you bring Him?...
>
> Chris: I've failed, I've disappointed some people in what they wanted or thought they wanted or thought they wanted from me, Mrs. Goforth, but sometimes, once in a while, I've given them what they needed even if they didn't know what it was. I brought it up the road to them....[155]

This bringing of salvation into focus through art, this bringing something up the road, giving an existential value to the traditional trek across the Calvinistic journey imagery, is the true vocation of the guru-poet. Yet the poet is himself not completely independent; Mrs. Venable says of her relation to her son:

> When he was frightened..., I'd reach across the table and touch his hands and say not a word, just look, and tough his hands with my hand until his hands stopped shaking and his eyes look out, not in [on his existential isolation], and in the morning, the poem would be continued. Continued until it was finished....I would say 'you *will*' and he *would*.[156]

If this kind of coming-together the mother and son birthed a poem every summer after incubating it together nine months, "the length of a pregnancy.[157] This creativity is analogous to Serafina's and Lady-Myra's celebration of their physical fertilization.

Iguana's Nonno is the Williams poet grown older, physically dependent in his creative independence. Like Sebastian who needed Violet's hand to gain the strength to write his annual poem of summer, Nonno needs Hannah, around whom time and sex are meaningless,[158] to write his first new poem in twenty years. Nonno, incarnationally involved in otherness, intends to write a poem of moral advice just as had Christopher Flanders in his verse adaptations of the writings of a Swami, a great Hindu teacher. This is the crucial difference between Nonno and Sebastian: Nonno's whole intent is to share his insightful poetry of life. Unlike the Old Man in Ionesco's *The Chairs*, he does this successfully. Sebastian's purpose of poetry is selfish; he prints it himself on an eighteenth-century handpress and circulates it only among his coterie. This is the kind of symptomatic flaw that causes his violent end; for when the act of eating, the metaphor of becoming one with another, is not the total commitment of communion, it can only be cannibalism.

Violet's whole intent is to build Sebastian's posthumous reputation. The thrust of the play focusses on her attempt to silence Catharine Holly; for Catharine, who wished to love and not use Sebastian, continually screams out the poet's lack of otherness. It was precisely this inability to transcend to any degree the existential isolation of the literalist that kept him from being a true poet in Williams' terms. Violet, despite her protestations[159] that Sebastian wanted posthumous recognition (recognition not communication), is doomed even in her own terms to failure, for she wishes to popularize a person whose very artistic selfishness devalued everything Violet herself had said a poet should be. This is the wrought irony around the falsely manicured garden of *Suddenly Last Summer*.

Because of his selfishness, Sebastian finds eschatological blackness in the isolated Encantadas' bird-turtle violence; meanwhile Nonno finds incarnational communication in his prayer-poem as the iguana, "one of God's creatures at the end of the rope...scramble[s] home safe and free."

Williams calls it "a little act of grace" at the hands of the business-man-returning-minister, Larry Shannon.[160] Generally it is Williams creative, incarnational people who are the fugitive kind: Hannah speaks for them all when at the end of *Iguana* she "pauses between the door and the wicker chair and speaks to herself and the sky....'Oh, God, can't we stop now? Finally? Please let us. It's so quiet here, now.'" But she knows that the next day Maxine the business woman will drive her farther down the road from the door of the Costa Verde establishment.

In Williams' exquisite eight-page vignette, "The Poet," the hero is truly a seeing guru. He is evangelist of the intangible esthetic, a Christ-figure who "stretching his wasted arms like the cross-bars of a ship...compelled [the children]...to understand the rapture of vision and how it would let a man break out of his body."[161] He tries desperately to free the children into gaining personality that transcends the governmental and corporate mercantile association, because, he says like Thoreau, "they were old enough to be conscripted into the service of states and organizations" and therefore were also old enough to sense "the presence of something outside the province of matter." But the children fail the poet; their bourgeois backgrounds overcome them. The lose their chance at poetic Vision.[162] Theirs is the choice of nearly all the Williams people as they function as symbols of Williams' art theme.

Versus the merchants are the Williams poets, the artists of various kinds with their associative characteristic imagery. Williams is of the same opinion as *Milk Train*'s Blackie; she says to Chris about Sissy:

> She inspected you through a pair of military fieldglasses before she had me take you to the pink villa with the—king-size bathtub, the pink silk sheets, and the cupids.
>
> Chris: Do they, uh—signify something?
>
> Blackie: Everything signifies something.[163]

This universal signification is Tennessee Williams' basic claim to be a metaphorical. In this case, Blackie, the "dark" woman, is sent procuring for Sissy whose glasses of vision allowed her only to see if the poet's body was usable enough, commercial enough in her terms to be worthy of her king-size pink possessions. Williams says:

> I can't deny that I use a lot of those things called symbols but being a self-defensive creature, I say that symbols are nothing but the natural speech of drama....A symbol in a play has only one legitimate purpose which is to say a thing more directly and simply and beautifully than it could be said in words. I hate writing that is a parade of images for the sake of images.[164]

Thus like the hero of "The Poet" the artist must be able to ferment something from any kind of organic matter, that is, be able to make transcendent poesis and universal poem out of the literalists' flatly perceived moments of perception.

Williams' female artists fall into two units of imagery, the *rubia y morena*, the light and the dark. Blanche du Bois, whose name means white woods, is epitome of the light, hysterical, sensitive women whom Williams associates with imagery units of whiteness, translucent glass, gentle music, and lyric animals. She is the lady of the camellias who love the poems a dead boy wrote. She is soul

sister of Hannah and the women with diaphanous names, Laura and Heavenly and Alma the nightingale of the Delta. These women stand, in Williams' world of American opposites, against the epitome of Williams' dark woman,[165] Serafina della Rose. Serafina, whose creativity is expressed in her auspicious pregnancy, has several dark sisters: the Italians, Land and Myra, the middle-European Fräulein;[166] in addition *Flora* (Sissy) Goforth receives the dark dog and garden imagery, calling herself Flora the Georgia swamp bitch. She is experiential sister of Karen Stone and Princess Kosmonopolis. In Williams' view all three darkened their white femininity through the business machinations of career. While the Princess—who married a dark Grecian name—takes her chance at retrieving her whiteness, her fertility, through the otherness of love, the unsaveable Karen Stone falls lower and lower to darker and darker Italian men. Only Catharine Holly seems midway between these extremes; she alone seem balanced as she relates to the venal Mrs. Venable what happened at Cabeza de Lobo (Head of the Wolf) even though Mrs. Venable, the wolflike business woman who has employed a business housekeeper named Foxhill, threatens Catharine with lobotomy at Lion's View Hospital. This is the same lion, one presumes, that threatens Sissy.

> Mrs. Goforth: ...I'll—wake up the next day...-face that angry old lion.
> Chris: Angry old—?
> Mrs. Goforth: —lion!
> Chris: The sun? You think it's angry?...
> Mrs. Goforth: It's just a big fire-ball that toughens the skin, including the skin of the heart.[167]

Chris offer her the lovely evenings to offset the leonine sun. He talks of the soothing Mediterranean dark whose only shine is from little lamps, the opposite of the sun, the little lamps that don't mean business, the little lamps that were all the brightness white Blanche once darkened could stand. Maggie the Cat, who howls because her darkly prowled nights are not negotiable enough, is the business woman supreme. Born a poor girl who read the *Commercial Appeal* every night,[168] she genuinely admires Big Daddy's business acumen; desperate to insure her inheritance ("You've got to be old *with* money."[169]), she lies and makes pure animal announcement at the play's end that she is indeed pregnant.

Williams' male artists likewise practice arts of many kinds: they are poets like Tom Wingfield whose image units of movie-fied distance can articulate only the poet's estrangement; they are abusers of poetry like *Iguana*'s Sebastian who uses art as a prop to make himself the perennial house guest that the *Milk Train*'s Sissy complains about; they are seemingly mad artists like the poet in "The Poet," the writer of a 780-page masterpiece in "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion"; they are would-be actors of youth like Chance who knows best the art of his body. He is brother to the statuesque youth, One Arm, who is brother to *Camino*'s sculptured, golden Kilroy. With these body artists Williams fairly shines with Whitmanesque sexual imagery.[170] In addition, there are artists of religion like Larry Shannon when he frees the iguana in and overture to Hannah, or artists of life like both Val Xaviers who merely try to resist the corruption of life both urban and rural. Or they are full-blooded poets like Nonno who dies giving and Chris who gives to the dying.

When these artists do not sell themselves short, in fact, when they do not sell themselves like the Fräulein's bullish Indian Joe or the male prostitute of "One Arm" and "The Interior of the

Pocket,"[171] they become bricks, like Big Daddy's son, tossed into the smooth-running machinery of mercantilism. By their mere creative incarnational existence they outrage businessmen like Jabe Torrance or men giving the business to the arts of science (John Buchanan), of politics (Boss Finley), or of human relations (Big Daddy, Braden Gewinner). They oppose, like *Suddenly*'s Doctor Sugar, the inroads of institutionalization, the wasteland of the personal at the expense of truth. Male and female artists alike are far removed from *Camino*'s Gypsy, the dark woman of business who frankly sells her daughter, are far removed from the ironically named Gutman, the merchant supreme on the *Camino*.

The clash of opposing poles, art versus business, truth versus mendacity, creators versus destroyers, continues the duality of tension that is basic to Williams, even to his units of imagery. On the one hand obsessed with moon and roses, on the other besieged by mendacious merchants in gardens of insectivorous plants and carnivorous animals, Williams has Shannon rise to defend the only positive truth playwright and character can be sure of: "Sir? Sir? The *pecuniary rewards* of a *poem* are *grossly inferior* to its *merits, always*!"[172] Williams constantly juxtaposes the two camps and nowhere does it better than in his *Suddenly* which is centered on the art theme: The existential failure of the man who merchandizes poetry of any kind. This play condenses more integrally perhaps than any of Williams' plays his basic units of imagery: the imagery of each pole and the violent imagery of those poles' confrontation.

The poet-sybarite is on constant junket with his castrating mother. The scene, however, is static. It is the violently colored garden of a Victorian Gothic home, itself in the Garden District of New Orleans. It is "inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of a savage nature" and all evocative of the ports visited by the poet. Sebastian "*dreaded*, abhorred!—false values that came from being publicly known, from fame, from personal exploitation." Yet wanting recognition, he left the press-agentry to his mother; he was too weak to accept every poet's price of communication, a bit of self-inconvenience. He wrote his poems in the summer—always a significant time for Williams—because the other nine months were that poem's germination, "the length of a pregnancy." Violet treats his poems with the reverence due a Host; she recalls that his most significant trip was to the Dragon Country, the Beanstalk Country, the dead moon country of the Encantadas. This was Melville's land of "extinct volcanos, looking much as the world at large might look—after a last conflagration."[173]

This conflagration of fire imagery is metaphor throughout Williams' work for fires more internal, for more emotional and existential smolders. *The Glass Menagerie*'s entire last scene of revelation is played by soft candlelight which is extinguished amidst impending sheets of lightning. The stage direction of *Eccentricities, Summer and Smoke,*and *Cat* all demand pyrotechnical displays. In *Summer and Smoke*, John strikes a match, holds it close to Alma and says that she had what he thought "was just a Puritanical ice that glittered like flame. But now I believe," he says, "it *was* flame, mistaken for ice."[174] In *Rose Tattoo* Serafina's husband was burned to death, then cremated; Serafina says: "A Man, when he burns, leaves only a handful of ashes."[175] She herself is consumed with sexual heat as are Lady of *Orpheus Descending* and Myra of *Battle of Angels* to whom Val decrees that a man can burn down a woman. It is inevitable irony that because he has burned down women that Val is literally burned to death by vigilantes' blowtorch.[176] Carol Cutrere and Cassandra Whiteside both burn with life fever as does Kilroy. Sometimes the result of the existential smolders

if the burning of an orchard at Mood Lake or a cotton gin in *Baby Doll*. Eloi in "Auto-Da-Fe" sees fire as soul-ful purification of sensual corruption; in *Camino Real* the burning of the poet Shelley's heart is diagnosed as "*pure*!—as a man's burning should be."[177] To this burning-heart image the poet Byron connects final commentary on what should be "a poet's vocation...to influence the heart....He ought to purify it and lift it above its ordinary level. For what is the [poet's] heart but a sort of...*instrument*!—that translates *noise* into *music*, chaos into—order." From on the other side of Sebastian, Byron admits: "That was my vocation once upon a time, before it was obscured by vulgar plaudits!"[178]

While Christopher the true poet consumes cool milk, the fevered Mrs. Goforth—not willing to go forth—screams: "All that work [that business], the pressure, was burning me up, it was literally burning me up like a house on fire." And the poet who knows well the price of the creative life answers: "Yes, we—all live in a house on fire, no fire department to call; no way out, just the upstairs window to look out of while the fire burns the house down with us trapped, locked in it."[179] Life is a death trap set on fire by the burning lion of the sun, the regular-as-business chronometer that burns out youth and talent.[180] The hot fire of Williams' sun nourishes the unedenic jungle of insectivorous plants and carnivorous animals; the fire cooks things to be eaten. "We were *going* to blond, blonds were next on the menu." Catharine says of Sebastian. "He was famished for blonds, he was fed up with the dark ones...famished for light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if there were—items on a menu.—'That one's delicious-looking, that one is appetizing.'"[181] Thus in an irony appropriate perhaps only to the gentility of symbols Sebastian runs from a restaurant to be eaten alive by dark, naked boys screaming the word for bread, *pan*, on a street burnt ash-white, under a sky of phallic bone picked carrion clean. This eating is the ultimate metaphor of hate in Tennessee Williams, for it is the use that opposes salvific love. Catharine, whose surname Holly recalls that New Testament incarnational time of Christmas, says: "I loved him, Sister! Why wouldn't he let me save him?...We all use each other and that's what we think of as love, and not being able to use each other is what's—hate."[182] Sebastian was all in white,[183] white as a Host about to be consumed by dark birdlike boys. The Blackness cannibalizes the Whiteness to reciprocate usage that should have been love. The light and shadow of a hearth fire become violent sacrificial pyre in Catharine's fevered, orgasmic vision which is "a true story of our time and the world we live in."[184] This is the time of lightning promised so early in Williams by the poet Tom Wingfield. It is true perhaps not only of the times but of Williams' own writing sensibility. Wingfield's "preoccupation with the artist's singularity or specialness" has evolved in the Williams' esthetic to the pitch of *Suddenly Last Summer* where the artist's singularity, his "sense of alienation [is] defensively exaggerated into exhibitionist defiance."[185]

Suddenly Last Summer is, therefore, most important to the basic imagery units of Tennessee Williams not only because of those units' coalescence, but also because of its enormously successful organic allusiveness which brings to maturity much of the somewhat awkward experimentation that Eddie Dowling expunged from the acting version of *The Glass Menagerie*. Concerning the period of the latter play, John Gassner has written:

> ...playwriting manifested itself chiefly in the manner in which playwrights resorted to flexible and expressive play structure and relied on supplementary theatrical elements, such

> as music, lighting, and stage design. Our writers continued to write imaginative drama, but they created a *poetry of theatre* rather than dramatic poetry.[186]

it is with this poetry of the theatre that Williams has had his greatest success. If he has, at least intuitively, theories of poesis and poet, then these can be complemented by his basic theory of poem. His theory of creativity he explained quite well in *Orpheus Descending*:

> Vee: ...Since I got into this painting, my whole outlook is different...
> Val: ...Before you started to paint, it didn't make sense.
> Vee: —What—what didn't?
> Val: Existence![187]

The purpose of the artist's work is to arrange the disconnected moments of reality in order to extract some meaning from existing. Therefore the theory of poem in Williams is a search for the form most reflective of his time. Needless to say, in Williams the base of poetry is the theatre. But just as the setting of *Suddenly* typically refracts the mature Williams' verbal image units, so also is his basic mode of composition the image-making eye of the motion picture camera. In her excellent study entitled *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams*, Esther Jackson writes that Williams "has subjected his lyric moment to process. In his theatre, the instant of vision has been re-created: its image has been enlarged and enhanced."[188] Miss Jackson then definitively investigates Williams' basic cinematographic technique of composition by montage in the representative "This Property Is Condemned." Like Joyce, O'Neill, Wilder, Giraudoux, and Cocteau,

> Williams uses his camera eye sensitively. With it he is able to arrest time, to focus upon the details of his vision, to emphasize elements of its structural composition, to vary his point of view, and to draw a wide variety of parallels.[189]

Williams uses the

> ...same general pattern of image-making in his longer works. Each of the plays represents an attempt to give exposition to poetic vision. Each play is composed like a poem: The dramatist spins out symbolic figures which are its lyric components. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is composed of eleven theatrical images. *Summer and Smoke* has a like number. *Camino Real* is divided into sixteen scenes. *Orpheus Descending* has nine. Some plays, such as *The Rose Tattoo, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Suddenly Last Summer,* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, do not appear at first glance to be composed of such poetic components. Beneath the apparently continuous flow of action, however, a similar structural design may be found. For Williams, the play is an ordered progression of concrete images, images which together give sensible shape to the lyric moment.[190]

Williams enlarged recently upon the distinction between a play in dramatic form and a dramatic poem. He said,

> When the leading drama critic of Copenhagen, Denmark, told me that *Rose Tattoo* was not a play, but was a dramatic poem, I didn't know quite how to take it. It's hard to be told you haven't written a play in dramatic form. However, seeing *Eccentricities of a Nightingale* last night [the premiere, at which this writer sat next to Mr. Williams], I felt that it was a dramatic poem. I really don't regard myself as much of a traditional poet. I don't write poetry consciously. But in *Eccentricities* I use a southern heroine who tends to speak in a lyrical style. I think you can respect is an artist's opinion of his own work. But I think it's an interesting evening of a special kind of theatre, the theatre of poetic sensibility.[191]

In the same interview Williams told Chicago drama critic Sidney Harris that he was just finishing his last long play.

> I don't feel I have to write long plays anymore. I can write short plays or occasionally I can write a short story....I like a short play, a play that is around eighty pages long. Why stretch a one-act play into three hours for commercial reasons?

He could almost have reiterated the art theme of his plays: why debit the esthetic for business purposes.

Thus does Williams handle the technical problems of poema. His cinematographic technique is complemented with an "enthusiasm for metaphor and symbolism [that] comes partially from modern psychology and partially from a regard for the French symbolist poets."[192] While thematically he is indebted in varying degrees to D. H. Lawrence, Strindberg, Proust, Chekhov, Pirandello, Lorca, Hart Crane, many Southern novelists, and dozens of others, Williams as technician has "seldom 'organically' incorporated" his literary tastes into his plays. Consequently when de does attempt literary grafting, "they most often sound like ventriloquists' tricks."[193] (Witness *You Touched Me*.) The fact is that in intuitive application of theories of poesis, poet, and poema, Williams is, in his expression of personal lyricism, for better or worse, his own man.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A THEORY OF ALIENATION METAPHOR: SEX AND VIOLENCE IN WILLIAMS

About her young husband, a "poet with Romanov blood in his veins," Mrs. Goforth dictates:

> I made my greatest mistake when I put a fast car in his hands....The Police Commissioner of Monaco personally came to ask me....To inst that he [the poet-husband] go with me in the Rolls with a chauffeur at the wheel, as a protection of his life and of the lives of others. --M. le Commissionaire, I said, for me there are no others.--I know, Madame, he said, but for the others there are others.[194]

Alienation differs from isolation in this that it implies a point of reference, implies a quality of otherness. It is from within personal existential isolation, from within his own solitary confinement that the individual looks out to see others. And while Val Xavier's statement that "We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life"[195] is basically true, it does not rule out the lesson of otherness that Williams' characters learn or do not learn in varying degrees.

Alienation is endemic to the American tradition: this country's alienation from mother Europe has been accomplished beyond the fondest hopes of *The American Scholar*; the alienation of South and North in Civil maelstrom continues today; this century has seen increase of tension between agrarian and rural sensibilities; besides these, there have always been male-female differences as well as the alienation of the sensitive versus the burger-merchant. At every turn and in every case, because of the isolation inherent in the human condition man looks out at the other and perceives the alien. The consequent Angst of incompletion drives him to various distractions[196] or compensation.

> We don't all live in the same world, you know, Mrs. Goforth. Oh, we all see the same things--sea, sun, sky, human faces and inhuman faces, but--they're different in *here*! [Touches his forehead.] And one person's sense of reality can be another person's sense of--well, of madness!--chaos!--and...when one person's sense of reality seems too--disturbingly different from another person's...he's--avoided! Not welcome.[197]

In Williams' plays this conflict of personal realities births various kinds of violent tensions; for everybody lives in an *oubliette* of isolation on the Gulf of Misunderstanding.[198] Recalling the Calvinistic importance of naming things as a means of showing dominance, one feels that Williams gives consummate emphasis to names whose value is existential identity.

> Kilroy: My nam's Kilroy. I'm here.
> Jacques: Mine is Casanova. I'm here, too.[199]

This existential exchange with emphasis on identity and presence is important to a writer who changed his own name[200] and whose characters either change theirs (Val Xavier,[201] Sissy (Flora)

Goforth) or intend to live under the directive of their given names: Alma's soul, Blanche's whiteness, Big Daddy's paternity, Heavenly's fallen grace. Life is not "Hello from Berth." It is rather "The Long Good-bye," the recognition of alienation from others and sometimes from one's very self. This is the epitome of alienation when one becomes alienated *within* his own *isolation*. Catharine Holly's journal experience precisely describes this violent alienation from self.

After a Mardi Gras Ball, Catharine was willingly seduced by a married man who after their intimate union--which for her destroyed the otherness between them--told her to forget. She reacted in public violence, beating on his chest, humiliating herself before everyone at the Ball.

> After that, the next morning, I started writing my diary in the third person, singular, such as "She's still living this morning," meaning that *I* was....--"WHAT'S NEXT FOR HER? GOD KNOWS!"--I couldn't go out anymore.[202]

This is a kind of dying when self disintegrates into pieces of self, and the first person stands outside of the self as a third person voyeur of all that de does. On the level of the art theme it might here be stated that this first to third progression in Catharine is analogously the progression from romantic to neo-romantic. The species of change is the problem.

Change to the romantics was a good whose any deficiency art could supply. To the neo-romantic, however, change takes on a character of duality. It is more often not the romantic evolution to maturation; it is more often violent corruption of some organic whole. Williams, however, did not begin with functionally metaphoric violence. At first--and perhaps to a degree latterly--he deserved the savaging done his *Streetcar* by Mary McCarthy in March, 1948.[203] But long before that, at age sixteen, Tom Williams had published his first story, a violent one, in *Weird Tales*, July/August, 1928. Needless to say this poorly written story was sensational. Williams wrote in the March 8, 1959, *New York Times*:

> If you're well acquainted with my writings since then, I don't have to tell you that is set the keynote for most of the work that has followed. My first four plays, two of them performed in St. Louis, were correspondingly violent or more so. My first play professionally produced and aimed at Broadway was *Battle of Angels* and it was about as violent as you can get on the stage....During the nineteen years since then I have only produced five plays that are *not* violent....What surprised me is the degree to which both critics and audience have accepted this barrage of violence. I think I was surprised, most of all, by the acceptance and praise of *Suddenly Last Summer*. When it was done off Broadway, I thought I would be critically tarred and feathered...with not future haven except in translation for theatres abroad, who might mistakenly construe my work as a castigation of American morals, not understanding that I write about violence in American life only because I am not so well acquainted with the society of other countries.[204]

Violence, however, defined as any lack of proper order knows no special country. The most widely read book of Western civilization, the Bible, shows order made from chaos almost immediately turned back to chaos as creature and creator became alienated and men were violently expelled into

a suddenly violent environment. Such violence of environment mirrored the internal violence; the Creator gave to nature the appearance of man's internal disintegrated reality. Hannah says: "Sometimes *outside* disturbances...are an almost welcome distraction from inside disturbances."[205] Not only do nature's disorders mirror man's, they provide man therapy as he tries to restore order to nature, tries to regain the Edenic appearance. But the appearance and the reality are too disparate and man most often sits upright in tension. Hannah tells Shannon "that everything has its shadowy side."[206] As if in complement, Silva Vacarro and Baby Doll make rapid etiological exchange of Williams' philosophy of violence:

> Silva: ...I believe in the presence of evil spirits.
> Baby Doll: What evil spirits you talking about now?
> Silva: Spirits of violence—and cunning—malevolence—cruelty—treachery—destruction....
> Baby Doll: Oh, them's just human characteristics.
> Silva: They're evil spirits that haunt the human heart and take possession of it, and spread from one human heart to another human heart the way that a fire goes springing from leaf to leaf and branch to branch in a tree till a forest is all aflame with it—the birds take flight—the wild things are suffocated...everything green and beautiful is destroyed.[207]

Thus, in what he diagnoses as a lamentable human condition, Williams sees a violence much more devastating than that violence's sporadic eruption in murder, arson, rape, and castration. Critics are often distracted by the sensationalism of this surface violence; theirs is an unfortunate distraction, for Williams intends the external violence rather as metaphor of the more subtle violence he diagnoses in all mankind. Williams attempted to countermand this impression in *Orpheus Descending*. Vee Talbott talk of beatings, lynchings, and runaway convicts torn to pieces by hounds as example of violence. Val amends her definition:

> Violence ain't quick always. Sometimes it's slow. Some tornadoes are slow. Corruption—rots men's hearts and—rot is slow.[208]

Corruption is quiet violence; it is the alienation of parts within the whole. It is the violence of Williams' concern. Change says: "Princess, the age of some people can only be calculated by the level of—level of—rot in them. And by that measure I'm ancient."[209] This—not the castration—s for Williams' message as Chance closes the play asking the audience "for your recognition of me in you." Into this metaphorical web signifying internal corruption Williams easily fits his "southernmost" garden locales. Shannon says:

> It's always been tropical countries I took ladies through. Does that, does that—huh?—signify something, I wonder. Maybe. Fast decay is a thing of hot climates, steamy hot, wet climates.[210]

This amply reinforces the previous conclusion that Williams writes about the south of the human condition.

Corruption is disorder. The artist by definition is a creator who imposes order on disconnected chaos. He takes the literal, superficial happening and invest it with layers of meaning a literalist cannot tolerate. Anything can be invested; everything is grist for the artist's mill. Thus even violence can be raised to metaphor

> as it elucidates theme, intensifies mood, and delineates character....The violence gives aesthetic value to the incongruous, the ugly, the repulsive, and the chaotic which these sensitive observes [Southern writers] see in their world. It expresses the suffering of inarticulate and the dispossessed persons. It questions an optimistic faith in progress and human self-sufficiency by asserting the darkness in the heart of man. It protests that without some formal ordering of his experience man will be overwhelmed by the accidental and the relative. By expressing in the mode of violence the destructive forces in society and in human nature, these Southerners affirm their sense of order through the very disorder which violates it.[211]

Robert E. Fitch, Dean of Christian Ethics at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, is representative of the Williams critics who descry surface sensationalism. Dean Fitch calls Williams the High Priest of *La Mystique de la Merde* which he defines as "the deification of dirt, or the apotheosis of ordure, or just plain mud mysticism.[212] Fitch points out, however, almost accidentally, the translation Williams makes of Calvinist theology into literary metaphor:

> No one wishes to deny the deep corruption of which human nature is capable. But when we obliterate both character and intelligence in a fixation on sex and obscurity, we are arriving at a doctrine of total depravity. And this doctrine in the hands of a skilled literary artist is even more repulsive than in the teachings of a theologian.[213]

Williams comes from a generally Calvinist background that has injected an element of violence into his artistic vision. Vee Talbott of *Battle* and *Orpheus* is, perhaps, his most explicit portrait of the afflicted artist. Vee is concerned with that essential poetic quality, vision. In both plays, driven by religious guilt, Vee begins to paint, not pictures quaintly pastoral, but pictures associated with sex and primitive religious experience. She paints imaginative treatments of the Church of the Resurrection, its phallic steeple blood red. Her

> personality, frustrated in its contact with externals, has turned deeply inward. She has found refuge in religion and primitive art and has become known as an eccentric. Although a religious fanatic, a mystic, she should not be made ridiculous,...not be devoid of all dignity or pathos.[214]

> At Val Xavier's arrival Vee is completing her painting of the Twelve Apostles.

> Dolly: She's been painting them for twelve years, one each year. She says that she sees them in visions. But every one of them looks like some man around Two River County. She told Birdie Wilson that she was hoping she'd have a vision of Jesus next Passion Week so she could paint Him, too.[215]

Naturally, Vee makes the Val-Savior identification in her vision and paints him as Christ ("Passion week always upset her."[216]) after experiencing a violent sexual vision of her Savior. Beulah and Dolly repeat that Vee saw Him

> in the cottonwood tree. The *lynching* tree....Exactly where time an' time again you see couples parked in cars with all the shades pulled down! And what did he do? He stretched out his hand and *touched yuh*.
> Dolly: Where? [Vee...touches her bosom.] ...He made a pass at you?...He made a pass at you?[217]

In Vee coalesces a vision of sex, religion, violence, and art in a way derided by disorder. The fact is that the biography of Christ lends itself well as Western archetype to all four categories. Vee tells Val that she saw her Savior on Holy Saturday, the day before the Resurrection, and was blinded. Because of such shock treatment Vee comes to the artist-orderer's vision of life's duality.

> Vee: ...You know we live in light and shadow, that's, that's what we *live* in, a world of—*light* and—shadow....
> Val: Yes. In light and shadow. [He nods with complete understanding and agreement. They are like two children who (through the vision of art) have found life's meaning, simply and quietly, along a country road]....Without no plan, no training, you started to paint as if God had touched your fingers....You made some beauty out of this dark country....[218]

For those who cannot stand the generic artists' tension-pain of creation Williams chronicles several unsatisfactory ways out: drink, drugs, sexual promiscuity. These are all variations of self-violence that mask the deeper Angst of existence. Frustration at existence leads to violent aggression against oneself or others. Sebastian's sick aggression against self is singularly unfruitful as he sets himself up for his masochistic sacrifice. Sandra in *Battle of Angels* confesses to Val her own frustration:

> You should have killed me, before I kill myself. I will someday. I have an instinct for self-destruction. I'm running away from it all the time....All over the God damn country with something after me every inch of the way![219]

Sandra is pursued like Shannon whose psychic masochism, bound like Val's mysticism in the Passion of Christ, is spooked to violence. The Princess, Lady-Myra, Sissy Goforth, Baby Doll, Maggie, and Brick are all likewise sparked to their own peculiar kinds of self-violence: the Princess is bent on destruction failing her comeback; Lady-Myra forces her husband Jabe (whom Williams

names *Death*) into killing her; Sissy, who wold never dream of doing herself violence, does herself the worst violence by deliberately obfuscating her chance for salvation with Chris; Maggie and Baby Doll both subject themselves to violent situations because, childless, they both are out of harmony with themselves. None of them are like the satisfied Serafina whose pregnancy integrates her self-ideal of female fertility, puts two lives in one body, and symbolizes the love of her new husband. Shannon, the male questor, is violent to himself: he cuts his neck attempting to drown himself in the sea. As a result, he has to be lashed into a hammock, a voluptuous crucifixion, that he sincerely enjoys for the painless atonement-assuagement of his guilt at his rage at God.

Yet despite this one sad-masochistic scene, *Iguana*'s violence is much like most of Williams' violence: either internal or off-stage so that despite Fitch, McCarthy, and Falk,[220] Williams is not nearly so mercantilely sensational as first glance would tell. This is especially true in the play that even Williams thinks is his most violent, *Suddenly Last Summer*. But even here, as if in the best of Greek tradition the sensational violence occurs not only off-stage but in the past. "The violence promised by the fury remains in the telling, not in the doing."[221] The rage provides interplay for characterization of the personages: the arbiter Doctor Sugar, the abused Catharine Holly, the violent Violet Venable.

The language of abuse that Williams' people employ is most often violent for what it leaves unspoken. Williams employs in his plays few four-letter words. This is a tribute to his lyric sensibility; for to translate the excess and kind of language now usually associated with the novels of Henry Miller or William Burroughs to the stage would be offensive to the common sensibility no matter how integral the language was. Sometimes, however, Williams' lyric by-pass does not fit his characters; for instance, when crude, rude Stanley Kowalski wants to "get those colored lights going,"[222] the phrase is vivid but definitely not Kowalski. That Williams filters the reality of his stage language is aptly proven by a comparison of his story "Kingdom of Earth" with his play *Kingdom of Earth*. The story is written in a crude countrified vernacular that knows the common phrase for every function and describes those functions in purple detail; the play is a reconstructed version of the short story and as such—not, therefore, only because its bowdlerized language is more socially acceptable—is more worthy of Williams' controlling art.

Mrs. Goforth wants Chris—professional linguist—to toy with language, to play the truth game with her; but he refuses. Chris-Williams intends language to be the vehicle of the truth, because language is communication, is the major means of breaking down the alienation between people.

> I think the truth is too delicate and, well, *dangerous* a thing to be played with at parties, Mrs. Goforth. It's nitroglycerin, it has to be handled with the—the carefulest care, or somebody hurts somebody and gets hurt back and the party turns to a—devastating explosion, people crying, people screaming, people even fighting and throwing things at each other. I've seen it happen, and there's no truth in it—that's true.[223]

When language breaks down, when language is not true, only the violence of increased alienation can result. This is quintessential truth to Williams, and if the integrity of his intent is to be judged, this must be fully understood. In a definite *apologia pro arte sua*, Williams give Myra and Val the

following exchange about truth in the art of language. Myra takes Val's book in her arms and makes the same comparison as Mrs. Venable to Sebastian's poems and Mrs. Goforth to her own memoirs:

> Myra: It's like holding a baby! Such a big book, too; so goon an' solid.
> Val: It's go life in it, Myra. When people read it, they're going to be frightened. They'll say it's crazy because it tells the truth.[224]

Williams himself said of all his work and specifically of *Suddenly* that he writes the "true story of the time we live in." It is small wonder, therefore, that so late in his career, when Williams has given a so-far summary statement in *Milk Train* and has written several excellent vaudevilles (e.g., *Slapstick Tragedy*) that he should be turned out of vogue—as Gore Vidal has said[225]—and not be so "popular" simple because his frightening work must be attended to with greater concentration and more critical effort than the currently popular Neil Simon's.[226] Perhaps the test here is that nearly all of Williams' dramatic works (not his prose) survive the test of rereading.

The violence of Williams' plays is often centered, as is Eudora Welty's,[227] about the "collapse of the individual in a society, or more specifically, in a family oblivious of his need to be loved and believed in."[228] The Kowalskis could have saved Blanche who just "*can't* be *alone*!"; the Venables and Hollys could have saved Heavenly and Chance; the Pollitts could have saved Brick; and the larger families of human kindness could have saved the Princess and Sissy and Mrs. Stone. In Williams' world, therefore, it is small cynicism that when *Period of Adjustment*'s Ralph is asked if he were an orphan, he answers: "Yes, I had that advantage."[229] The Williams families barely communicate, so deep is their estrangement. *The knightly Quest*'s Gewinner exchanges with his family certain cablegrams of subtle violence that is representative of the general familial alienation:

> The Christmas one said, Christ is born, Love, Mother, and the Easter one said, Christ is risen, Love, Mother. And once, between Christmas and Easter, Gewinner dispatched a cablegram to Mother Pearce that was utterly meaningless to her. It said, Dear Mother, What is He up to now? Love, Gewinner.[230]

In nearly every instance of sadism Williams uses the handy trope of Christ's Passion and Death to reinforce the existential horror of every man's isolation. From *Battle* through the quintessential Kilroy to *Milk Train* Williams very often establishes his hero as a Christ figure and then works upon him some kind of Christ-ian violence. In *Iguana*, for instance, Priest Shannon, "crucified" in a hammock, is tormented by the lusty pink German militarists as was Christ surrounded by soldiers on the Cross. Williams' depiction of this German family is of interest on two counts: their pink Germanic sensuality is ironic comment on America's imported Calvinism, and their militarism, dramatized as something despicable, is pointedly inveighed against by a writer who comes from a South where the military tradition is viewed as a kind of gallant violence.

In Williams' generally polar and cyclic view of things violence precedes sex; man rages at one thing or another—his isolation, Mama, God—and then turns, to solve his rage, to sex which only increases the rage since the act of sex can only be performed in the continuum of time and is, therefore, touched as much as anything else with enemy evanescence. Williams consequently

experiences the romantic promise, the realized shock of alienation, the neo-romantic's partial adjustment to frustration. Sex is violent in Williams when it is *use* and not *love* that is its mark. For this reason Williams has taken sex, its violence and perversions, and matured it into an existential alienation metaphor in order to define his message. The writer

> with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal ways of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock—to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures....My own feeling is that writers who see by the light of their Christian faith will have, in these times, the sharpest eyes for the grotesque, for the perverse, and for the unacceptable.[231]

Myra Mannes specifies Williams' dramatic technique of violence as "a shock treatment, administered by an artist of great talent and painful sensibility who illumines fragments but never the whole. He illuminates that present sickness which *is* fragmentation."[232] Like many of the Victorian critics of the so-called immoral and decadent Restoration comedy, Fitch and those critics who have advocated similar positions have failed to see in Williams' plays the pervasive moral implications of the decadent and violent elements. They fail to see that Williams simply follows in the dramatic tradition that has its roots in fifth-century Greek and tragedy and comedy. Williams, like Euripedes in *Medea*, like Aristophabes in *Lysistrata*, like Jonson in *Volpone*, Wycherly in *The Country Wife*, and like Otway in *Venice Preserv'd*, has chosen to mirror and not reform directly in his drama. Although Yeats says, "Art...is a revelation, and not a criticism" there is in Williams' plays implied criticism about the society in which he lives. When superficial reaction distracts one too much in a Williams play, he becomes blind to the metaphor; and it is precisely this metaphor as well as Williams' expressionistic dramatic techniques which should sign to the viewer *not* to become as superficially distracted as some of his critics evidently have.

As with Artaud, whose theatre of explicit cruelty goes beyond Williams' American daring, Williams' "cruelty" does

> not refer exclusively to torture, blood, violence, and plague—but to the cruellest of all practices: the exposure of mind, heart, and nerve-ends to the grueling truths behind a...reality that deals in psychological crises when it wants to be *honest* [that is, versus mendacity], and...confronts the existential horror behind all social and psychological facades.[233]

Consequently when Shannon shocks Hannah by telling her of his sex-partner's parents—old maids of both sexes, when Williams reveals the psychic anomalies of Brick and Sebastian and Oliver Winemiller, the sexual heat of Maggie and of Lady-Myra and of Alma grown older, the point is that sexual hysteria is metaphor for a more basic existential hysteria. If there is any direct relation, it is

that Williams counsels that a fully developed sexuality be incorporated into the organic personality. In a Puritan culture which tends to fragment sexuality, he maintains that the individual does essential violence to his own organic whole when he denies sex a fulfilling role in the personality. Both of his Alma's illustrate the violence of this existential corruption.[234] Serafina who spends most of the *Rose Tattoo* in hysteria transcends that condition of *hysteron* (womb) through discovery of a true love who confirms her as a person and as a fertile woman; such dual confirmation is for Williams positive statement that any division of personality from sexuality is a condition which can only lead to psychic fragmentation and violence. It is in this way that Williams redeems sensationally superficial sex to a metaphorical currency of alienation. Maxine tells of her dead husband Fred, of how not only the violence of language, but also the unexchangeability of sex between them defined their isolation.

> We'd not only stopped sleeping together, we'd stopped talking together except in grunts—no quarrels, no misunderstandings, but if we exchanged two grunts in the course of a day, it was a long conversation we'd had that day between us....I know the difference between loving someone and just sleeping with someone.[235]

Maxine's "pleasures" are like Carol-Cassandra's jooking, like all the violent distractions Sissy Goforth says people run to until one too many ruins them. Gewinner Pearce had used his blanket-size white scarf for his k/nightly assignations. Then, while escaping in the Ark of Space, Gewinner asks

> What about this?
> He touched his white scarf which had made so many festivals of nights on the planet Earth, far behind them.
> Will this be admitted with me?
> Why certainly, yes, of course, the young navigator assured him. It will be accepted and highly valued as a historical item in our Museum of Sad Enchantments in Galaxies Drifting Away.[236]

This is pointed and latest Williams on the misues of sex: not only does the user become more fragmented within himself, but his world also fragments and Drifts Away. The Williams characters

> are not "mankind" in the sense of classic, neoclassic, romantic, or realistic definitions. They are images of a humanity diminished by time and history. They are each characterized by an inner division, by a fragmentation so complete that it has reduced them to partialities. They are "un-beings," caught in the destructive life-process. They are fragments of debris, thrown up by "time and destroyer."[237]

> In *One Arm* Williams describes the alienated isolate running to Sad Enchantments:

> He never said to himself, I'm lost. But the speechless self knew it and in submission to its unthinking control the youth had begun as soon as he left the hospital to look about for destruction [as a male prostitute].[238]

Williams intends to tell the truth as his artistic vision sees it; and one writer's truth is often another man's violence, especially if the opposing truth points up an audience's "pleasures and answers" as sad distractions from existential problems. Williams has, therefore, consciously and deliberately provoked his audiences; for the art of his theatre is to violate stock stereotypes of judgment and feeling. Williams' theatre is itself an act of transgression. This is particularly true as Williams makes religion a part of his theatre in a way similar to that when theatre was a part of religion. He aggresses against his audience through the confusion of opposites; he expresses religion by dramatizing blasphemy, love through use, life through death—in short, he attacks the "being" of his audience by presenting them with characters of "unbeing" who in situations of disintegration expose the dis-integration of the audience.

Williams has stated his art theory—which is not non-violent—as an anarchy which upsets organized society. This has always been the province of the theatre where catharsis—the relief following the disturbance of a frightful identification—has always been proper. In the "traditional" theatre the fright-to-catharsis has occurred because of identification with the destroyed protagonist. Ancient audiences identified with mythic heroes who incarnated virtues especially valued in the particular theology that occasioned the act of theatre.

> But today's situation is much different. As social grouping are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated [aware of isolation] in their relation to [alienation from] the myth as corporate truth or group model....This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers behind the life mask....The equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth...is virtually impossible today. [Today what is necessary is] *confrontation* with myth rather than identification. In other words, while retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the "roots," and the relativity of the "roots" in the light of today's experience. If the situation is brutal, if we strip ourselves and touch an extraordinarily intimate layer, exposing it, the life-mask cracks and falls away.[239]

In Williams, sex and violence provide the confrontation with the western myths that mask problems of human existence. Williams testifies by outrage and exposé. He employs selective insight to light the fragmentation of modern man. Romantic evolution he sees as dis-integration of the self to isolation and of the other to alienation. He dramatizes this existential corruption to expose it afresh as a new wound; he feels it needs a fresh exposure since the old ways of viewing it have been variously repressed and accepted as normalcy. To the literal-minded, Williams seems oversimply to prescribe the male seed-bearer to cure the hysteria; his metaphor of the reality is an incarnational prescription that an exchange of true love can salve the existential hysteria, rage, and alienation.

Williams, whose absurd Gypsy guns people down in the street, extends the violence he sees in man even to his theology. Williams is unsure of God; he has a hope and a view. He hopes in the incarnate God of New Testament love, the bearer of metaphorical seed who will providentially cure humankind's hysteria; but he has too often viewed the eschatological God of cruelty, the ruler of

Dragon Country, who blesses the users. This alienated, calculating God makes Williams' Gewinner suspicious "that back of the sun and way deep under our feet, at the earth's center, are not a couple of noble mysteries but a couple of joke books."[240] The violent possibility of such divine duplicity serves essentially in Williams' plays to confirm the isolation of the alienated and escalate their existential rage; for the creatures remember the Creator as the somehow recalcitrant source of the former order now lost.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Tennessee Williams' theatre is in one sense very like the ancient classical theatre. It is essentially a religious act. *Sweet Bird, Cat, Milk Train,* and *Baby Doll* center on alter tables of beds; *Eccentricities, Summer and Smoke,* and *Camino Real* revolve around ritual fountains of Eternity.[241] *Battle of Angels, Orpheus Descending,* and *Suddenly Last Summer* are ritual re-enactments of events of salvation and damnation. The patio setting of *Iguana* is sanctuary-like, the characters making entrance from their isolated sacristy cells. *Streetcar*'s people in a deftly choreographed ritual move from the introit of scene one, played appropriately on the steps of the house, to Stella's offertory to Blanche, to Blanche's repetitious ritual cleansings in white tubs of water, to the ritual of *The Poker Night* played around an altar of a table by men whom Williams' stage directions place in ritual vestments of primary colors. Blanche, Host-white as a victim should traditionally be, knows Stanley to be her executioner. Her words of consecration are her story to Mitch about her young first husband; she wins Mitch and "there's God—so quickly." This story next told by Stella does not convert Stanley who by scene ten vests himself in the ritual silk pajamas of his wedding night and protrudes his tongue between his teeth to rape-consume Host-Blanche in an inverse ritual of communion become cannibalization. The remainder of the play is concerned with cleansing and collecting: Blanche bathes herself, a used communion dish, and collects her things together, the victim doing the ablutions and straightening proper to the executing priest. Eunice gives Stella a credo to live by ("You've got to keep going.") and Blanche, attended by Doctor and Matron, processes out past a congregation of Williams characters.

Williams' metaphorical translation of the Episcopalian Mass is dark parody of institutionalized religion. With Emerson, Williams feels that prayers and dogma simply mark the height to which religious waters once rose; now, in the new time of the encompassing esthetic, Williams' translation points up the lack of the old economy. The validity of listening to artists in areas of interpersonal relationships (which includes man's relation to God) is that historically artists have pre-known and pre-sung for ages the kerygma that the institutions have arrived at only latterly. This is true no more than in the comparison of sensibility between ancient Greek drama and the kerygma of interpersonalism that has only recently come to vogue in twentieth-century theological consciousness.

Williams obviously prefers the intuitive esthetic approach to what an institutionalized religious ethic would call the metaphysical interaction of God and man. To show his preference he oftentimes contrapuntally plays the intuitive esthetic against the institutionalized ethic. Many of his "artists" live at least near, if not next-door, to churches of various denominations, indeed if they do not live *in* parsonages themselves. And if the protagonists do not live *near, next,* or *in,* then some representative of the religious institution is likely to intrude upon them—and rarely to good advantage. Williams' cynical spectrum runs through the mincing minister of *You Touched Me*, the mercenary Reverend Tooker of *Cat*, the sexually disturbed Lutheran prison chaplain of "One Arm," the misunderstanding priest Father de Leo of *Rose Tattoo,* the concerned-with-appearances Reverend Winemillers of *Eccentricities* and *Summer and Smoke,* Mrs. Venable's hateful references to priests

and scriptures of institutions, the minister's raucous family in "The Yellow Bird," and the bought-off clerical rivals of *The Knightly Quest*: the Catholic Father Acheson and the Reverend Doctor Peters of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This contrapuntal association Williams presents nowhere so concisely as in *Night of the Iguana* where the battle between institutional responsibility and personal integrity is waged within the protagonist, the Reverend Lawrence T. Shannon. Accused of "fornication and heresy...in the same week," Shannon is quite rightly more disturbed by the "heresy"; for his shaking preachment of personal belief to a congregation is wider reaching than his one-time sexual act.

> The next Sunday when I climbed into the pulpit and looked down over all of those smug, disapproving, accusing faces uplifted, I hand an impulse to shake them—so I shook them....Look here, I said, I shouted, I'm tired of conducting services in praise and worship of a senile delinquent—yeah, that's what I said, I shouted! All your Western theologies, the whole mythology of them, are based on the concept of God as a *senile delinquent* and, by God, I will not and cannot continue to conduct services in praise and worship of this...angry, petulant old man. I mean he's represented like a bad-tempered childish old, old, sick, peevish man—I mean like the sort of old man in a nursing home that's putting together a jigsaw puzzle and can't put it together and gets furious at it and kicks over the table. Yes, I tell you they *do* that, all our theologies do it—accuse God of being a cruel, senile delinquent, blaming the world and brutally punishing all he created for his own faults of construction.[242]

With a God like this it is small wonder that the Western theologies, the western institutional religions manufacture congregations that Shannon likens to snakes and cockroaches; it is small wonder that he detests the institutional Christianity that in masked violence made of Mexico "a country caught and destroyed in its flesh and corrupted in its spirit by its gold-hungry Conquistadors that bore the flag of the Inquisitions along with the Cross of Christ." It is small wonder that he hates the congregations who "go home and close...windows, all...windows and doors, against the truth about God."

Because of the personal tension the Reverend Shannon becomes a dispossessed wanderer. He becomes a guide for Blake Tours. (One presumes Shannon gives Blake's customers Tours of Experience when they expected only Tours of Innocence.)

> I entered my present line—tours of God's world conducted by a minister of God....Collecting evidence...[of] my personal idea of God, not as a senile delinquent, but as a...
> Hannah: Incomplete sentence.[243]

Just so for Williams is God Shannon's sentence seeking a completion. Because of what his religious culture has subjected him to, because of what he has familiar-ly experienced, and because of what he knows, Williams presents to date a highly ambivalent attitude toward God. He does not know as yet which fork in the sentence will end in an accurate completion. Inductively seining his plays' functional religious trappings and overt theological statements against the interpretative biography "written" by his mother, one can construct—like Cocteau on "Saint" Genet—the ambivalent

theological stance of Tennessee Williams. It is in this "knightly quest" that Williams promotes the religious act of his theatre; it is the lack of "time for contemplation," the lack of the necessary "introversion" for which Williams censures America in his latest novella, the off-stage comment of *The knightly Quest*.[244] It is to offset this lack of time that he gives the timeless world of his plays.

Unbelief for Williams is an impossibility; for unbelief is inorganic in the sense that it is an interruption in the development of the whole, created personality. Despite the Freudian fingers popularly pointed at Williams, the playwright's principle of belief is totally un-Freudian. (Freud, an unbeliever himself, said that "experience of God is reducible and that unbelief represents a higher degree of development, while belief represents retrogression to a lower degree of the sense of realism."[245]) Williams nowhere doubts God as a primary cause. In his characters' heavily felt sense of creaturehood he elaborates his full belief that God is the whole of everything, is the cause of everything. It is, however, the nature of this Prime Causality that greatly disturbs the Williams world.

Williams and his characters see God in two ways; Shannon's sentence can be completed by one or the other selections in Williams' multiple choice. God is perceived either as an Old Testament God of Wrath ruling over a semi-Calvinistic cycle of guilt-submission-atonement-uncertainty or a New Testament God of Love offering a cycle of need-submission-communication-salvation. In either case, however, surrender of the creature is required, and it is here that Williams' difficulty begins; for the idea of God in man is not a flash occurrence; it is the result of organic growth. From identification with parents, siblings, and others in the domestic environment, the personality develops an ego-ideal which is free of the short-comings of the real ego. A tension develops between egos. "Consciously or unconsciously, the proper ego makes continual comparison with the ideal ego. Conscience, feeling of guilt, self-criticism are the usual expressions of this relationship."[246] Beyond this ego and super-ego development lies the awakening of the libido on the sensory levels of oral-eroticism, anal-sadistic phase, and the genital stage. The Oedipus complex which arises during the genital stage as a boy fixates on the mother with a concomitant repulsion for the father becomes latent after the genital stage until puberty when it is revived and normally solved.

Yet, while still in the genital stage, the child experiences a tense polarity.

> The idealized mother promotes affection, imagination and intuition. She directs emotional development...the inner life, the foundation of morality and opens the way to religious experience. The father—representing the link with the outer world—promotes by identification the sense of observation of the out world and rouses...the aggressive instinct. He symbolizes authority, which defends and oppresses....Will power is reinforced and intelligence takes shape;...the way is prepared towards outside reality, towards Nature, society and country.[247]

Character genesis is, therefore, particularly associated with the Oedipal-fixation of the genital stage. This is important for a playwright whose mother writes:

> Friction between Cornelius [Tennessee's father] and Tom existed from the start, with Cornelius even unconsciously putting it into words when he tried to reassure Rose upon the

> birth of her first baby brother: "He's no good, is he?" All through Tom's life, that seemed to be his father's feeling about him....His father contemptuously called him "Miss Nancy."...I just stood by and took it. I wanted my children to feel there was one parent in whom they could have faith.[248]

About her husband, Tennessee Williams' mother continues, "He took no joy in the children....The most trivial act might spin him into a tantrum and after it was spent, he would sit on the couch and glare, when he wasn't stretched out on it snoring, recovering from a hangover."[249] Tennessee has written of those early years of paternal violence and alienation;

> On those occasional week-ends when my father visited the house...the spell of perfect peace was broken. A loud voice was heard, and heavy footsteps. Doors were slammed. Furniture was kicked and banged....Often the voice of my father...was harsh. And sometimes it sounded like thunder. He was a big man. Beside the slight, gentle figure of my grandfather [recall *Iguana*'s Nonno], he looked awfully big. And it was not a benign bigness. You wanted to shrink away from it, to hide yourself [he might have added, like Adam and Eve cowering at the wrathful exit of and Old Testament Garden.][250]

The indirect point of this is what it did to Williams' personality; the direct point has to do with the displacement of his artistic ego as the displacement influences his plays' dual concept of God. Rümke writes:

> We find the infantile link with our worldly father—or the rebellion against the father originating in our Oedipus complex—rejected by our ego and projected on the word "God" and the shape behind it. Prohibitions coming from this "projected" father help the ego in repressing rejected ambitions, especially those concerned with sex and power.[251]

The God-image, Rümke can be summarized as saying, becomes delineated in terms of the father-image as experienced in early childhood. The God-father projection on *God* is colored by the father-son relationship established by the son's father. Thus as a personal unresolved Oedipus complex becomes, in a national-religious culture of Calvinism, projected on the word *God*, it is small wonder that the word receives angry connotations of alienation and violence. God becomes Shannon's "senile delinquent," Moony's "crazy man, deaf, dumb, and blind, [who] could have put together a better kind of a world than this is,"[252] and Sebastian's carnivorous deity of the Encantadas.

The Oedipal alienation from the violent father is wider; it becomes an ambivalent reaction—a confusion of love-hate—to the mother-sponsored interiority which counsels passivity and surrender. This passivity is intolerable to a person whose stage of individuation has become fixated on his existential isolation. To become passive or subjugate is to engender an existential feeling of guilt to the individual who betrays himself by making a sacrifice of individuality in becoming passive to another. This guilt-anxiety (Shannon's spook) emerging from the sub-conscious is particularly acute in individuals who suffered

> psychic traumatism in early youth—for instance...a too actively caressing mother, or a surgical operation which the child considered an outrage. Thus an operation for tonsillitis or any other surgical intervention may be the starting-point of fear of passivity: fear of a senseless urge to defend and protect oneself when surrender is demanded.[253]

This is significant—at least superficially since his psychiatrist's records are not public—to Tennessee Williams whose plays one feels are the pulsation of his psyche.[254] When he was five years old, Williams nearly died of diphtheria. For nine nights his mother slept with him, packing his throat in ice. On the ninth day, Mrs. Williams noted that his tonsils, enlarged by the illness, had disappeared. The doctor diagnosed that the fevered child had swallowed the. For the next wo years Williams had Bright's disease which affected his kidneys and paralyzed his legs so that he could not walk. During this traumatic time, "the important people in Tom's...life were," his mother says, "his grandparents, his sister, Ozzie [a Negro nurse] and myself."[255] In other words, he was surrounded by a genteel old man and three women.

It would be no surprise if out of trauma in such an unresolved Oedipal stage the personality, in its refusal to be subjugated and duped, transmuted through simple reaction the wrathful God-father[256] into the vengeful Black Mother, the *vagina dentata* of various mythologies. Williams has his complementary hero, D. H. Lawrence, say, in *I Rise in Flame*:

> All women resent...anything...that distinguishes men from women....They take the male in their bodies—but only because they secretly hope that he won't be able to get back out again, that he'll be captured for good![257]

Fear of passivity to women transmutes to fear of passivity to God; to illustrate this "primordial fear" of the male that he will be held fast, absorbed, annihilated, or emasculated by the female Williams has created the wrathful bitch Goddesses who are often his women: the seeds were in Amanda and Blanche; they bloomed in Maggie Pollit, Maxine Faulk, Cassandra Whiteside, Carol Cutrere, Sissy Goforth, and Mrs. Venable. These are Calvinist women, "swamp-bitches" and "female devils" in the words of Mrs. Goforth. Williams molds, therefore, the subconscious of the human condition, the national-religious bias, and the personal trauma of being subjugated to passivity into an organic and terrifying esthetic. It is typical Williams irony that Sebastian finds God, well-toothed, in the company of his ravenous mother immediately after the female-dominated act of the turtles' birth.

In the confessional play, *Suddenly Last Summer*, the Venables' image of God is the eschatological deity of the Old Testament. While all that Mrs. Venable says must be read with a mirror, she does try to make Sebastian into the poet-priest; she emphasizes to the play's confessor, Doctor Sugar, who is (Williams' not Mrs. Venable's) God-figure-arbiter (to perform lobotomy or not), Sebastian's virtues of chastity, discipline and abstinence. She is like Saint Genet in her twisting to positive virtue the glories of the inverted. She sees the Venables' role of benefactor as one of sacrificial victim. Sebastian could only agree that he was indeed priest-victim of the Black Mass of his own death. As he ran up the street to the "Glorious" Hill of his Golgotha, he completed "a sort of!—image!—he had of himself as a sort of!—*sacrifice* to a!—*terrible* sort of a—...—God...—a *cruel* one."[258] Sebastian's fault, says Catharine Holly, who is Williams' spokesman, is his passivity.

"*He*!—accepted!—*all*!...—He thought it unfitting to ever take any action about anything whatsoever!"[259] In his passivity Sebastian is like his proto-portrait, Anthony Burns, in Williams' sado-masochistic short story, "Desire and the Black Masseur." Burns feels secure only in the passivity of a movie theatre; he submits the passive surface of his white body to a Black Masseur who takes Burns' passivity and teaches it to be active surrender. This is first key to Williams' ambivalent view of man's relation to God. Sebastian's passivity to his Old Testament God is that of victim to executioner; Burns' surrender to his Negro masseur is rather paradoxically an active turning to a passive attitude that allows an opening up to atonement and New Testament love.

Man, because of Eden's loss is incomplete. Eden's loss is, perhaps, only the explaining mythology of the gap-lack between the ego and the super-ego. "The sins of the world," Williams writes, "are really only its partialities, its incompletions, and these are what sufferings must atone form."[260] Thus the guilt that the ego feels at falling short of the ideals of the super-ego demands in Williams' economy a "principle of atonement, the surrender of self to violent treatment by others with the idea of thereby cleansing one's self of his guilt."[261] Burns' difference from Venable is that Burns and the Black Masseur love each other. This is what makes the eating of Burns salvific communion while the eating of Sebastian is cannibalism. It is overly functional Williams technique that Burns' death occurs at the end of Lent next door to a church whose religiously institutionalized people passively celebrate the "fiery poem of death on the cross,"[262] that during the consumption of the fiery named Burns the house behind the church burns down in purification—undoubtedly the doing of *Auto-Da-Fe*'s Eloi, that Burns' bones are taken to the end of the carline—presumably Blanche's streetcar named Desire that goes to Elysian Fields.

This is the tension of growth in Williams' psyche: to make the passivity he learned emotionally as a child into the active surrender he knows intellectually is the capacity of an organically composed creature. In searching for a system compatible with America's generally endemic Christianity, Williams often adds tones of Oriental philosophy which help, by their very distance from Western culture, to define active surrender; in addition, as he searches for metaphors of his two views of God he has settled on mercantile men of wrath like Big Daddy and Boss Finley to symbolize the Old Testament God-father. Opposing this eschatological metaphor is Williams' incarnational view of the New Testament God, a Christ who is young, most often blond, and at least superficially a stud.

If the ego in an unresolved Oedipus complex refuses surrender to the mother, the reaction can only be aggression. Christ's appeal as a Calamus God of love is that historically he aggressed against his world, successfully enough to quiet the wrathful Old Man (although he might awaken[263]) and was able to suffer a death of atonement by crucifixion on the cross of Stupidity and Cupidity[264] and yet be laid, dead-but-not-dead, like Kilroy in the Pieta arms of his mother, La Madrecita. Thus the ego-displacement of the God-transferred Oedipus complex becomes manifest in a desire to be equal to God, to be at once a victim of otherness, the ultimate aggressor against and savior of another. Christopher Flanders voices it as one person becoming God to another.

This person-to-person god-ness is given almost as if in answer to the Writer in *The Lady of Larkspur Lotion* who keens, "Where's God? Where's Christ?...What if there *is* no...?" Men still need "compassion and understanding" one for another. It is also reassuring that the God of love is found in other people particularly when the Williams people have no surety that the Mumbo-Jumbo will

keep the angry Old Man asleep and "off their backs." For this reason they often cling physically together like Chris' two little animals in sleep, simply to salve the feelings of being dispossessed by a carelessly whimsical deity.[265]

Even though the "new Testament" has no reassurance that the Old will not be revived, Williams proceeds to construct the New on Western civilization's Christ-base because of Christianity's inherent philosophy of *hermano*[266] and its ready sado-masochistic adaptation. Williams' view of the God of love, as was his view of the God of wrath, is interesting when framed by the Gilsonian perspective that man does not deduce the creature from God, but God from the creature.[267] Therefore, to find God Williams has looked not only at his wrathful or loving fellows, but more importantly he has looked into his own existential of wrath and love, into his own existential isolation and refracts for himself what for him works as an image of God.

Because the nature of God is uncertain, because space and time are prisons, and because deserts lie between the closet individuals, Williams has Kilroy—made patsy willy nilly—shout that the whole human race has been shanghaied.[268] And because Williams-Kilroy will not be passive, will not buy the "Sleep-Sleep" Lotus-Eater cry of *Camino*'s streetpeople,[269] will not make the easy escape through the consuming vaginal arch called The Way Out,[270] he suffers a terrible tension in his attempts to be awake and to awaken others.

A significant proportion of Williams' plays occur on the liturgical feasts of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. When so used, these feasts are sometimes incorporated to give over-obvious theological dimension to the human condition. For instance, Boss Finley's messiah-complex is handsomely enlarged in his own mind when university students burn him in effigy on Good Friday; he then proceeds ironically to have Chance castrated on the feast of second life, Easter Sunday, the same day that both Val Xaviers (Saviors') are burned. The Xaviers' deaths are the fiery demises of the phoenix, that symbol of resurrection whose banner Williams explicitly states hang over the Camino Real "since resurrections are so much a part of its [the play's] meaning." Lady-Myra (whose name plays with the Christian Blessed Lady Mary) celebrates her conception by telling a biblical trope, the story of the fig tree, and by asking to be decorated with Christmas ornaments.

This liturgical location of his plays is Williams' grimace of irony; for in Williams there is no providence: Mary doesn't help a Christian;[271] she gives no sign:[272] and God doesn't free the iguana.[273] Consequently, the Williams people are driven like the writer in the short story, "Night of the Iguana," to say: "The help of God!...Failing that, I have to depend on myself."[274] But the more knowledgeable people know that because there is no providence, human beings must take responsibility for each other. This is the responsible vocation which Christopher Flanders assumes in aiding old men to drown and aged women to die. It is summed in "the forbidden word" which the Christ-figure Dreamer says as he places his arm about a blinded Survivor: *Hermono*! *Brother*! Gutman calls it "the most dangerous word in any human tongue." But Casanova says, "People need the word. They're thirsty for it!"[275] They need the mutual compassion it implies. As a result its violation, deliberate cruelty, is the "one unforgivable thing."[276] This is sin in Williams: not so much an offense against some God, but an establishment of alienation between people which keeps them from meaning God to each other.

Alma and John debate the Williams theology as do Hannah and Shannon. Alma sees the footprints of an otherwise inscrutable God in the science of medicine because it is a social service.

She professes that a doctor receives his appointed vocation from God and this "is more religious than being a priest!"[277] As a small girl, Alma meeting John held her hands as if to receive a Communion Wafer; grown up, she tells him that he is "like holy bread...among us."[278] John, then, after a cynical disquisition on religious neurotics, gives Williams' famous anatomy lecture, the Puritan-Cavalier confrontation with its resultant reversal of roles. This is perverse Williams again as John redeems himself through good works of brotherhood and Alma, lovelorn, withdraws from all brotherhood by selling herself to salesmen.

In *Iguana* Hannah argues with Shannon that he has gone too far in making pseudo-identification with the Brother of Brothers, the Lover of Lovers, Christ. She is like *I Rise in Flame*'s Frieda who shouts at Williams' other Lawrence: "You can't stand Jesus Christ because he beat you to it. Oh, how you would have loved to suffer *the original* crucifixion.[279] Hannah lashes him for enjoying his voluptuous crucifixion, tied into a hammock, "no nails, no blood, no death."[280] In fury that Hannah punctures his act of pseudo-atonement, Shannon threatens a Black Consecration of hemlock and poppyseed tea which will kill the Old Man, Nonno. Hannah screams for him to stop; he has gone too far in being active (the reason he is tied) just as others had gone too far in being passive. Either extreme is Mrs. Winemiller's puzzle in which "the pieces don't fit."[281] And either extreme leads to psychotic desperation, "the sort of desperation that comes after even desperation has been worn out through long wear!"[282]

The Survivor in *Camino Real* prescribes the moderate antidote to extreme activity and passivity: "When Peeto, my pony, was born—he stood on his four legs at once, and accepted the world!" This kind of active submission typifies Williams' preoccupation of late with an Oriental theme of acceptance. His *Milk Train* integrates "a pair of stage assistants that function in a way that's between the Kabuki Theatre of Japan and the chorus of Greek theatre."[283] To this form of pure theatricality he has matched fitting matter, a theology of Oriental active-submission which he feels is not only wisdom for the human condition but is also compatible with Western versions of Christianity's new dispensation of love.

To surrender the ego, a problem not only Oedipally difficult, but also dangerous because of the advantage it gives the other, is the only route Williams sees to balanced creature-Creator relations.

> The many offenses our egos have to endure...are better accepted....Otherwise what you becomes is a bag full of curdled cream—*leche mala*, we call it!—attractive to nobody, least of all yourself![284]

This is what Shannon is told by Hannah as she becomes more Eastern, a "Thin-Standing-Up-Female-Buddha." She tells Shannon of her love experience with the Aussie underwear fetishist. "The moral" of that story, she says, "is oriental. Accept whatever situation you cannot improve." She doesn't want him to accept the falsely passive "no sweat" philosophy being sold by Maxine and she doesn't want him to take the hyper-activist's "long swim to China."[285] Neither would she approve of Gewinner's lover, Dr. Horace Greaves, whose

> samadhi (a trancelike condition known to Hindu mystics and their disciples) was probably

> only synthetic since he could enter a customs shed with apparent, dreamlike composure but was apt to go to pieces if a customs officer inquired into the nature of certain pills and vials that were tucked away into his luggage.[286]

Alma when drugged, however, finds her repressed ego more constructively released: "Those tablets work quickly....I'm beginning to feel them almost like a water lily...on a Chinese lagoon."[287] Sissy Goforth lives on a Divine Coast, achieves pseudo-Nirvana on drugs, dresses in Chinese ritual robes, and receives unknowingly a true teacher, an author of a book of Hindu verse entitles *Meanings Known and Unknown*. He is a blond, bearded Christ-figure about whom everything is a contradiction; he counsels a Calvinistic world to a wise dualism of keeping the body in a state of repair because it is the home of the spirit. Sissy accuses him of being a saint because unlike most people who "get panicky when they're not cared for by somebody." he gets panicky when he has "no one to care for."[288] Sissy's rejection of him grows when she learns from the pagan Fata-Morgana Witch of Capri that Christopher (Christ-bearer) has the medieval reputation of being the Angel of Death. Then alternately repelled and fascinated by him Sissy asks Chris for a kiss. He refuses; for a kiss now would be a Judas kiss. Sex between them would obfuscate in her mind exactly what was Chris' spiritual mission to her. His refusal ignites her sarcastic question: "Can you walk on water?" This aggressive woman, whose early history was undoubtedly that of the waif in "This Property Is Condemned," Cannot bear to hear Chris' message of life and death: "*Accept* it....*Accept* it." She cannot see that acceptance is not weak passivity; significantly, as she lies dying, the hospital *Salvatore Mundi*, Savior of the World, cannot be reached by telephone. "Acceptance," Chris says to the dying woman.

> Mrs. Goforth: What of?
> Chris: Oh many things, everything, nearly. Such as how to live and to die in a way that's more dignified than most of us know how to do it. And of how not to be frightened of not knowing what isn't meant to be known, acceptance of not knowing *anything* but the moment of still existing, until we stop existing—and acceptance of that moment too.

And she dies not understanding, not accepting, screaming at Chris: "No, *no*, go. Let *me* go!!" He stands over her quietly sipping "the milk as if it were sacramental wine,"[289] unable because of her resistance to become God to her as Doctor Sugar had to Catharine when she gave him her resistance, actively choosing to be passive.[290]

About human beings unwilling to admit that acceptance, the active submission of the ego, is the answer to their existential tensions, *Adjustment*'s Isabel says: "They've all got a nervous tremor of some kind....The world is a big hospital...a big neurological ward and I am a student nurse in it."[291] Like Chris she finds her vocation in others, a student of her self simultaneously. She finds God in them and they in her, all accepting the fact that this is the best they can do. Williams specifies this in his autobiographical "Grand" when he says of his grandmother who loved him: "'Grand' was all that we knew of God in our lives!"[292]

God exists for Williams as factually as does his father; but the way to approach that fact is a psychic problem. Not to know whether God is an avenger (this eschatology leads to the basic

existential desperation in all Williams' plays) or whether he is a lover (as Williams hopes) loved in what seems more than a make-shift way in other people, leads Alexandra to pry in the last act of *Sweet Bird*: "Someday the mystery god may step down from behind his clock like an actor divesting himself of make-up and costume."

Williams' God is, in short, the father of the fragile Menagerie, the father who fell in love with long distance. His existence is known, but he send no word, no address; he makes no claim to the worn-out records he left behind. The family he abandoned, the brotherhood of men, must cling together—the only sure hope—to belie the statement of *Sweet Bird*'s Heckler who says: "I believe that the silence of God, the absolute speechlessness of Him is a long, long and awful thing that the whole world is lost because of."[293]

CHAPTER VI

A COALESCENCE OF DEATH AND LOVE: THE TEXTUAL POSTURE OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

To speak of death is to speak of life, of time and place, and of God; to speak of love is to speak of God, of the sexual metaphor, and of the alienation of violence. Under these two general titles, *death and love*, Tennessee Williams has continued his insistent Puritan naming of things. With a true artist's convolution of surface reality into dimensional metaphor,[294] he has taken the literal moment of death—the ultimate alienation—and transfigured it to a symbol of the worse death of the living isolato. His Val sees men isolated in their own skins; his Blanche screams she cannot be alone; his Almas, his Hannah, his Serafina, all suffer the hysteria of women abandoned. Their hysteria, however, is more than "the big female weapon"[295] that Shannon diagnoses. Their hysteria is the result of existential dispossession. While most of Williams' protagonists move forward to solve their dispossession, feeling on the way through some long night's journey into day, Chance mistakenly backpeddles—much like the mistaken Amanda and Blanche—by trying to regain from the lost past the Heavenly home of his heart.[296] His excuse would be that of Baby Doll: "Sometimes I don't know where to go, what to do."[297] As a result, he retreats to the past, despairing of all the questions and the lack of answers chronicled by Marguerite in *Camino Real*.[298] Silva's answer to Baby Doll is that her lost feeling is "not uncommon. People enter this world without instruction." There is no surety except, not-pitying-oneself, to move forward as do the saveable Stella who makes the best of her situation and the redeemed Serafina who does a volte face from the past to the future.

Those who do not progress are destroyed like Blanche and Amanda; they remember too passively "some distant mother with—wings."[299] They rely on a security that has evanesced. The future is too foreboding. George Haverstick shakes for no physical reason;[300] he trembles rather at *Camino Real*'s existential question: "Can this be all? Is there nothing more? Is this what the glittering wheels of the heavens turn for?"[301] Williams' people, like Williams himself, agree with Edwin Arlington Robinson quoted in *Suddenly Last Summer*: "We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks."[302] *Battle of Angels*' Val continues this Everyman's search:

> *Why*....That was the first word I learned to spell out at school. And I expected some answer. I felt there was something secret that I would find out and then it would all make sense.[303]

These existential pokings born of a dissatisfaction with life couple with Williams' ambivalent view of God as a God of violence or a God of love. This uncertainty leads only to inhumane withdrawal of the personality and to ultimate despair of the justice of a Being who cold possibly give to the "tiny spasm of man"[304] some meaning. The theology-obsessed Chicken in "Kingdom of Earth" articulates of his sex experiences:

> I heard her footsteps on the stairs coming up to the attic. And then I realized that I had been praying. I had been sitting these praying to God to send that woman up to me. What do you make of that? Why would God have answered a prayer like that? What sort of God would pay attention to a prayer like that coming from someone like me who is sold to the Devil when thousands of good people's prayers, such as prayers for the sick and suffering and dying, are given no mind, no more than so many crickets buzzing outdoors in the summer. It just goes to show how little sense there is in all this religion and all this talk of salvation. One fool is as big as another on this earth and they're all big enough.[305]

An approximation of this despair leads the majority of Williams' people through dark nights of the soul from which they rarely recover. If not the answers, at least the questions become in "these tropical nights...so clear."[306] It is on one such night that Jacques points out to Marguerite that over the whole *Camino*—even above the silk phoenix banner of resurrection—hangs the Southern Cross. And this cross of affliction, this affliction of the South of the human condition is that man seems alien and isolated on a cold highway to nowhere. Confronted with the ultimate dispossession of death, even the seeming strong are turned to jelly.[307]

In the minicosm of his art, Williams focusses primarily on this worse death by dramatizing in almost grand Guignol detail the event of literal death. Against his conception of death he displays certain attitudes toward living. Life ia a basically elemental matter. The liquid imagery of the sea, the cradle of life, is the womb symbol of the eternity from which man proceeds and to which he will return. *Iguana*'s Nonno, whose real name is Jonathan Coffin, returns to the sea to die, making excuses for his "disgraceful longevity." No one wants the old, the worn out, the dispossessed; he and Hannah are driven out, for as Maggie the Cat says, "You can be young without money but you can't be old without it."[308] The living ignore the dying as a useless commodity.[309] Williams' early heroine Amanda had pontificated that for no one is life easy. "Tom—Tom," she says, "life's not easy, it call for —Spartan endurance!"[310] A later Williams heroine, Sissy Goforth, insists that to get through life a person has to be tough; this is a more digested prescription than Alexandra del Lago's insistence that only monsters succeed in life. Chicken says in 1967:

> A man can't be soft in this world. I think that life just plain don't car for the weak. Or the soft. A man and his life both got to be made out of the same stuff or one or the other will break, and the one that breaks won't be life. Because life's rock. So man's got to be rock, too. Life, rock: man, rock. Because if they both ain't rock, the one that's not rock won't be life. The one that's not rock will be man, so man's got to be rock, too. The soft one is broke when the two things come together, and life is never the soft one.[311]

This rock is far from Nonno's gentle sea, but it is fittingly opposite the repose of the latter. It is while most unreposed that Serafina della Rose—a flower like the Camino Real violets that crack the stone of the mountain—takes her stand and celebrates basic Williamsiana: the life in terms of sexual fertility.

The Captain in 1947's *You Touched Me* celebrates this Williams theme; he warns his sister, whom Williams' notes describe as a "self-righteous and mentally sadistic spinster,"[312] to stop her

"efforts to keep life out of the place."[313] He accuses her of being one of the "people [who] have got that power—of turning life into clay.[314] She represents to Williams an "aggressive sterility."[315] Against the violence of this Emmie's chastity Williams places the young anti-soldier Hadrian, who arrives, like all Williams' sensitive people, "waiting for something."[316] Hadrian's return to the house revivifies the Captain in his fight for life versus living death. A soldier of the broader existential and not the meaner World War, Hadrian engages in the only kind of military gallantry Williams respects: he does violence to the ordinary conceptions of words and inverts them. The World War being ended, he shocks the little moribund society to which he returns, saying,

> A new war's beginning....The war for life, not against it. The war to create a world that can live without war. All the dead bodies of Europe, all the corpses of Africa, Asia, America ought to be raised on flagpoles over the world, and the cities not built up bet left as they are—a shambles, a black museum—for you and you and you—to stroll about in—on Sunday afternoons— case you forget—and leave the world to chance, and the rats of advantage.[317]

Hadrian is obviously not unSpartan; he is, however, also not the tough rock calloused to the needs of others. His view of life is a responsible one; he sincerely regrets knifing a young guard in order to escape prison camp:

> I saw he was only a kid and just as—gentle—as you are. The life in him yielded as softly as tissue paper. I knew very well that gentle things, such as that boy...,are made to be gently treated. Barely touched, hardly breathed upon.[318]

His regrets, his hopes for life, he expresses to Matilda whom he intends to save—and does—from the introverted, desiccated life-example her Aunt Emmie had set.

In more direct terms the "expectant" Maggie says to the hying life-force Big Daddy: "Announcement of life beginning!" And Big Daddy studies her and agrees in italics, "*Uh-huh, this girl has life in her body, that's no lie*!"[319] Earlier, Daddy had insisted to Brick that life was tolled by ejaculation, the office of the life-bringing seed-bearer: "They say you got just so many and each one is numbered."[320] Karen Stone had been assured of life in a corresponding way: she regarded her menstruation as making her body "eligible for...service to life"[321] and when her menopause was accomplished, she began her drift, like the Princess Kosmonopolis, into unfertile death. In a related way Val knows he is sentiently alive:

> I can sleep on a concrete floor or go without sleeping, without even feeling sleepy, for forty-eight hours. And I can hold my breath three minutes without blacking out....And I can go a whole day without passing water.[322]

Both the services and discipline of such physical mechanics assure these people that they are alive, until one day they realize that mechanics are deceptive, that being alive is more than mere continuation of physical function. The story of Lady-Myra centers on this discovery when once she announces the ultimate betrayal of mechanics, that she has coupled sexually with Death.

While Williams has almost specialized in plays about death, non so conveniently centers its argument and conflict in quite the fashion of *Orpheus Descending* with *Battle of Angels*. The plot introduces Val Xavier, as seed-bearing life force, into the violated garden of a sterile Southern town. His refrain is not against life but against life's corruption. For him and for Williams, as it was biblically intended at the exit from Paradise, death is the outward sign of man's internal corruption. At his arrival, Lady-Myra wants to be dead;[323] but death, she laments, "don't come when you *want* it, it comes [she intones prophetically] when you don't want it.[324] Carol-Cassandra wants to live and not be dead-alive, but her gesture at living is a selfish exhibitionism. She screams at Val that she tries to be a

> show-off!...*I'm an exhibitionist*! I want to be noticed, seen, heard, felt! [All those sensual mechanics again!] I want them to know I'm alive. Don't you want them to know you're alive?[325]

Val answers with balance: "I want to live and I don't care if they know I'm alive or not." He is not as hysterical as Carol-Cassandra who repeats in both plays a speech that Williams also used in "The Case of the Crushed Petunias." She says:

> Take me out to Cypress Hill in my car. And we'll hear the dead people talk. They do talk there. They chatter like birds on Cypress Hill, but all they say is one word and that one word is "live," they say "Live, live, live, live, live.'" It's all they've learned, it's the only advice they can give.—Just live....Simple!—a very simple instruction.[326]

Cassandra's very own irony is that Cypress Hill is situated "on the highest point of land in Two River County, a beautiful windy bluff just west of the Sunflower River"[327] in which she will later drown never to be recovered. Carol-Cassandra sees Val as her particular camino's Way Out of Two River County and away into big-city jooking. That, Williams' Val judges—having gone that route—is lively but is not living. Lady-Myra, on the other hand also sees Val as her Way Out. Having long before had a frustrating love affair that ended in fruitless abortion, Lady-Myra wants only to be dead. She chooses this ultimate alienation, although she admits that death is terrible.[328][329] As a small girl she had asked her aunt a very important question, She tells Val, who feels that people live alone, that

> I was a little girl then and I remember it took her such a long, long time to die we almost forgot her.—And she was so quiet...in a corner...I remember asking her one time, Zia Teresa, how does it feel to die?—Only a little girl would ask such a question....She said—"It's a lonely feeling."...I think people always die alone.[330]

Val, however, shows her that death is in fact the ultimate corruption. He tells her of the legless birds who sleep on the wind; they live their whole lives on the wing and "never light on this earth but one time when they die."[331] Lady answers: "I don't think nothing living has ever been that free, not even nearly. Show me one of them birds and I'll say, Yes, God's made one perfect creature!"[332] Val consequently shows himself to Lady: he is the uncorrupted free bird. All at once Lady-Myra, who

wanted to be dead because of her past, confronts her past in the form of her old lover David, and assesses her present with her dying husband Jabe in terms of the future that Val's love promises. Of Jabe she says, "Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there,"[333] over the dry goods store with the merchant whom Williams' notes call the "living symbol of death."[334] To David in both plays she, like Tom Wingfield who abandoned the passivity of the movies for moving, says, "My life isn't over, my life is only commencing."[335] The symbol of the fruitful existential for Lady-Myra is not being physically barren. She uses the biblical trope of the fig tree to illustrate the wider dimensions of her conception.[336] Then, however, death in the form of her husband Jabe enters "like the very Prince of Darkness,"[337] kills her, aborts her pregnancy, and sends Val to death by fire. Both hero and heroine die; but they die a death of the physically mechanical. The level of life they have achieved transcends the literal death. Myra shouts for them both, "I've won, I've won, Mr. Death, I'm going to bear."[338] Though she dies the literal death, Myra learns the lesson that Val brought her and that Chance articulates in *Sweet Bird*; "To change is to live..., to live is to change, and not to change is to die";[339] that is, to be dead-alive by not coming to terms with the past and with evanescence.

A failure to come to such terms characterizes Williams' dramas of failure. His Blanche of the lost White Woods tells of her retreating confrontation with insistent evanescence.

> I, I, *I* took the blows in my face and my body! 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!...Funerals are pretty compared to deaths. Funerals are quiet, but deaths—not always. Sometimes their breathing is horse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, "Don't let me go!" Even the old, sometimes, say, "Don't let me go." As if you were able to stop them!...Unless you were there at the bed when they cried out..., you'd never suspect there was the struggle for breath and bleeding....I saw! *Saw! Saw!*...Death is expensive....Why, the Grim Reaper had put us his tent on our doorstep![340]

Blanche sees for all the existentially hysterical Williams people that surface ends. Ignorance of mortality would indeed be a comfort to her and to them all.[341] But because she is not ignorant, life has become for her a dark march to uncertainty. For them all, as for the girl Willie in *This Property is Condemned*, death can no longer be glossed by the swift millimeter of the movies.

> Did you see Greta Garbo in *Camille*? It played at the Delta Brilliant one time las' spring. She had the same what Alva died of. Lung affection....Only it was—very beautiful the way she had it. You know. Violins playing. And loads of white flowers. All of her lovers came back in a beautiful scene!...But Alva's [lovers] all disappeared....Like rats from a sinking ship! That's how she used to describe it. Oh, it—wasn't like death in the movies.[342]

The expurgated mendacity of movie-fied Puritanism on the subject of death is condemned by Bid Daddy who forces the interissue of literal death-life into the open where Brick can place it in an existential dimension.

> Brick: Big Daddy....It's hard for me to understand how anybody could care if he lived or died or was dying or cared about anything but whether or not there was liquor left in the bottle and so I said what I said without thinking. In some ways I'm no better than the others, in some ways worse because I'm less alive. Maybe it's being alive that makes them lie, and being almost *not* alive makes me sort of accidentally truthful.[343]

Cat's big debate of life and death is not whether the Ochsner Clinic can or cannot save the literal life of Big Daddy; *Cat*'s debate centers on Maggie's attempts—whatever be her motives and drives—to hand Brick back the life of his existential,[344] and secondarily upon Brick's attempts to establish some viable communication with his merchant father.

Death is, after all, the ultimate visible expression of mankind's guilt at alienation from his Creator. In it the general sin of the race is revealed. It is small wonder, recalling Eve the temptress' role in introducing death, that Williams' Lawrence comments wryly:

> Women have such fine intuition of death. They smell it coming before it's started even. I think it's women that actually let death in, they whisper and beckon and slip it the dark latch-key from under their aprons....I have a nightmarish feeling that while I'm dying I'll be surrounded by women.[345]

Perhaps it is for this very reason that *Period*'s George Haverstick takes his bride on their wedding trip in a hearse. The cruel truth is that "the human animal is a beast that dies but the fact that he's dying don't give him pity for others."[346] It gives him instead George's shakes or Chance's hysteria as he fears being killed in the War by an accident like a bullet.[347] The Princess del Lago refuses Chance even the mention of death. She adds, "I've been accused of having a death wish but I think it's life that I wish for, terribly, shamelessly, on any terms whatsoever."[348] And it is perhaps with these words that she establishes herself and several of her sisters, Serafina and Cathy Holly and Lady-Myra, as heroines of life. Death may be the last adventure to the minister in *One Arm*, but to Williams death is an unspeakable outrage, for it is the ultimate confrontation with relentless time. Life for Williams is the Calvinistic pilgrimage whose sequence is uni-directional from the inception of individual life to individual biological death. And between the two points something fierce blazes.

> A man's gotta live his own life....I don't wanta die! I wanta *live*! What I mean is, get out of this [urban] place, this lousy town—...[mercantile] factories, building....Quantity production, everything on a big scale;—that's God!....Millions of people...down here in the mud. Ugh, too many of 'em, God!...Crawling over each other, snatching and tearing, living and dying till the earth's just a big soup of dead bodies.[349]

For most of these people their vision allows them to see their life not as a cyclic phenomenon of seasons but as a uni-directional turtle race to the sea-cradle of life. So that they may never forget, Williams reminds his people in both *Streetcar* and *Camino Real* of their mortality as he employs contrapuntally to their conversations a dark Mexican woman who hawks repeatedly the one line: *Flores para los muertos, flores—flores*.... This is especially functional during Blanche's monologue

on death, desire, and young solders.

> Death....We didn't dare even admit we had ever heard of it!
> Mexican Woman: Flores para los muertos, flores, flores...
> Blanche: The opposite is desire....Not far from Belle Reve, before we had lost Belle Reve, was a camp where they trained young soldiers. On Saturday nights they would to in town to get drunk—
> Mexican Woman: Corones...
> Blanche: —and on the way back they would stagger onto my lawn and call "Blanche! Blanche!"...Sometimes I slipped outside to answer their calls....Later the paddy wagon would gather them up like daisies.[350]

Thus the soldiers, the intimate strangers, became a crown of flowers, dead, to prove her desire, her life, that was the opposite of terrifying sentient death. This is her confessional monologue to Mitch and her existential hysteria increases. She screams for no literal reason "Fire! Fire! Fire!" as she becomes aware that this "jooking" living is the dead-alive that is less than life and worse than death. This being pinched with pleasures as Big Daddy is pinched with pains may be temporarily a satisfactory proof of existence but it is no gauge of true aliveness!

Although death is absolutely universal in human life, Williams' people react with an almost inextinguishable horror at this end. They are afflicted with feelings they did not lose with Eden's fall; they remember that man was not created to die. Death's relation to life is the causal one of some impersonal proto-sin; death affronts, therefore, even mocks, the integrity of man's intended full organicism. Williams resists such dissolution; but because his view of Deity remains ambivalent, his attitude toward death is equally so. He remains ambivalent, his attitude toward death is equally so. He despises man dying the corrupting, dissolving death of Adam, the Old Testament death of revenge, when there is the possibility of redemptive non-death in a New Testament Christ. This ambivalency is not peculiar to Williams, but is typical of humankind's death psychology. Karl Rahner, a most modern theologian, documents death's duplicity.

> The end of man, considered only from man's point of view, constitutes a real-ontological contradiction which is insoluble and irreducible to simpler terms. The end of man as a spiritual person, is an active immanent consummation, an act of self-completion, a life-synthesizing self-affirmation, an achievement of the person's total self-possession, a creation of himself, the fulfillment of his personal reality. At the same time, the death of man as a biological being is a destruction, an accident, which strikes man from without, unforeseeably, with no assurance that it will strike him at the moment in which he has prepared himself for it interiorly. Death is for man a dark fate, the their in the night; it is an emptying, an ending. This simultaneity of fulfillment and emptiness, of actively achieved and passively suffered end, of full self-possession and complete dispossession of self, may...be taken as a correct description of...death.[351]

Such paradox Blanche cannot accept as she fantasizes her movie-fied death that will end her

evanescence and recall her lost time of love.[352] The unwashed grape that will transport her soul to heaven is highly romantic gesture that ignores the fulfillment while belaboring the dispossession. She wishes to return to Nonno's sea. She hopes for some vague life everlasting that is more than the everlasting mechanical life symbolized by the continual restoration of the virginity of *Camino*'s Gypsy's daughter. Life everlasting is the specific hope of all mankind. Big Daddy, the sensitized merchant, diagnoses:

> The human animal is a beast that dies and if he's got money he buys and buys and buys and I think the reason he buys everything he can buy is that in the back of his mind he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life everlasting![353]

But life everlasting has minimal definition for Williams people who have lived dead-alive half-lives of the mechanical. Mrs. Buchanan envisions her rosy burgher life continuing in Doctor John's projected children.[354] Big Mama asks Brick to impregnate the childless Maggie to give the dying Big Daddy the life everlasting he desires. The physical continuance by procreation is in their minds, for in their minds without it—like Maxine's dead Fred—the dead become only an echo, not transported by Nonno's sea but mechanically feeding the fishes in Fred's.[355]

Yet in *Camino Real*, of which "resurrections are so much a part of its meaning,"[356] Kilroy wishes:

> Jean Harlow's ashes are kept in a little private cathedral in Forest Lawn...Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could sprinkle them ashes over the ground like seeds, and out of each one would spring another Jean Harlow? And when spring comes you could just walk out and pick them off the bush![357]

In absurdist fashion Kilroy exploits the concept of physical life everlasting. The Proprietor in 1948's shorter *Camino* comments on the streetcleaners who in both plays are symbols of death. He voices the opinion that everyone thinks that with his own death there will be no survivors.[358] *Iguana*'s Hannah and *Streetcar*s Mitch both know differently; he fears outliving his mother and she, her grandfather. Both live in a world if impermanence, but Hannah and her grandfather most clearly perceive—more even that Alma who loses the vision—the Statue of Eternity. For it is in Nonno's poem of moral advice that physical death's dark night is explained to those who blanche with existential fear. Nonno assures Hannah he will not leave her even in death; for when death, the zenith of life is "gone past forever," "from thence/ a second history will commence."[359] Williams is not quite sure of the nature of this second history, but like the Deity and whom he is likewise uncertain, he is sure it exists.

When an artist makes a coalescence, brings together themes and images and attitudes, attention must be paid. In *I Rise in Flame* Williams integrates his art theme, his chiaroscuro sexual and eating imagery, and his attitudes toward life, love, death, women, violence, and ultimate resurrection. Out of all this emerges a life-triumph over death as art fulfills man's desperate craving for immortality. Williams makes his D. H. Lawrence speak

> I'm an artist.—What is an artist?—A man who loves life too intensely, a man who loves life till he hates her and has to strike out with his fist....To show her he knows her tricks, and he's still the master!...I wanted to stretch out the long, sweet arms of my art and embrace the whole World! But it isn't enough to go out to the world with love. The world's a woman you've got to take by storm. And so I doubled my fist and I struck and I struck....Fiercely, without any shame! *This* is life, I told them, life is like *this*! Wonderful! Dark! Terrific!...That's how it is—when first you look at the sun it strikes you blind—Life's—blinding....The sun's going down. He's seduced by the harlot of darkness....Now she has got him, they're copulating together! The sun is exhausted, the harlot has taken his strength and now she will start to destroy him. She's eating him up....Oh, but he won't stay down. He'll climb back out of her belly and there will be light.[360]

In *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* Williams writes, "Death: Celebration." Inversely he writes, "Life: Celebration" as Sissy Goforth, who does not wish to go forth, wrestles within and without herself with the "meaning of life." Terrified at the death of her husband Harlon Goforth, Sissy abandoned him:

> Suddenly he stops trying to make love to me....I see—death in his eyes....I see terror in his eyes....I get out of the bed as if escaping from quicksand!...I leave him alone with his death, his—[361]

Sissy nearly suffocates like Karen Stone whose husband died next to her on their plane flight over the oldest sea in the world. Sissy's friends have been dying "rat-a-tat-tat"[362] so that knowing she herself is dying[363] she insists that "Everything's *urgentissimo* here this summer."[364] Upon Chris' arrival she covets life even more. She deludes herself into thinking her life is cyclic like the seasons and not uni-directional between the points of birth and death. "The summer is coming to life! I'm coming back to life with it."[365] To convince herself she lies:

> Mrs Goforth: Death—never even think of it...
> Chris: Death is one moment and life is so many of them....Life is something, death's nothing....
> Mrs. Goforth: Nothing, nothing, but nothing. I've had to refer to many deaths in my memoirs.[366]

Chris identifies Sissy with the banner of the Griffin that the Oriental stage assistants raise at the play's beginning and lower at the end.

> One: The device on the banner is a golden griffin.
> Two: A mythological monster, half lion and half eagle.
> One: And completely human.[367]

What's a griffin?" Mrs. Goforth asks. Chris answers: "A force in life that's almost stronger than

death."[368] And this is precisely what Sissy has tried all her life to be: stronger than death, as when she and her Alex toyed with death poking each other with sword tips and muzzling one another with small revolvers.[369] When finally in the act of dying, Sissy is described by Two: "The griffin is staring at death, and trying to outstare it."[370] And when Sissy is dead, Blackie and Chris wonder where all her fierce life has gone. "You feel it must be still around somewhere, in the air."[371] But the bird is flown, done in by its ultimate encounter with the curved prisons of time and space.

The only escape from prison, from the death-trap of existence,[372] is *acceptance* of life and death: "Acceptance is not knowing *anything* but the moment of still existing, until we stop existing—and acceptance of that moment, too."[373] This is Chris' vocation; it is the vocation of Everyman as Angel of Death—to help others break through the terror of literal death into the accepting sea of existence expansion. In a typical Williams inversion, Chris aids an old suicide who stands on a beach shouting cowardly for help.

> I gave him the help he wanted, I led him out in the water, it wasn't easy. Once he started to panic; I had to hold onto him tight as a lover till he got back his courage and said, "All right." The tide took him as light as a leaf.[374]

By inverting and shocking the ordinary sensibility, Williams emphasizes that prolongation of the physical mechanism of life is not living; his point is that a successful literal dying can be a more creative and socially responsible act than merely stoically continuing a dead-alive mechanics.[375] Sissy and Blackie make terrible encounter on this point that was also Lady-Myra's.

> Mrs Goforth: The dead are dead and the living are living!
> Blackie: Not so, I'm not dead but not living![376]

Williams image and point are both Emersonian: *vision* of a higher than physical kind helps man transcend the existential horror. Man suffers terror and hysteria until he is only to "look and look and look, till we're almost nothing but looking, nothing almost but vision."[377] And this vision is that of the artistic eye which in correlating and uniting makes order of the hopelessly absurd and disconnected perceptions of an uninvestigated existence. Death forces the issue and makes man look hard at life. This is the vision given to Vee Talbott, Big Daddy,[378] and "The Poet." Sissy, however, lets her mercantile appreciation of the goods of life obfuscate her sight; like the Pharaohs she plans only to sleep.[379] She misses entirely the "boom punctuation" of her Angel of Death. Thirteen times Chris says *Boom*. Like George's *snap* in Albee's *Virginia Wolf*, Chris throws the *boom* to awaken the existentially drowsing Sissy; the *boom* is to remind her of her mortality, for it is the crack of individual death, individual apocalypse, every man's individual Armageddon. But Sissy, dying with her legalism and her mercantilism (two institutional good opposed to love), puts crass stop to love: she tells Chris to let go her hand as her rings are cutting her fingers. She can't take the chance on love; and consequently in continuing the use she knows so well, she misses the opportunity for love, for "love of true understanding" which can crack "the hard shell" of her heart.[380] Her death is her total alienation.

Isabel in *Period of Adjustment* says, "Love is stronger than death."[381] Love, for Williams,

redeems the failure, the corruption; love denies the ultimate alienation of death; love is the only means of regeneration. But to be all those things love must be a finding of self by going out of the self to lose the self in the other. Love is more than its physical expression in sex, for that can too easily become the cannibalized use of Sebastian and Chance and Sissy. Because love is a dying to self in the other it is appropriate that the act of love is often called by the French *petite morte*.

Sexual use in Williams can be subsumed under Captain Rockley's act of having relations with a porpoise in *You Touched Me*. This is the dehumanized use that makes the other a mere object; this is the most common personal "sin" in Williams. *Phoenix*'s Lawrence raves about the isolation of looking for God in oneself. This use of self that does not end personal isolation is Williams' masturbatory metaphor which locks Billy Spangler of *The Knightly Quest* into his isolation. In his poem "The Siege" Williams repeats the cry of the sexual isolato:

> I build a tottering pillar of my blood
> to walk it upright on the tilting street....
> How perilously do these fountains leap....
> Sometimes I feel the island of myself
> a silver mercury that slips and runs,
> revolving frantic mirrors in itself
> beneath the pressure of a million thumbs.
> Then I must that night to in search of one
> unknown before but recognized on sight
> whose touch...
> stays panic in me and arrest my flight.
> Before day breaks I follow back the street,
> companioned, to a rocking space above.
> Now do my veins in crimson cabins keep
> the wild and witless passengers of love.
> All is not lost, they say, all is not lost,
> but with the startling knowledge of the blind
> their fingers flinch to feel such flimsy walls
> against the siege of all that is not I.[382]

In "Crushed Petunias" Williams declares that living alone in a barricaded house is sin. Mrs. Buchanan counsels John to sin by telling him in *Eccentricities* not to get involved with Alma's strange little group. Blanche tells Stanley that "The four-letter word deprived us of our plantation." And one presumes that Blanche's linguistic delicacy cover the vulgar term for the act of love which is without love and is use.[383] Blanche knows well this act of use; for when she discovered her husband's homosexuality, he became a false god to her and she began to depend on the kindness of strangers.[384] She looks for love-salvation with the proper stranger, but such non-communicative intimacies do not waylay the panic of her unloved heart. Her sister Alexandra del Lago names the act of use as a way of forgetting death. It is the only "dependable distraction."[385] Val had called sex the make-believe answer to communication. Sex is the rented room available since the beginning

of time, as John tells the eccentric Alma.[386] The act of use, being rented, is not love that Chance seeks, "something permanent in a world of change."[387] The streetwalkers' birdcall of love-love in *Camino Real* is far from the love inherent in the term *hermano*, so important to that play's ethic. The mercenary cry of love is worse than hate.[388] In short, love in Williams' quite Christian economy is not groin-centered but is other-centered; for in the other becoming God to the lover the alienation of otherness transmutes into a mutual identity under the aegis of the Creator.

When love is not requited, the unloved lover rightly calls love an affliction; for this reason Alma in both her plays recites a William Blake poem "on the affliction of unrequited love." If Serafina can say that sex without love is without glory,[389] then Alma could make truism of the converse. Both elements are required in a fruitful relation of man to woman to make them one, to complete their union—in Williams' terms—physically and metaphysically as the tattoo transfers from one to the other to both. Quite rightly does Alexandra at the climactic revelation scene in *Sweet Bird* acknowledge that true love of another is salvific miracle:

> Chance, the most wonderful thing has happened to me. Will you listen to me? Will you let me tell you?...I felt something in my heart for you. That's a miracle, Chance. That's the wonderful thing that happened to me. I felt something for someone besides myself. That means my heart's still alive, at least some part of it is, not all of my heart is dead yet. Part's still alive.[390]

She pleads with him to reciprocate; she emphasizes their mutual need.

> Princess: There's no one but me to hold you back from destruction in this place.
> Chance: I don't want to be held.
> Princess: Don't leave me. If you do I'll turn into the monster again. I'll be the first lady of the Beanstalk Country.[391]

She makes the characteristic Williams request that is too often superficially interpreted. She wants "To be warmed—touched—loved."[392] And while the celebration of this touch may be the act of sex, the implications of that act transcend for the Williams people purely physical gratification. Serafina can say: "We had love together every night of the week, we never skipped one, from the night we was married till the night he was killed in his fruit truck on that road there."[393] But it is not so much the physical act of love that Serafina misses; it is the psychic and existential reassurance which come from the act whose passing she laments.

Love is, therefore, more than a sexual phenomenon in Williams, although a Freudian interpretation may be placed on such mother-son relationships as Violet and Sebastian's in *Suddenly*, as Olga Kedrova and her golden son's in "The Mattress by the Tomato Patch," as the mother and son's in the poem "Photograph and Pearls." It is true in one Williams exception, at least, that Mr. and Mrs. Stone could not make their marriage functional until they assumed a mother-child relation; but normally sex is only species sign of Williams' more generic love. It seems, for instance, most unlikely that Tom Wingfield's love for mother and sister has incestuous designs; Chris Flanders, moreover, rejects any sexual suite of Sissy Goforth; and on the farther side of debit it is precisely

sex—its misuse—that obstructs pair after pair of Williams lovers.

Brick tries to correct the existential mendacity endemic to the misuse of love by sex. He and Williams employ a situation which requires a new set of tolerance from their audiences' straight middle-class values. The distortion presented tells much about more socially accustomed relationships of love.

> Skipper and me had a clean, true thing between us!—had a clean relationship, practically all our lives, till Maggie got the idea you're talking about. Normal? No!—It was too rare to be normal, any true thing between two people is too rare to be normal. Oh, once in a while he put his hand on my shoulder or I'd put mine on his, oh, maybe even, when we were touring the country in pro-football an' shared hotel-rooms we'd reach across the space between the two beds and shake hands to say good-night, yeah, one or two time we—
> Big Daddy: Brick, nobody thinks that that's not normal!
> Brick: Well, they're mistaken, it was! It was a pure an' true thing an' that's not normal.[394]

In a more gee-whiz fashion Jim Connor tells *Menagerie*'s Laura that "The power of love is really pretty tremendous! Love is something that —changes the whole world."[395] This change is precisely what Amanda and Big Mama desire as one confronts the absolute death of her past and the other the physical death of her husband. The desperate Amanda says: "In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is—each other."[396] Big Mama 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. Oh, you know we just got to love each other, an' stay together all of us just as close as we can, specially now that such a *black* thing has come and moved into this place without invitation.[397]

Big Mama prescribes that only love can conquer Black Death; but Big Mama is only half-right. Lady-Myra's encounter with Jabe, the symbol of death, clarifies the fact that in Williams' economy literal death is of small import:

> Lady: [Referring to Jabe's knocking] I know! Death's knocking for me! Don't you think I hear him, knock, knock, knock? It sounds like what it is! Bones knocking bones....Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you....I endured it. I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I'm alive once more! *I won't wither in the dark*!...Everything in this rotten store is yours, not just your pay, but everything Death's scraped together down here! [It became Val's because as life force he has conquered liter death, made it meaningless to Lady, and as a consequence deserves the spoils of the conquered.]—But Death has got to die before we can go.[398]

This defeat of death, this need to deprive death of its victory and its sting is a sentiment totally Incarnational and highly Williamsian. The parallel between the general Christian economy and

Williams' view is that biological death having been introduced by sin as an inevitability is in the last analysis transcendable in both economies by the determination of true love. The metaphorical mind, which is Williams', at once dramatizes this love as mutual human response; but to a poet-creator who is vividly conscious of his own creaturehood, the expression of this human response is defined as finding God in the other so that the entanglement is not simply a biological pas de deux but a theological triangle of existence.

Up to this point Williams is a fairly traditional Western writer who subscribes to the belief that created and creative life can indeed be explained and understood; he is not picked in the full vitriol of a self-mocking Stendhal, or in the superparodic tradition of Joyce, Proust, and Kafka: although of late he has, as have they, sent grotesque people with impossible names through mad worlds of his own creative imagination. Yet even in these maddest stories and vaudevilles—*The Knightly Quest* and *The Gnädiges Fräulein*—the main concern remains an existential triumph over death by means of love.

Williams truly believes that love is stronger than physical death; but the Puritan crosses the Cavalier in hybrid Williams and tends to negate the visible power of love. Like the characters of John O'Hara, the characters of Tennessee Williams almost as soon as they find the transcending love which frees or can free their existential are destroyed physically by literal death. It is almost as if the Puritan strain rising out of some national recessive gene makes insistent commentary that America's dream of physical Eden can never be realized.[399]

This trace in Tennessee Williams of the Puritan literalist's inhibition almost compulsively devaluates metaphorical Williams' restored and fruitful Eden of interpersonal love; but not completely, for though the physical base of the metaphor is destroyed by time or biological death (equable entities), the true lovers *accept* without self-pity the unidirectional *boom* of individual apocalypse. This they have learned is the last trial of active passivity before their acceptance into Nonno's eternal sea which laps cyclically and forever around Alma's retrieving fountain of Eternity.

1. Tennessee Williams, *The Knightly Quest* (New York: New Direction, 1967), p. 82.

2. *Ibid*., p. 81.

3. V. L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926), p. 3.

4. Joseph Gaer and Ben Siegel, *The Puritan Heritage: America's Roots in the Bible* (New York: New American Library, 1964)., p. 3.

5. William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* contains in the fifty-three pages of Book One forty-six references to Providence. He is thus far removed from the forbidding, alienated Deity that will emerge on the other side of Eden in Williams' work.

There is, however, a most interesting similarity, a gloss on Bradford by Williams. Although the parallel may be a totally accidental, the tone of the two texts indicates just how closely Williams works with the early American Puritan sensibility.

> Bradford: "Marvelous it may be to...consider how...wickedness did...break forth here, in a land where the same was so much witnessed against and so narrowly looked onto, and severely punished when it was known....Yet all this could not suppress the breaking out of sundry notorious sins....One reason may be that the Devil may carry a greater spite against the churches...and the gospel her, by how much the more they endeavor to preserve holiness....Satan hath...power in these...lands." *Of Plymouth Plantation*, edited by S.E. Morison (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 316.
>
> Williams: "All at once...there was an outbreak of crime in the town of Gewinner interrupting a long period of...extreme orderliness....This was like the first eruption [in this town of the ideal American Project] of some epidemic small pox...increased to a score. Then to a hundred. [As a result] a record number of religious converts were made by all the churches and optimists in the pulpits referred to the crime wave...as 'the Devil's Last Stand.'" *The Knightly Quest*, pp. 71-72.

6. H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Kriegel's, 1956), p. 91.

7. Parrington, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

8. James R. Hurt, *"Suddenly Last Summer*: Williams and Melville," *Modern Drama*, III (1961), 396-400.

9. Walter Blair, et al., *The Literature of the United States* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1966), II, p. 1085.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *You Touched Me* (New York: Samuel French, 1942), p. 19.

12. The influence of Lawrence on Williams has long been obvious:

> Tennessee Williams has frequently stated that he considers D. H. Lawrence the greatest writer of our time, and has freely acknowledged a considerable debt to him. Lawrentian themes and characters appear in every Williams play; there are recognizable quotations from Lawrence; there is a play *You Touched Me!*, based on the Lawrence short story, and a one-act play, *I Rise in Flames...*, based on the last days of Lawrence; and there is a poem dedicated to Lawrence, *Cried the Fox*. Cf. K. K. Sagar, "What Mr. Williams Has Made of D. H. Lawrence," *Twentieth Century* (August, 1960), p. 143.

13. Leslie A. Fiedler, *An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 159.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

15. Nancy Tischler, *Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan* (New York: Citadel Press, 1961), p. 20.

16. Edwina Dakin Williams, *Remember Me to Tom* (New York, G. P. Putnam, 1963), pp. 148-149.

17. "The Yellow Bird," *One Arm and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1954), pp. 199, 200, 202, 207.

18. From the present introductory discussion *Tattoo's* Serafina must nearly always be subtracted; for, a contrast to the rest of Williams' characters, she is his one, major comic creation.

19. *Summer and Smoke* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 214. Immediately before John's remark, Alma, on the other side of the dichotomy, had said about his "cavalier" anatomy lecture:

> ...so that is your high conception of human desires. What you have here is not the anatomy of a beast, but a man. And I—I reject your opinion of where live is, and the kind of truth you believe the brain to be seeking!—There is something not shown on the chart.
> John: You mean the part that Alma is Spanish for, do you?
> Alma: Yes, that's not shown on the anatomy chart! But it's there. (p. 213).

20. *Kingdom of Earth, Esquire* (February, 1967), p. 100.

21. James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dell, 1963), pp. 93-94; italics added.

22. *Three Plays of Tennessee Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 336.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 337.

24. R. B. Nye and N. S. Grabo, *American Thought and Writing* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), I. xxxii.

25. *The Milktrain Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 59-60.

26. *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow, Esquire* (March, 1966), p. 78.

27. "Afterword to *Camino Real*" in *Three Plays*, p. 163.

28. *Ibid*., p. 164.

29. "Foreword to *Camino Real*" in *Three Plays*, p. 159.

30. *Ibid*., p. 159.

31. *Ibid*., p. 162.

32. *The Glass Menagerie* in John Gassner, *A Treasury of the Theatre* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 1043.

33. *Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: New Directions, 1947), p. 41.

34. *Glass Menagerie*, p. 1050. Correlative to Williams' judging of himself as a playwright who "feels" as opposed to those who "think," it is interesting to read Erich Fromm on this basic dichotomy in the American psyche. The latter part of the quotation does double duty in supporting both Tom Williams and Tom Wingfield on the movies.

35. *Eccentricities of a Nightingale* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 101.

36. *Kingdom of Earth*, p. 100.

37. *Night of the Iguana* (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 85, 24.

38. *Ibid*., p. 49.

39. *Period of Adjustment* (New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 79.

40. The quotations in this paragraph are from Paul A. Hummert, "Preparing for Godot," *Today* (June, 1966), p. 21.

41. Gassner, *op. cit*., p. 1032.

42. *Ibid*., p. 785.

43. *Esquire* (August, 1965), p. 95.

44. Tennessee Williams, "Questions without Answers," *New York Times* (October, 1948), sec. 2, pp. 1,3.

45. William Sharp, "An unfashionable View of Tennessee Williams," *Tulane Drama Review* (March, 1962), p. 171.

46. K. M. Sager, *op, cit.*, p. 149.

47. *Battle of Angels* (New York: New Direction, 1940 and 1958), p. 215.

48. Signi Falk, "The Profitable World of Tennessee Williams," *Modern Drama* (December, 1958), I, 175.

49. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (New York: New Direction, 1955), p. 111.

50. *Ibid*., p. 70.

51. *Camino Real* in *Three Plays*, p. 192.

52. Falk, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

53. *Ibid*.

54. Although Williams has adapted several of his dramas into film scenarios, *Baby Doll* was his first "original" screenplay. His feeling for this dramatic form, most indigenous to the time, is patently obvious in the technical fluidity and literary easiness of the shooting script, published as written. It might also be noted that while at MGM he finished a shooting script called *The Gentleman Caller*: MGM read it and fired him. In its second form, *Glass Menagerie*, Warner Brothers outbid MGM for the play written, ironically, on Metro's time.

55. Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), pp. 26-27.

56. *Ibid*., p. 27.

57. *Ibid*., pp. 27-28.

58. *Streetcar*, p. 151.

59. *The Slapstick Tragedy, Esquire* (August, 1965), p. 134.

60. *Battle of Angels*, p. 166.

61. *Orpheus Descending*, p. 47.

62. *Ibid*., pp. 47-48.

63. *The Rose Tattoo* in *Three Plays*, p. 155.

64. *Milktrain*, pp. 44-45.

65. *Period of Adjustment*, pp. 14-15.

66. Brustein, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

67. *Milktrain*, pp. 70 and 111.

68. R. H. Fogle, *The Romantic Movement in American Writing* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), p. 1.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Tischler, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302.

71. In *Modern Drama* (1958), I, 166-171, Richard Vowles has set out to determine "the lineal descent of Williams from Strindberg" despite the fact that in a Stockholm interview in 1955 "Williams explicitly denied the influence of Strindberg." Vowles sees a correlation between the two playwrights on point of moral inquiry, treatment of Life's tense struggles, and theatricality. It is, he decides, "a poetry of the theatre" that they have in common.

72. *Camino Real* in *Three Plays*, p. 313.

73. *Ibid*., p. 239.

74. *Ibid*., p. 281.

75. *Ibid*., p. 316.

76. Tischler, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

77. Marion Magid, "The Innocence of Tennessee Williams," *Commentary*, XXXV (January, 1963), p. 34.

78. A. B. Kernan, "Truth and Dramatic Mode in the Modern Theatre: Chekov, Pirandello, and Williams," *Modern Drama* (1958), I, 101.

79. *Ibid*., pp. 102-103.

80. *Ibid*., 111.

81. *Ibid*., p. 112.

82. *Ibid*., 113.

83. Brustein, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

84. *The Knightly Quest*, pp. 81-82.

85. Magid, *op,cit*., p. 34.

86. Gore Vidal, "Tennessee Williams," *McCall's*, XCIV (October, 1966), p. 107. Williams "is the best playwright the United States has ever produced. And though from time to time the fashion goes against him, he is still there, at work, making a world like no other; and we are all fortunate to have lived in his time."

87. Pauline Kael, *I Lost It at the Movies* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap's Bantam, 1966), p. 126.

88. *Streetcar*, p. 11.

89. Thornton Wilder, *Our Town* in Gassner, *op. cit.*, p. 936.

90. *Streetcar*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, "One Arm," "Angel in the Alcove," "The Coming of Something to the Widow Holly," The Lady of Larkspur Lotion," "Auto-Da-Fe," "Lord Byron's Lover Letter," "Something Unspoken," and "The Mutilated."

91. Taos, New Mexico: "The Purification"; Manhattan: "Talk to Me Like the Rain"; Santa Monica: "The Mattress by the Tomato Patch"; the Midwest: "The Malediction," "The Long Goodbye."

92. *The Slapstick Tragedy*, p. 102.

93. *The Knightly Quest*, pp. 8-9, 42.

94. *Suddenly Last Summer*, p. 13.

95. *Camino Real*, p. 169.

96. *Sweet Bird of Youth*, p. 362.

97. *Camino Real*, pp. 264-265.

98. *Streetcar*, p. 110.

99. *Ibid*., p. 81.

100. *Ibid*., p. 110.

101. *Sweet Bird*, p. 361.

102. *Orpheus Descending*, p. 103.

103. *Ibid*., p. 49.

104. *Battle of Angels*, p. 172.

105. *Camino Real*, p. 326.

106. *Glass Menagerie* in Gassner, *op. cit.*, p. 1059.

107. Donald Justice, "The Unhappy Fate of the 'Poetic,'" *Poetry*, XCIII (1959), p. 402.

108. The quotations in the following three paragraphs are taken from Tennessee Williams, "The Timeless World of a Play" in *Three Plays*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-8.

109. R. W. Emerson in *Selections from Ralph W. Emerson*, Stephen Whicher, editor (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 47.

110. *Ibid*., p. 55.

111. "Sutpen's Hundred is another such island, though in the rich texture of a novel it can be surrounded, in both space and time, by the familiar waters of reality. *Everyman* man also come to mind, and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Penguin Island*." Jacob Adler, "The Rose and the Fox" in Rubin and Durene's *South*: *Modern Literature in Its Cultural Setting* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 353.

112. *Ibid*., pp. 353-354.

113. *Camino Real*, pp. 279, 283.

114. *Suddenly Last Summer*, pp. 70, 47.

115. *Camino Real*, p. 246.

116. *Milktrain*, pp. 8, 89, 111, 109.

117. *Sweet Bird*, p. 352; in the following plot precis, pagination is included in the text.

118. William Sharp, "An Unfashionable View of Tennessee Williams," *Tulane Drama Review* (March 1962), p. 1961.

119. *Glass Menagerie* in Gassner, *op. cit.*, p. 1051.

120. *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, pp. 78-79.

121. *Glass Menagerie* in Gassner, *op. cit.*, p. 1046.

122. "Foreword to *Camino Real*" in *Three Plays*, p. 159.

123. W. J. Bates, *Criticism: The Major Texts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952), p. 514.

124. Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art*? in Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 516.

125. Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

126. Aristotle, *Poetics* in Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

127. *Three Plays*, p. 4.

128. Gassner, *A Treasury of the Theatre*, p. xii.

129. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

130. *Ibid.*, p. 1033.

131. "Something wild...," *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays* (New York: New Directions, 1953), pp. vii, viii.

132. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

133. "Tennessee Williams' POV," *loc. cit.*

134. Jacob Adler's "Rose and the Fox: Notes on the Southern Drama," already cited, deals with both Williams' and Hellman's basic allegories of human existence. The symbolic motifs of *Roman Spring* have been discussed by A. Gerard, "Eagle and the Star," *English Studies*, XXXVI (1955), 145-153. The imagistic heritage of Williams has been examined by J. R. Hurt, "*Suddenly Last Summer*: Williams and Melville," *Modern Drama*, III (1961), pp. 396-400.

135. *Cat*, p. vii.

136. "Something wild...," *op, cit.*, p. xii.

137. Williams in Tischler, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

139. "Afterword to *Camino Real*" in *Three Plays*, p. 163.

140. *Ibid*., pp. 163-164.

141. Gassner, *A Treasury*, pp. 1033-1034.

142. *Ibid*., p. 1034.

143. Jackson, *op. cit*., p. 28.

144. *Cat*, pp. vii, viii.

145. *In the Winter of Cities* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 44.

146. *Gnä*diges Fräulein p. 130.

147. Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 27.

148. *Suddenly*, p. 15.

149. *Ibid*., pp. 16-17.

150. *Ibid*., p. 21.

151. In his "POV" essay Williams wrote: "I am giving away no trade secrets when I point out how many artists, including writers, have sought refuge in psychiatry, alcohol, narcotics, way-in or way-out religious conversion, and so forth."

152. *Suddenly*, p. 73.

153. *Milk Train*, p. 25.

154. *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (New York: New Directions, 1950), p. 101.

155. *Milk Train*, pp. 110-111.

156. *Suddenly*, p. 73.

157. *Ibid*., p. 18.

158. Williams describes Hannah as "ethereal...she is totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking—almost timeless." *Iguana*, p. 18.

159. *Suddenly*, p. 17.

160. *Iguana*, p. 125.

161. *One Arm and Other Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1954).

162. *Ibid*., p. 69.

163. *Milk Train*, p. 26.

164. "Foreward to *Camino Real*" in *Three Plays*, p. 161. In a January 14, 1967 interview of the Irv Kupcinet Television Show following the Chicago premiere of *Eccentricities*, Williams said of III, ii, the hotel room set, that:

> I think the scene that didn't come out last night for me was the scene in which John tries to bed down Alma in the rented room. Now that was a symbolical scene about a rather delicate matter.

Sidney Harris:	I almost went out with the fireplace.
Williams:	A delicate matter of whether or not a man will be able to perform the sexual act with a woman he is not in love with but who loves him desperately. It looks as if it won't come off, and then all of a sudden the fireplace is lit. I suppose that's one of my corny symbols, but for met it worked, although it didn't seem to work in the production.

Williams had hoped that John Buchanan's dialogue would ease the working of what was certainly a heavy-handed symbol.

> Miss Alma, the fire has gone out and nothing will revive it....It never was much of a fire, it never really got started, and now it's out....Sometimes things say things for people. Things that people find too painful or too embarrassing to say, a thing will say it, a thing will say it for them so they don't have to say it. (p. 99)

165. From the beginning, the Dark Lady had represented the hunger of the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon male not only for the rich sexuality, the dangerous warmth he had rejected as unworthy of his wife, but also for the religions which he had disowned in fear, the racial groups he had excluded and despised. The black woman is typically Catholic or Jew, Latin or Oriental or Negro. Wherever the Dark Lady plays a serious role in our literature, she is likely to represent...our relationship...with the Mediterranean Europe from which our culture began; she is surrogate for all the Otherness against which an Anglo-Saxon world attempts to define itself and a Protestant one to justify its existence. Fiedler, *op. cit*., p. 301.

166. *Gnädiges Fräulein*, p. 130.

167. *Milk Train*, pp. 84-85.

168. *Cat*, p. 30.

169. *Ibid*., p. 38.

170. Chance has the "kind of body that white silk pajamas are, or ought to be, made for." The Princess pronounces his body "hairless, silky-smooth gold." (*Three Plays*, pp. 342, 354) Oliver Winemiller of "One Arm" is a "statue of Apollo" whose "one large hand made joyless love to his "sculptured" body. He offers his flanks to the minister whose own dreams had been of a golden panther's "narcotic" lick of his loins. The heroes of "angel in the Alcove" and "The Poet," are used unnaturally and the hero of the short story "Kingdom of Earth" revels throughout in autoeroticism. In *Hard Candy*'s "Two on a Party" Williams describes all of his young heroes from Brick to Kilroy: "The motorcyclist...has one of those blond and block-shaped heads set upon a throat which is as broad as the head itself and has the smooth and supple muscularity of the male organ in its early stage of tumescence." P. 69. Williams' formal poetry is especially ripe in sexual imagery.

171. "...His left hand removed/ from the relatively austere pocket of the blue jacket/ and thrust now into the more companionable pocket of the gray pants....The interior of the pocket is dark as the dark room he longs to sleep in;...in it the hot white hand of the boy is closed on itself/ with a betrayal of tension his eyes have refused to betray....the hot white fingers unclose, they com unknotted and they extend/ slightly sidewise, to offer again their gesture of reassurance/ to that part of him, crest-fallen, on which he depends/ for the dark room he longs to sleep in." *In the Winter of Cities*, pp. 35-36.

In *Orpheus* Lady attacks her estranged lover David Cutrere on this same point after her abortion and his desertion, both done for "Good reasons." "*You* sold *yourself*. *I* sold *my* self. *You* was bought. *I* was bought. You made whores of us both!" (P. 61) Val says: "Lady, there's people bought and sold in this world like carcasses of hogs in butcher shops." (P. 41) The image of merchandizing, especially oneself, is constantly functional in Williams' ethical esthetic.

172. *Iguana*, p. 65.

173. *Suddenly*, pp. 13, 17, 18.

174. *Summer and Smoke*, p. 238.

175. *Rose Tattoo*, p. 153.

176. Val: "They say that a woman can burn a man down. But I can burn down a woman." Lady later agrees: "You can! You can burn down a woman and stamp on her ashes to make sure the fire is put out!" *Orpheus Descending*, pp. 40, 107.

177. *Camino Real*, p. 243.

178. *Ibid*., p. 245.

179. *Milk Train*, p. 245.

180. *Ibid*., p. 85.

181. *Suddenly*, p. 40.

182. *Ibid*., pp.39, 61.

183. *Ibid*., p. 79.

184. *Ibid*., p. 47.

185. Gassner in Tischler, *op, cit.*, p. 303.

186. Gassner, *Best American Plays*: *1945-1951* (New York: Crown, 1952), p. xii.

187. *Orpheus*, p. 66.

188. Esther Jackson, *op, cit*., pp. 36-37.

189. *Ibid*., p. 37.

190. *Ibid*., p. 39. "Many artists, including Hart Crane, have been convinced that there is, operating in contemporary symbol-making, a 'machine aesthetic.' Williams, like Joyce, Eliot, and Pound—and like plastic artists such as Léger—seems to create such 'synthetic' symbols: to invent shapes and forms out of the fusion of organic elements. The great film artist Sergei Eisenstein discussed this technique in modern art. He claimed, for example, that Joyce was aware of using the cinematic technique of montage....Arthur Miller also discusses the use of the camera eye in his *Introduction to Collected Plays* (New York, 1957), pp. 23-36." *Ibid*., p. 37.

191. Williams in Kupcinet Interview.

192. Tischler, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

193. *Ibid*., p. 295.

194. *Milk Train*, p. 7.

195. *Orpheus*, p. 47.

196. Sissy Goforth says: "Everything that we do is a way of--*not* thinking about it. Meaning of life, and meaning of death....Just going from one goddam frantic distraction to another, till finally one too many goddam frantic distraction leads to disaster." *Milk Train*, p. 60. Williams calls "the worst of all human maladies, of all afflictions" the felling of existential dispossession, "the thing people feel when they go from room to room for no reason, and then they go back from room to

room for no reason, and then they go *out* for no reason and come back *in* for no reason." *Ibid*., p. 88.

197. *Ibid*., pp. 68-69.

198. Mrs. Goforth: You *are* what they call you!
Chris: ...As much as *anyone* is what anyone calls him.
Mrs. Goforth: A butcher is called a butcher, and he's a baker. A--
Chris: Whatever they're called, they're men, and being *men*, they're not known by themselves or anyone else. *Ibid*., p. 114.

In Williams' economy this is the inherent failure of the created existential.

Chance: We've come back to the sea....The Gulf.
Princess: The Gulf?
Chance: The Gulf of misunderstanding between me and you.
Sweet Bird, p. 364.

199. *Camino Real*, p. 210.

200. Mrs. Williams read "Tom the Piper's Son," "Little Tommy Tucker," and "Little Tommy Tittlemouse" to her son who objected: "'Evvy'body's [sic] named Tom.'...The name had no distinction to him, even then." *Remember Me to Tom*, p. 19. Williams himself gives various reasons for the change, the most pretentious being that "the Williamses had fought the Indians for Tennessee and I had already discovered that the life of a young writer was going to be something similar to the defense of a stockade against a band of savages." *Ibid*., p. 190.

201. Valentine Xavier is "the very name of one of Tom's ancestors on his father's side, a sixteenth-century Basque who was a younger brother of St. Francis Xavier." *Ibid*., p. 120. In addition, internal to Val's characterization is the fact that he admits to Myra that he has changes his name to Val Xavier. *Battle*, p. 190.

202. *Suddenly*, p. 64.

203. Mary McCarthy, "A Streetcar Called Success" in *Sights and Spectacles* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 131.

204. "Foreword to *Sweet Bird*, " p. 335.

205. *Iguana*, p. 42.

206. *Ibid*., p. 105.

207. *Baby Doll*, pp. 78-79.

208. *Orpheus*, p. 67.

209. *Sweet Bird*, p. 450.

210. *Iguana*, p. 42. "In the South slavery and in the North industry which fattened on slave-produced cotton were outward signs of the inner fall of man who always perverts the freedom which his Creator provided. Even when given a New World..., he again lost Paradise. He carries into every beginning the configuration of the end, his lustful, proud, gluttonous self. That this corrupted nature sows and reaps little except destruction is abundantly dramatized." Louise Y. Gossett, *Violence in Recent Southern Fiction* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1965), p. 42.

211. *Ibid*., p. 51.

212. Robert Fitch, *La Mystique de la Merde*," *The New Republic*, CXXXV (September 3, 1956), p. 17.

213. *Ibid*., p. 18.

214. *Battle*, pp. 130-131.

215. *Ibid*., p. 130.

216. *Ibid*., p. 207.

217. *Ibid*., pp. 210-211.

218. *Orpheus*, pp. 92, 68.

219. *Battle*, p. 161.

220. Signi Falk, *op. cit.*

221. Gossett, *op. cit*., p. 8.

222. K. M. Sagar, *op. cit.* p. 151, comments wryly on various inconsistencies between Kowalski's character and language.

223. *Milk Train*, p. 72

224. *Battle*, p. 194.

225. Gore Vidal, *op., cit.*

226. Williams: Today the theatre seems almost all musical comedy..., so I don't go to it very much. I like to see every Albee play and every Pinter play. And I can't think of anybody else.

Ann Southern: There is a young man named Neil Simon who has written a few funny plays.

Williams: Who?

Ann Southern: Neil Simon.

Williams: What did he write, dear?

Ann Southern: Didn't he write *Odd Couple* and *Barefoot in the Park*? Are you putting us on, Mr. Williams, by asking us who Neil Simon is?

Williams: I really didn't know. *Kupcinet Interview, op. cit.*

227. The connection between Welty and Williams has been established by Winifred Dusenbury, "*Baby Doll* and *The Ponder Heart*," *Modern Drama*, III (1961), pp. 393-395.

228. Gossett, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

229. *Period*, p. 26.

230. *Knightly Quest*, p. 11.

231. Flannery O'Connor in "The Fiction Writer and His Country." *The Living Novel*: *A Symposium*, ed. Granville Hicks (New York: MacMillan, 1957), pp. 162-163.

232. Marya Mannes, "The Morbid Magic of Tennessee Williams," *The Reporter*, XII (May 19, 1955), pp. 41-43.

233. Charles Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," *Tulane Drama Review* (Winter, 1966), p. 172.

234. Williams: Someone in one review of *Eccentricities* said it was a sexless play which astounded me because I thought the play was almost nothing by a woman's effort to integrate sex into her sexless life.

Sidney Harris: I almost said in my review that it made one realize that the word *hysteria* comes from the Greek meaning *womb*.

Williams: I know that. And it seems to me that Alma's hysteria was the whole folium of the play. *Kupcinet Interview, op. cit.*

235. *Iguana*, pp. 80-81.

236. *Knightly Quest*, p. 100.

237. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

238. *One Arm*, pp. 9-10.

239. Jerzy Grotowski, "Towards the Poor Theatre: The Spectacle as Act of Transgression," *Tulane Drama Review* (Spring, 1967), p. 67.

240. *Knightly Quest*, p. 22.

241. A truly excellent study of Williams by R. B. Vowles elaborates at great length upon the fluidity of Williams' plays, their flow of verbal image intermingling with stage setting. *Tulane Drama Review*, III (1958), 51-56. Confer also Esslin on the union of ritual with the dramatic, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

242. *Iguana*, pp. 54-56. Henry Popkin, *op. cit.*, p. 62, notes Williams' heavily anti-institutional bias: "For Williams, religion is a convenient source of symbolism, but [in institutional form] it seems to be without real value in the world of his plays."

243. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

244. *The Knightly Quest*, p. 59.

245. H. C. Rümke, *The Psychology of Unbelief: Character and Temperament in Relation to Unbelief* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), p. 20.

246. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

247. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

248. Edwina Dakin Williams, *Remember Me to Tom* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1963), p. 8.

249. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

250. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

251. Rümke, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

252. *American Blues* (New York: Dramatist's Play Service).

253. Rümke, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

254. "Last year [1958] I thought it might help me as a writer to undertake psychoanalysis and so I did. The analyst, being acquainted with my work...[recognized] the psychic wounds expressed in it." "Foreword to *Sweet Bird* in *Three Plays*, p. 335.

255. Edwina Williams, p. 25.

256. Shannon in his pseudo-crucifixion admits an equation: he is in "rage at Mama and rage at God" (p. 95.) This is the exact equation Maxine had made when she said that because Shannon

had been caught masturbating by Mama the confusion of sex-mother-God started his problems. Shannon agrees, as she says:

> And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside...because she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God wouldn't punish you for it harder than she would....You said you loved God and Mama..., but it was your secret pleasure and you harbored a secret resentment against Mama and God. (p. 81)

257. *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* (New York: Dramatist's Play Service). In heavily supportive repetition of the ravaging female, *vagina dentata* theme are the following:

Iguana's Shannon: "All women, whether they face it or not, want so see a man in a tied up situation. They work at it all their lives." p. 97.

Sweet Bird's Chance curses the Princess who warns him of the coming of his castrators: "That [castration] can't be done to me twice. You did that to me this morning, here on this bed...." p. 448.

Cat's Maggie viciously tries to subjugate Brick by telling him now she had destroyed Skipper and made him only a *passive receptacle*: "When I came to his room that night...I destroyed him....From then on Skipper was nothing at all but a receptacle for liquor and drugs." p. 43. "At the center of most of Williams' plays there is the same slightly repellent pas de deux: the man austere, eager to keep his purity; the woman turning to him like Potiphar's wife unto Joseph." Magid, *op. cit*., p. 38.

258. *Suddenly*, p. 62. Aunt Rose, rejected by her family, actively resigns herself to the hands of her Savior in "The Unsatisfactory Supper," a playlet whose very title continues the communion-cannibalization eating imagery. Through her active passivity she triumphs over the cannibalization attempted upon her by her selfish relatives.

259. *Ibid*., p. 84.

260. *One Arm and Other Stories*, p. 85.

261. *Ibid*., p. 90.

262. *Ibid*., p. 92.

263. *Camino*'s Esmeralda talking of institutionalized religion says:

> And how do you feel about the Mumbo Jumbo? Do you think they've got the Old Man in the bag yet?
> Kilroy: The Old Man?
> Esmeralda: God. We don't think so. We think there has been so much of the Mumbo Jumbo it's put Him to sleep!

264. "Cupidity and Stupidity, that is the two-armed cross on which you have nailed me!" "The Strangest Kind of Romance" in *27 Wagons*, p. 151.

265. Making an allegory of people in the house of dubious master, Chris says:

> Have you ever seen how to little animals sleep together, a pair of kittens or puppies? All day they seem so secure in the house of their master, but at night when they sleep, they don't seem sure of their owner's true care for them. Then they draw close together....Their owner's house is never a sure protection, a reliable shelter. Everything going on in it is mysterious to them, and no matter how hard they try to please, how do they know if they please?...We're all of us living in a house we're not used to....We're left alone with each other. pp. 73-74.

266. *Camino* is particularly concerned with *hermanos*, brothers in brotherhood, to waylay the dispossession man feels under the ambivalent deity.

267. Etienne Gilson, *A Gilson Reader*, edited by Anton C. Pegis (New York: Doubleday Image, 1957), p. 101.

268. *Camino Real* in *Three Plays*, p. 221.

269. *Ibid*., p. 215.

270. *Ibid*., p. 212.

271. This is Kilroy's plea throughout *Camino*. For example, confer *ibid*., p. 220.

272. Serafina in her doubt repeatedly asks for a sign from the Virgin Mary. Act One, for instance, ends with the plea: "Lady, give me a sign!" and Act Two begins with it.

273. Shannon says: "Now Shannon is going to go down there with his machete and cut the damn lizard loose so it can run back to its bushes because God won't do it and we are going to play God here." *Iguana*, p. 122. Once again, in lieu of a dubiously silent God, people must be responsible for each other. Only in *Slapstick* is there any kind of providence or divine intervention: in *Mutilated*, set at Christmas time, Celeste and Trinket are reconciled by and "apparition," the presence of the Virgin Mary; in *Fräulein*, the Fräulein says that God threw her a fish. In both instances, the individuals are sub-normal. Celeste and Trinket are delusional drunken whores and the Fräulein, torn to shreds by birds, is merely translating her own act of love and calling it "providence" as she knows all too well the sacrifice of her being God to Indian Joe.

274. *One Arm and Other Stories*, p. 193.

275. *Camino Real*, p. 189.

276. *Streetcar*, p. 146.

277. *Summer and Smoke*., p. 134.

278. *Eccentricities*, p. 75.

279. *I Rise in Flame*, p. 8.

280. *Iguana*, p. 96.

281. *Summer and Smoke*, p. 151.

282. *Camino Real*, p. 240.

283. *Milk Train*, p. 1.

284. *Camino Real*, p. 327. The imagery of milk in Williams is intricately meaningful. Its best summary is here in *Camino*. When mother's milk turns bad, when the milk of human kindness is not the cup, specifically named as *consecrated* in *Milk Train*, then men cannot mean God one to another and they become *leche mala*, sour on themselves and each other.

285. *Iguana*, pp. 98, 115, 99.

286. *Knightly Quest*, p. 29.

287. *Summer and Smoke*, p. 178.

288. *Milk Train*, p. 73.

289. *Ibid*., p. 82, 110, 65, 92, 113, 114, 105.

290. The long "resistance" passage of *Suddenly* begins on page 66 with Doctor Sugar's injection into Catharine's arm.

291. *Adjustment*, p. 118.

292. *The Knightly Quest and Other Stories*, p. 172.

293. *Sweet Bird*, p. 433.

294. In his [Gewinner's] vision was that alchemy of the romantic, that capacity for transmutation somewhere between a thing and the witness of it. The gods used to do that for us. Ceaselessly lamenting women were changed into arboreal shapes and fountains. Masterless hounds became a group of stars. The earth and the sky were full of metamorphosed beings. Behind all of this there must have been some truth. Perhaps it was actually the only truth. Things

may be only what we change them into, now that we have taken over this former prerogative of the divine. *Knightly Quest*, p. 84.

295. *Iguana*, p. 21.

296. *Sweet Bird*, p. 412.

297. *Baby Doll*, p. 58.

298. Marguerite:...What are we sure of? Not even of our existence....And whom can we ask the questions that torment us? "What is this place?" "Where are we?"—a fat old man who gives sly hints that only bewilder us more, a fake of a Gypsy squinting at cards and tea leaves....Where? Why?...the perch that we hold is unstable. *Camino*, p. 264.

299. *Ibid*., p. 263.

300. *Period of Adjustment*, p.. 12-13.

301. *Camino*, p. 223.

302. *Suddenly*, p. 9.

303. *Battle*, p. 168.

304. *Menagerie*, p. 1041.

305. "Kingdom,", p. 162.

306. *Camino*, p. 262.

307. When the big wheels crack on this street it's like the fall of a capital city....I've seen them fall! I've seen the destruction of them! Adventurers suddenly frightened of a dark room! Gamblers unable to choose between odd and even! Con men and pitchmen and plume-hatted cavaliers turned baby-soft at one note of the Streetcleaners' pipes! *Ibid*., p. 226.

308. *Cat*, p. 38.

309. *Camino*, p. 183.

310. *Menagerie*, p. 1043.

311. *Kingdom*, p. 134.

312. *You Touched Me*, p. 116.

313. *Ibid*., p. 71.

314. *Ibid*., p. 94.

315. *Ibid*., p. 5.

316. *Ibid*., p. 12.

317. *Ibid*., p. 31.

318. *Ibid*., p. 62.

319. *Cat*, p. 190.

320. *Ibid*., p. 80.

321. *Roman Spring*, p. 107.

322. *Orpheus*, p. 40.

323. *Battle*, p. 148 and *Orpheus*, p. 32.

324. *Orpheus*, p. 61.

325. *Ibid*., p. 27.

326. *Ibid*., p. 28.

327. *Battle*, p. 134.

328. *Battle*, p. 179 and *Orpheus*, p. 69.

329. *Battle*, p. 179 and *Orpheus*, p. 69.

330. *Ibid*., p. 75.

331. *Ibid*., p. 42.

332. *Ibid*., p. 42.

333. *Ibid*., p. 109.

334. *Battle*., p. 227.

335. *Ibid*., p. 175; *Orpheus*, p. 63.

336. *Battle*, p. 223.

337. *Ibid*., p. 229.

338. *Orpheus*, p. 114.

339. *Sweet Bird*, p. 416.

340. *Streetcar*, pp. 25-26.

341. *Cat*, p. 75.

342. *Property*, pp. 201-202.

343. *Cat*, pp. 111-112.

344. Oh, you weak, beautiful people who give up with such grace. What you need is someone to take hold of you—gently, with love, and hand your life back to you, like something gold you let go of—and I can! I'm determined to do it—and nothing's more determined than a cat on a tin rood—is there? Is there, baby? *Ibid*., p. 197.

345. *Phoenix*, p. 9.

346. *Cat*, p. 72.

347. *Sweet Bird*, p. 54.

348. *Ibid*., p. 372.

349. *Mooney's Kid Don't Cry*, pp. 11 and 13.

350. *Streetcar*, pp. 138-139.

351. Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), p. 48.

352. Blanche: I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I'm going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I'm going to die on the sea. You know what I shall die of?...I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out on the ocean. I will die—with my hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship's doctor, a very young one with a small blonde mustache and a big silver watch. "Poor lady," they'll say, "the quinine did her no good. That unwashed grape has transported her soul to heaven."...And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard—at noon—in the blaze of summer—and into an ocean as blue as...my first lover's eyes! *Streetcar*, pp. 158-159.

353. *Cat*, p. 73.

354. *Eccentricities*, p. 54.

355. *Iguana*, p. 22.

356. *Camino*, p. 169.

357. *Ibid*., p. 289.

358. Proprietor: Any my death will be like the fall of a capital city, the sack of Rome or the destruction of Carthage—And, oh, the memories that will go up in smoke!...You mean to tell me that all this flesh will be lost? *American Blues*, p. 50.

359. *Iguana*, p. 123.

360. *Phoenix*, p. 17.

361. *Milk Train*, p. 56.

362. *Ibid*., p. 84.

363. *Ibid*., p. 11.

364. *Ibid*., p. 37.

365. *Ibid*., p. 72.

366. *Ibid*., p. 84.

367. Ibid., *p. 5.*

368. *Ibid*., p. 66.

369. *Ibid*., p. 36.

370. *Ibid*., p. 103.

371. *Ibid*., p. 117.

372. Chris:...We—all live in a house on fire, no fire department to call; no way out, just the upstairs window to look out of while the fire burns the house down with us trapped, locked in it. *Ibid*., p. 105.

373. *Ibid*., p. 114.

374. *Ibid*., p. 112.

375. In *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* Williams makes rare reference to suicide and his opinion of that act. A small man is refused entrance to the house of Death because he comes twenty years too early:

> The small man started to cry. He said if you won't let in for twenty years, I'll wait twenty years at the gate, I can't go back down the mountain. I have no place down there. I have no one to visit in the evening, I have no one to talk to, no one to play cards with, I have no one, no one. But the guard walked away, and the small man, who was afraid to talk, began to shout. For a small man he shouted loudly, and Death heard him and came out himself to see what the disturbance was all about. The guard said the small man at the gates had come twenty years too early, and wouldn't go back down the mountain, and Death said, Yes, I understand, but under some circumstances, especially when they shout their heads off at the gates, they can be let in early, so let him in, anything to stop the disturbance. Pp. 78-79.

376. *Orpheus*, p. 33.

377. *Milk Train*, p. 106.

378. *Cat*, p. 77.

379. *Milk Train*, pp. 94, 118.

380. *Ibid*., p. 12.

381. *Period*, p. 28.

382. *In the Winter of Cities*, p. 20.

383. *Streetcar*, p. 45.

384. *Ibid*., p. 165.

385. *Sweet Bird*, p. 372; *Camino*, p. 237.

386. *Eccentricities*, p. 91.

387. *Sweet Bird*, p. 378.

388. *Battle*, p. 220.

389. *Rose Tattoo*, p. 82.

390. *Sweet Bird*, pp. 424-425.

391. *Ibid*., p. 432.

392. *You Touched Me*, p. 50.

393. *Rose Tattoo*, p. 50.

394. *Cat*, pp. 104-105.

395. *Menagerie*, p. 1057.

396. *Ibid*., p. 1043.

397. *Cat*., p. 184.

398. *Orpheus*, p. 109.

399. In the latest Williams' novella, Billy Spangler Calvinistically regards the act of love as an evil brought about by the animal nature of the female whom he equates—perhaps because of Eve's role as temptress—with the devil. Confer *The Knightly Quest*, p. 49.

