CHAPTER VI

FEMALE FRUSTRATION IN LORCA AND WILLIAMS: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE

Both Garcia Lorca and Tennessee Williams have won wide acclaim for their portrayal of female characters because there are few dramatists who have evinced so much interest in the female and in the profound study of her psyche. Williams' gallery of female portraits is embellished with a vast variety of women because of his long, productive career as a playwright, but Lorca, like Albert Camus and Anton Chekhov, has left us only a few plays and hence comparatively fewer characters. However, from the promise that he showed, one can be certain that if his life had not been cut short by his assassination at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, he would have given us many more subtle, passionate, and emotionally-charged female characters. Yet the few women he has created offer an interesting comparison with Williams' females.

Belonging to disparate situations in life, Lorca and Williams have delineated women of different social set-ups and have brought to them much insight as representatives of certain types. If Williams' most affecting female protagonists belong to the antebellum American South, Lorca's women are invariably Spaniards, mostly Andalusians. Still there are some striking similarities in them as dramatists of despair and frustration. In his childhood, each had a tryst with a serious illness which forced him to the isolation of his
household where his only companions were ladies whose prolonged association endowed him with feminine sensibility which enabled him to study the females so closely. The personal experiences at home and later travels away from home made both of them susceptible to the suffering and frustration of women and turned them into playwrights of social protest. While Lorca has concerned himself with the Spanish women, their status in the society and problems accruing therefrom with latent criticism of its values, Williams' compassionate concern has been for the sensitive and fragile Southern women who are dissatisfied with the dehumanized routine life of our times. In the portraiture of these women lies Williams' veiled criticism of the values of crass materialism and brute force of the modern age.

If we accept Eric Bentley's judgment that the usual role of the theatre is to be "a chronicle and brief abstract of the time, revealing not merely the surface but the whole material and spiritual structure of an epoch", then both Lorca's and Williams' dramas must fall within the mainstream because they are works which consist largely of "attempts to represent upon the stage the material and spiritual structure of a new age, an age inaugurated by political, economic and technological revolutions of unprecedented and half-realized scope." Though Williams has often asserted that social problem don't move him yet it cannot be denied that like
Faulkner, Carson McCullers and other Southern writers, Williams' best characters are victims of changing socio-economic conditions. Williams, with his intimate knowledge of the Southern aristocracy, could not remain immune to the plight of the plantation owning class after the Civil War which saw the destruction of the Old South and its cultivated way of life. His works show his awareness of its decay and are "a vehement protest against a society besotted with its pursuit and worship of Mammon, Belial, and Moloch....Williams' principal criticism is directed against the benighted morality of crass utility and money grubbing, and his criticism is implicit in the pathetic plight of his heroines whose personalities have been warped by that same society."

Similarly, Lorca could not remain impervious to the social and political conditions prevailing in Spain just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Calling attention to Lorca's commitment to the social cause, Burton observes:

His perception of the social ills, combined with other personal factors... and his perception of women as the transmitters of culture led him to present the female experience as the core of the three tragedies he wrote towards the end of his life.... The depth and scope of Lorca's social dimension suggest a concerted attempt to denounce the social system.

In his trilogy, he subjects to rigorous scrutiny the antiquated social mores getting precedence over genuine and passionate self-fulfilment. It is an indictment of the institutionalized
victimization of the female in the contemporary Spain. By giving generic and eponymous names to many of his characters, Lorca evidently suggests that the individuality of his characters is subordinated to their functions as representatives of certain social roles or institutions.

A close study of the female protagonists of Garcia Lorca and Tennessee Williams reveals that much of their frustration is the result of the double standards of morality of the society in which they live. Their society believes in moral purity and has exalted notions of feminine virtue and virginity. The Andalucian society which allows great licence to the men severely restricts the women. Even a seemingly harmless malicious gossip or a slight suspicion of the woman's virtue and conduct may cause a catastrophe. The female sex bears the brunt of pressure and punishment in this system of incompatible codes of honour. The decayed Southern society, from which a number of Williams' most memorable characters are drawn, has almost similar restraints on a woman. After the Civil War and consequential upheaval in America, the Southern aristocratic men sold their plantations and squandered their riches to satisfy their carnal desires, but the ideal of a Southern woman as a goddess of virtue remained unaltered. Not only that, the moribund society looked to its women to salvage some of its lost pride and respect. According to Cash, a historian of the South, the social disturbances wrought by the
Civil War we i e to produce "yet more precious notions about Southern Womanhood and Southern Virtue and so to foster yet more precious notions of modesty and decorous behaviour for the Southern female to live up to." 4 Contrasted to them were the young planters who were not fettered by any such conventions and expectations of the society of the Old South and, as Jones has noted:

They married, usually for money, more full-blooded girls of the lower classes, the daughters of wealthy men who formerly had been socially unacceptable... Many of the planters were effete and impotent, often they were homosexual — like Blanche's husband, Allan. And, reared to be a lady the girl who had no money and was terrified of becoming a spinster... was faced with an impossible choice. Her pride forbade her marrying beneath her... and demanded that she marry a gentleman even if he was sexually deficient. 5

Due, no doubt, to the double standard observed in each society portrayed by Lorca and Williams, their women must show allegiance to a code of honour and lead emotionally-starved lives. They refuse to admit the existence of sex in them, although underneath their asexual exteriors are imprisoned strongly passionate women. They want to satisfy their natural urges for sex but the morality code under which they live restrains their desires. The unfulfilment of their desires leads to sexual and psychological frustration in them.

Though the dehumanized code of morality devastates practically all of Lorca's tragic heroines, the terrifying
consequences of its faithful observance are most evidently discernible in Yerma. Yerma is significantly different from the heroines of the other two tragedies, Blood Wedding and The House of Bernarda Alba because, unlike them, she does not eschew the expectations that the society has of her, but even exceeds them. She struggles to uphold the virtues of womanhood; marital fidelity, motherhood, and honour. For a greater part of the play, she is a dutiful wife, giving herself over to Juan and even allowing herself to be watched by her husband's two silent old crones. She had accepted Juan out of obedience to duty. "My father gave him to me and I took him. With happiness. That's the plain truth." The approached the wedding bed with hope and anticipation that she would find her own fulfilment within the bounds prescribed by her position as a married woman:

YERMA. I know girls who trembled and cried before getting into bed with their husbands. Did I cry the first time I went to bed with you? Didn't I sing as I turned back the fine linen bed-clothes?

But, unfortunately, though her marriage is proper and valid in every respect in the eyes of the society, it cannot produce children which is the most important element in Yerma's conception of herself as a married Spanish woman. Her fidelity to her husband and her devotion to duty and traditional honour are as strong as her desire to bear children. She repudiates Juan's veiled charge of adultery against her:
You and your people imagine you're the only ones who look out for honour, and you don't realize my people have never had anything to conceal.... Come near and smell my clothes.... See if you can find an odour that's not yours, that's not from your body.... Do what you want with me, since I'm your wife, but take care not to set a man's name in my breast.8

Her only salvation lies through her husband who, ironically, is entirely blind to her emotional need. Finally, when she strangles Juan in a fit of insanity, she condemns herself to remain unfulfilled for ever. Thus, Yerma, endowed as she is with the greatest sense of moral responsibility to conventional society, is left with nothing but frustration and remorse in the end.

Similarly, Lorca's Dona Rosita and Mariana Pineda are also women of intrinsic quality and traditional virtue who desperately struggle to uphold the sacred precepts of their society, viz., female fidelity and honour. Both of them, like Yerma, adhere to convention and stoutly reject all compromise. But even their unswerving allegiance to the code cannot save them from a horrifying fate. Waiting patiently for her fiancé, who has, in fact, abandoned her, Rosita has valiantly rejected all alternatives.

AUNT: Why didn't you listen to me? Why didn't you marry another?

ROSITA: I was tied.... I've always been serious.

AUNT: You clung to your idea without regard to reality and without thinking of your future.

ROSITA: I am as I am. And I can't make myself change. Now the only thing left for me is my dignity.9
She grows into a grotesque old maid with prospects of nothing but humiliation and shame which the self-righteous society considers fit for a rejected woman. Likewise, Mariana Tineda spurns all depraved suggestions of sexual capitulation to Pedrosa:

What is your plan? Just know I am not afraid of anyone. Like fresh-sprung water, that's how clean I am, and even though your touch could soil me, I'll still defend myself.10

Preferring death to dishonour, she goes to the gallows.

On the other hand, there are not many women in Williams whose expectations and aspirations are strictly in accord with those of the society in which they live. But one who lives in accordance with the code of traditional morality and who bears some resemblance to Lorca's Yerma in her devotion to love, duty and honour is Alma Winemiller, the heroine of Summer and Smoke. Like Yerma, she, too, gives expression to the higher ideals to which the modern society still owes allegiance, i.e., the ideals of filial piety, sense of discipline, and respect for tradition. If the quirks of fate have bound Yerma to a frigid man to whom her longing for a child is an anathema, they have made Alma fall in love with a young doctor who believes only in gay indulgence of physical urges and who, therefore, cannot appreciate her devotion to the traditional ideals. Given to the contemplation of the soul since her childhood Alma does not submit to John's overtures for a sexual relationship. Rather, she yearns to play the role of a genteel lady and uphold the traits that the society has cultivated in her. She prefers a life of the spirit to a life of the flesh:
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, just the same, yes, there! .... And it's that that I loved you with — that! Not what you mention.11

Despite her fidelity to conventional morality, Alma remains unfulfilled like Yeats. By the time she realizes the futility, and perhaps the foolishness, of adhering to the hollow traditional values, she finds that it is too late since life has already passed by her. John forsakes her for a more compliant girl who can give him far greater sexual satisfaction.

Another woman who shows respect for tradition is Stella, Blanche's younger sister, in A Streetcar Named Desire. Despite the fact that she has declassed herself by marrying a Polish labourer, Stanley Kowalski, she has, at least, in one major respect, preserved the Southern convention. The mistress in the old Southern society is traditionally submissive to her husband. While the master takes care of the larger issues of life, the mistress occupies herself with domestic affairs in this society. To quote porter:

Stella has adjusted herself to her husband's way of life, and this adjustment corresponds to Southern tradition about the wife's place in society. Thus the rebellion which Blanche instigates never really materializes.... In any event, her sexual dependence reflects the dominance that Southern tradition ideally proposes of master over mistress.12

So, we see that in Lorca's world even strict adherence to the conventional morality leads not to any haven, but instead
to despair, humiliation an frustration. His heroines lead lives of great sacrifice and renunciation at the expense of their emotional fulfilment. However, Williams' attitude to convention is ambivalent. If its observance destroys Alma, it is the one factor which saves Stella from the pathetic plight of her sister, Blanche.

The single most important factor which underscores the frustration of the individual in modern drama is his loneliness, his physical and spiritual arrogrness from the society in which he lives. According to Arthur Millar, there exists a kind of wall between the individual and the society, a wall which he can neither scale nor blow up. This aptly describes the plight of the female protagonists of Garcia Lorca and Tennessee William: they find a reasonable adjustment to the society well nigh impossible. It is interesting to note that their isolation is mostly the result of the social and economic conditions of the societies they have portrayed. According to Dusenbury:

The deleterious influence of socioeconomic conditions on Southern characters... including the material loss of the plantations and the depletion of the land, as well as the destruction by carpetbaggers, after the Civil War, itself had wrought much havoc, but it also includes, by inference at least, the moral isolation inherent in the society before its material fall...[Williams'] plays doubtlessly portray truthfully the terrifying loneliness of those clinging to a society of the South which has become so debilitated as to be almost non-existent.13

In describing the desperate attempts of his heroines to find security and protection, Williams is at pains to show that the members of the plantation owning class cannot exist in
isolation. Either they must adapt themselves to a new mode of life as Stella does in *A Streetcar Named Desire* or they must perish like Blanche. Most of the aristocratic Southern women like Amanda, Blanche, Cassandra and others, cannot adjust themselves to the highly competitive world; they lose the psychological sense of belonging somewhere, suffer desolating spiritual and physical apartness, and finally, are destroyed in one way or the other.

In the case of the Lórcan heroines, it is their efforts at self-fulfilment which mostly dispose them to physical and spiritual isolation from their community. The primitive, closed society expects them to accept their suffering as their fate, not to breathe a word about it nor raise their "arms against the sea."14 Lórcan best illustrates his point when he reveals Yerma's unavowed fear of separation from neighbours, from tradition, and from society itself in the scene of the laundresses in the play. He makes explicit not only Yerma's spiritual apartness from her community, but also the reasons why such an apartness exists. The society considers Yerma abnormal, worthy only of being laughed at, because she refuses to resign herself to her fate. Her moral and physical isolation, coupled with her problem of sterility, accentuates her suffering.

The congruity of the pattern is discernible in *The House of Bernarda Alba* where Adela suffers isolation when the truth of her affair with Pepe is known. All the members of the household, including the maid-servant, Foncia, conspire to prevent
her escape. It is not only her mother, the oppressor, but even her sisters, the oppressed, who thwart her attempts at self-fulfilment. Finding herself completely isolated from the group, and without a man to protect her, there is only one course left open to her: in sheer desperation she commits suicide. Through dramatizing the physical and psychic apathetic of his heroines, Lorde criticises the society for its lack of compassion to understand and appreciate individual suffering.

Both García Lorca and Tennessee Williams view sex as a necessary urge of the body the repression of which leads to devastating results. A greater part of the frustration of their women, as mentioned above, is the outcome of sexual starvation and emotional unfulfilment. In Lorca, sexual repression is inevitably the consequence of the restraints that an overly self-righteous society imposes on the woman. The Bride, Yerma, the daughters of Bernardo Alba—all feel suffocated in the repressive atmosphere and long for emotional release, but the set-up in which they live obliges them to stifle their urges. In Williams, on the other hand, though social forces do play a significant role in the sexual repression of the woman, it is also the result of a conflict between id and ego ideal in many of them. The most appropriate case in point is Blanche DuBois who plays the role of a gracious and refined lady or the Old South when she comes to stay in New Orleans with her sister. She finds Stella serenely happy in her physical relationship with Stanley, a perfect ‘he-man’. She is attracted to Stanley’s sensuality but, as a lady, she cannot but express her open disgust for him and,
as David Sievers observes, "with unconscious jealousy, she tries
to split them apart and convince Stella that Stanley is an ape,
'something sub-human, thousands of years old, a Stone Age Caveman'.

In spite of Stanley's explosive temper, however, their violent
quarrels end in passionate reconciliation and it is 'the things
that happen between a man and woman in the dark' that make her
life in New Orleans worthwhile". The relationship between Stella
and Stanley arouses strong desire for sex in Blanche, but the
super ego of a lady in her obliges her to stifle it. Similarly,
Alma, though extremely passionate and strongly sexual, projects
a stern puritanical exterior on account of the hermetic and
restrictive atmosphere in which she has been brought up. As
a defense mechanism against her sexuality she develops a kind
of passiveness, nervous laughter and somatic symptoms as well

...We see within Alma at the beginning the seeds of the same
devastating conflict between physical desire and a stern super ego
which overwhelmed Blanche Dubois." By the time she recognizes
her true sexual nature, John has forsaken her. The hysterical
repression of sex, therefore, precipitates Alma's final decay.

Another common premise which unites the heroines of the
two playwrights is their frustration in love. When they lose
love, they lose God, they lose themselves and their world is
darkened by the gloom of despair. Lorca's Dona Rosita and Williams
Alma and Laura face the same predicament: each of them sees the
man she loves pledge his troth to another. In many ways, Rosita's
loss of her fiance is analogous to Laura's loss of Jim and Alma's
less of John. Dona Rosita and Laura, in particular, bear some remarkable similarities: both are gentle and fragile and both possess ineluctable grace. If Rosita is a rose whose life is limited to just twenty-four hours, Laura is delicate like a moth. Both retire from the world around them, the former because of her broken dreams and the latter on account of her physical deformity and pathetic inability to face the world of reality around her. Rosita, however, has at least known a past which in retrospect was full of the bliss of love, but Laura has known just one moment of self-fulfilment with her gentleman caller which, too, ironically has helped to exacerbate her present pitiable situation. Her present is as wretched as that of Rosita and "the moment that she comes face to face with the present—the uncertainty, the insecurity of all life in that present—she turns and runs away. For it has been her experience to see the present not as a stairway leading to those stars of his or hope but as a broken shattered basement of all that is ugly, misshaped, and hopeless. It is the present, with its shattered hope, that lies smashed... around her."17 Similarly, Rosita's present dilemma "consists precisely in her awareness of the hopelessness of her hope and in the inevitability that as a spinster she will come to occupy a role in that society that is the object of derision and pity, bereft of any dignity." Thus, in the case of both the heroines, their projection of themselves consists only of black and realistic prospect of spinsterhood and its shame. In the end, they both have tragic beauty and win our sympathy and admiration for their heroic
efforts to suffer their humiliation in private. Rosita silently
and uncomplainingly bears her rejection and abandonment by
her fiance. She wants to live in obscurity: "I want to flee.
I don't want to see. I want to be left serene, empty. Doesn't
a poor woman have the right to breathe freely?" Likewise,
Lara, always mute like her lifeless glass figurines, never
opens her heart to either her mother or her brother. When
she blows out the candles, she engulfs herself in the over-
pervading darkness which is her ineluctable fate.

Williams' Alma presents a sharp contrast to Rosita in
her attitude towards her frustration in love. While Rosita,
true to the Andalusian morality, cannot think of any man other
than her fiance and stifles her physical desires, Alma's reaction
to her disappointment is quite drastic, for at the end we see
her embark on the career of a sportive lady. Rosita, aware of
the position of jilted women in the society in which she is
reared, accepts her fate as something inevitable, but Alma,
on the other hand, can't renounce desire because to her, as to
most other Williams' women, the opposite of desire is death.
And so, to avoid death, she capitulates her soul to desire.

A common fate that joins the women of the two playwrights
in frustration is that most of them are unhappily married. In
no case do we witness the sustained fruition of a happy relation-
ship between a man and a woman, except, of course, a Stella-Stanley
nexus. In the Spanish society, portrayed by Lorca, marriage is
a symbol of prestige for a woman while for a man it is a comfort-
able arrangement: a wife to look after him and to rear his
children. The men enjoy the privilege to have sexual satisfaction through infidelity, but the wife must look to her husband alone and if he is sexually deficient, she can do nothing but smother her instinctual desire for sex. Lórea, through portraying the erotic frustration of his heroines, criticizes marriages which are not based upon love but are rather a business transaction. For instance, the Shoemaker's wife "has had to accept the essential injustice of a world which could marry off a fiery young beauty to a wrinkled milquetoast, simply because he had money and she had none.... how sad a world she has had to accept."20 She, therefore, justifiably frets at her marriage to the aged Shoemaker, who cannot meet her sensual demands.

WIFE: ... but I'm to blame — I and I ... because I ought to stay in my house with ... I almost don't want to believe it, with my husband. If any body had told me, blonde and dark-eyed — and what a good combination that is, with this body and these colours so very very beautiful — that I was going to marry a ... I would have pulled my hair out.21

Belisa's insatiable sexual needs remain unsatisfied in her hopelessly unpromising marriage to the old Perlimplín. Yerma, too, is married to a man who has failed not only to give her a child but also to awaken her to the full potential of her sexuality. Even the village women know that the fault lies with her husband.

OLD WOMAN. The fault is your husband's....

Neither his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather behaved like men of good blood. For them to have a son heaven and earth had to meet.22

Marriage, however, is not as big a social obligation for an American woman as it is for a Spanish woman. It is a
necessity only for women like Laura who are not prepared to take up a position in life because without a home of their own, they end up "in some little mousetrap of a room... eating the crust of humility all their life."23

By Williams' own account, the conflict between his plots was irresolvable and life-long. It acted as an irresistible shaping force on his imagination and impelled him to use it as a thematic motif in many of his plays. In The Glass Menagerie, the most autobiographical of his works, the conflict between Amanda and her husband, the result of compatible temperaments, leads to Amanda's desertion. In most cases, however, the dissatisfaction of Williams' women with their married state is an account of their erotic unfulfilment. Lady Terrance, in Orpheus Descending, is bound to Jake, who is a personification of impotence and sterility. Referring to Jake as an incarnation of death, Lady Terrance tells Val: "Don't you think I hear him, knock, knock, knock? It sounds like what it is! Bones knocking bones ...."24 Blanche DuBois is also a victim of an unfortunate marriage to an effeminate young man who, because of his inability to satisfy her need for physical love, committed suicide. The vacuum and emptiness in Mrs. Stone's life is the evident outcome of her meaningless marriage to the sickly and impotent Mr. Stone. Many more instances of this type abound in Williams' works.

Nonetheless, there is a basic difference that marks the attitude of the heroines of the two playwrights towards marriage. While Lorca's women like Yerma, the Shoemaker's Wife,
remain loyal to the men to whom they are bound. Williams' women like Lady Torrance, Mrs. Maxine Taulk, etc., have extra-marital relations and show no scruples of conscience in seeking sensual satisfaction outside their marriage.

Both Lorca and Williams have drawn women who suffer frustration because their longing for motherhood has remained unfulfilled. For Lorca's Spanish women, maternity is one of the most essential functions that a woman is expected to fulfill. Children are a woman's greatest asset, her security and a warrant for a respectable position in society. To quote Burton: "Children are the fulfillment and legitimization of women which is why the desperate seeks a child. They are also insurance for the legitimate wife. The social rights of Leonardo's wife are secured because she has borne a child.... She can spurn him and dedicate herself to her children, preserving her own honor instinct despite her husband's infidelity and disgrace."25 A woman without children lacks authenticity in such a society and the world lacks meaning for her. This is best illustrated by Lorca in the character of Yerma who "longs for the whole emotional, psychological process of motherhood, from a spiritually willed conception to uncomplaining and joyous suffering during pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, care of the child and even endurance and abuse from the child as a youth."26

In the contrast, motherhood, like marriage, is not such a driving force for an advanced American woman because she has found pursuits which are far more absorbing and profitable than
the bearing and rearing of children. Maternity is not of necessity her highest goal. She may even be dedicated to a goal which demands childlessness. And if she has an economic mission, children may well signify an obstacle and she may legitimately renounce motherhood. We have, at least, one example of such a woman in Mrs. Stone in Williams' novel The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone who detests the thought of having children because she considers them a hindrance to furthering her prospects as a stage artiste. Yet, Williams has created women for whom maternity is a mystic ritual and its unfulfilment a cause of great suffering. In an early play, The Mutilated, Trinket has nearly as strong a maternal instinct as Yerma. Like Yerma, she regards motherhood as a religious ritual which has remained unfulfilled in her case. As the Lorcan heroine daydreams about the child from her own womb:

I shall to you, child, yes, for you I'll torn and broken be. How painful is this belly now, Where first you shall be cradled.

Trinket fantasizes sentimentally about the Blessed Mother and the Child: "His sweet hungry lips are at the rose-petalled nipple - oh such wanting things; lips are and such giving things breasts." Ironically, however, both women are denied participation in the sacred ritual of motherhood though, of course, for different reasons: Yerma is bound to a frigid man who is incapable of giving her a child and Trinket cannot find a lover who can help her realize her dream.
In some other women of his full length plays, viz.,
Margaret Hollitt and Lady Torrance, Williams tries to figure a
spiritual rejuvenation in pregnancy. These women share Yerma's
longing for a child and her faith in the mystical function of
maternity. However, of these women, the one who comes closest
to Yerma in frustrated motherhood is Margaret, whose husband,
Brick, has recoiled from physical relationships like Yerma's
husband, Juan. Though it is possible for both the women to
sire a child outside their marriage yet they prefer renunciation
of the goal of motherhood to being disloyal to their husbands.
Yerma looks up to Juan for the fulfillment of her emotional need:
"... he's my only salvation. By honour and by blood. My only
salvation." Margaret, similarly, waits for Brick to answer
her urgent drive. To Brick's thoughtless and warped suggestion
of a lover, Margaret replies, "I can't see a man but you! Even
with my eyes closed, I just see you." However, the comparison
ceases there. While Yerma fails to arouse Juan to the pitch
of her passion to answer her consuming longing, Margaret, like
a strong-willed Strindbergian woman, is determined to succeed.
Though the play ends on an ambiguous note, so typical of Williams,
yet we are prone to believe that Margaret ultimately succeeds
where Yerma has failed.

Williams' Lady Torrance in Akebeus Descending is a
comparatively simpler portrait of a woman whose desire for mother
hood, like Yerma's, has been smothered in an unhappy and fruitless
marriage to an invalid who personifies sterility and death.
But she lacks the poignant intensity and helplessness which
constitute the principal appeal of Yerma. If Yerma considers herself "like a dry field where a thousand pairs of oxen plow," Lady compares herself to the cursed fig tree which would never break forth in blossom. "It never bore any fruit, they said it was barren. Time went by it, spring after useless spring, and it almost started to die." The comparison however, does not stretch beyond this point. Though Yerma's body and soul thirst for a child, she opts for barrenness rather than choose adishonourable means of self-fulfilment. Lady, on the contrary, is not tormented by any scruples of conscience and traditional notions of honour and fidelity. She gives herself wholly to the enjoyment of the bliss of physical love with Val Xavier and, in the process, conceives. The contrast in the attitude of the two women brings in sharp focus the respect that Lorca's and Williams' women have for conventional ethics of morality. Nevertheless, Lady's joy at the expectation of bearing new life is transient and her fate hardly different from that of Yerma. If Yerma meets with metaphysical death after she has destroyed the very hope of begetting a child, Lady is shot when the insanely jealous Jabe discovers her affair with Val.

The female protagonists of Lorca and Williams present a contrast in their reaction to death. Williams' heroines are haunted by a sense of impermanence, particularly death. "Williams conception of man", as Gerald Weales observes, "is of one dogged by the knowledge of death and, hence, scarcely able to live the little life he has." Some of his heroines like Alexandra in Sweet Bird of Youth and Mrs. Flora Goforth in The Milk Train Doesn't Step Here Anymore are so much afraid of death that
they don't like to be reminded of it. To quote Alexandra:

> Whether or not I do have a disease of the heart that places an early terminal date on my life, no mention of that, no reference to it ever. No mention of death, never, never a word on that odious subject. I've been accused of having a death wish but I think it's life that I wish for, terribly, shamelessly, on an terms whatsoever.\(^3^4\)

Unlike Millora, Lorca looks at death from a different angle as Pedro Salinas perceptively notes:

> The vision of life and man that gleams and shines forth in Lorca's work is founded on death. Lorca understands, feels life through death... Lorca was born in a country that for centuries has been living out a special kind of culture that I call the culture of death... [it] is a conception of man... in which the awareness of death functions with a positive force... within which a human being may as itself, not only in the acts of life, but the very act of death.\(^3^5\)

Thus, death and violent death at that whose elongated shadow is present everywhere in Lorca's world, is not frightening for his women. True to the tradition of the Spanish people, they have a passion not only for living but for dying also. They look at death fearlessly. Death loses its awesomeness when these women act on impulse. The bride, while in elopement with Leonardo in the woods, prefers death with him to life without him. Adela gives precedence to death over a life of shame and sterility. The Bridegroom's Mother faces death without wailing now that her son is "a fading voice beyond the mountains."\(^3^6\)

Paradoxically, death gives her a philosophic release from sufferi

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\(^3^6\)Thus, death and violent death at that whose elongated shadow is present everywhere in Lorca's world, is not frightening for his women. True to the tradition of the Spanish people, they have a passion not only for living but for dying also. They look at death fearlessly. Death loses its awesomeness when these women act on impulse. The bride, while in elopement with Leonardo in the woods, prefers death with him to life without him. Adela gives precedence to death over a life of shame and sterility. The Bridegroom's Mother faces death without wailing now that her son is "a fading voice beyond the mountains."
Bernarda, quickly getting over the initial shock of her daughter's death, composes herself and stoutly declares, "Death must be looked at face to face." 37

There is another dimension of female frustration in both Lorca and Williams when they deal with the mother figures. Their frustration stems not from the factors recounted but from their concern for their children. Both the playwrights have brought out the element of frustration in their mother figures with deep perception and profound poetic sensibility. The Mother, in Lorca's Blood Wedding, and Amanda Wingfield in Williams' The Glass Menagerie, present a compelling comparison and contrast. They are both endowed with a sympathetic and loving solicitude for their children. Both are women without their men: years ago the Mother lost her husband in a violent confrontation, and Amanda was abandoned by Mr. Wingfield. Thus, on their shoulders has fallen the responsibility of looking after their offspring. The Mother's only hope is her son, the Bridegroom, and she is continually preoccupied with the thought of preserving him from harm because it is only through him that her fond dreams of grandchildren will be realized. In the same way, Amanda, "a curious combination of exaggerated gentility on the one hand and an exasperating practicality on the other," 38 is equally concerned about her two children, especially Laura. Her one great consuming regret is that she has not been able to find a gentleman caller for her morbidly introverted daughter. Despite all her euphemism about Laura's physical deformity, she cannot
shut her eyes to the reality of the situation and makes desperate efforts to see her securely settled in life.

Notwithstanding all their concern and solicitude for their children, these two mothers ironically aggravate their problems and precipitate the crises. Amanda, by perpetually referring to her imagined aristocratic past and relating fabricated stories of her success with men as a Southern belle, helps only in inculcating an everlasting sense of inferiority in Laura till finally she turns her into a hypochondriac, making her retreat further into her cocoon of isolation. In the same way, the Mother, ever anxious for the safety of her son, incites him to avenge himself on Leonardo, who has challenged her family honour by taking away the bride. She has a foreboding that her son will not survive the ensuing violent duel and so she could prevent the tragedy by washing her hands off the impetuous, lustful bride. But it must be reckoned that she is a Spanish woman for whom honour is much more precious than any other thing, including her only son. Finally, her worst fears are realized and she is left alone to mourn her dead. Though Amanda does not encounter the fate of the Mother, her plight is also tragic and she evokes our sympathy. Tom, her son, follows the roving footsteps of his father and Amanda is left alone with Laura.

Lorca's Bernarda Alba, who possesses entirely different reasons, sentiments, and attitudes, is also a frustrated mother who presents a sharp contrast to Amanda. The problem of arranging matches for her spinsterish daughters, which constitutes a night-
Irish reality, has warped her personality and left her utterly dissatisfied in life. Bernarda takes out her feeling of frustration on her daughters. Instead of feeling concerned at the plight of her emotionally starved girls, she lets loose a reign of terror on them. She drives sadistic pleasure by incarcerating them in the tomb-like nursery of her house. Motivated by an antiquated and dehumanized code of morality, she forces them to stay behind closed doors and barred windows so that they may never know what goes on outside the walls of their prison. To her "face in the eyes of the world and honour in the name is above any concession to the starved emotional life of the women." The death of her youngest daughter, brought about by her own perverse distortion of the truth, instead of softening her, hardens her still further and impels her to enforce the code with greater ferocity. She courts death as a welcome release from the strangulating domination of Bernarda but her sisters cannot hope to come out of the dark pit of frustration.

Bernarda's hypocrisy and concern for appearances bring her close to Williams' mother figure, Mrs. Venable of Suddenly Last Summer. "The sparkling cleanliness of the varnished floor and spotless panes of the china cupboard in the first act are the physical analogues to Bernarda's preoccupation with surfaces and facade" and she retains this preoccupation till the end of the play. By ordering virginal burial of her daughter, she lies to society and thereby shows that her devotion to social morality is hypocritical. Mrs. Venable, a savage and a creature
almost as frightening as Bernarda, is committed to the annihilation of her niece through the agencies of society. Like Bernarda she is chiefly interested in keeping up a false facade. As Bernarda does not want to reveal the true circumstances leading to the death of her daughter, Mrs. Venable does not want the society to know the facts about her son's end at the hands of some cannibalistic archfiends of an island. Her lies, like Bernarda instead of moving her to grief and resignation, motivates her to bribe a doctor to perform lobotomy on a poor girl to stifle the truth.

Emmie, Matilda's aunt, in Williams' short play, You Enchanted Me!, is another frustritated other figure who represents the aggressive sterility of Bernarda. Like the inhuman Lorcan woman, Emmie, too, believes in malelessness and aims at reducing the net amount of masculinity in the Captain's house. However, unlike Bernarda, she cannot for etude repression. She loses when Matilda is won over by Hadrian.

To sum up, Lorca and Williams have enriched their plays not only with poetic and dramatic content but also a social analytical dimension. Their experiences, coupled with their reactions to the socio-economic conditions of their time, impel them towards the theatre of social action and made them draw women who are victims of such conditions. Though the female protagonists of the two playwrights belong to divergent social and cultural milieux, there are, as we have observed, several points of convergence between them apart from some obvious dissimilarities. The heroines of both Lorca and Williams suffer
as a result of the code of morality which regulates their lives. Though the code is observed for more rigidly in the primitive Spanish society depicted by Lorca yet its devastating results can also be seen in the Southern American society portrayed by Williams. It obliges the women to repress their instinctual desires and deny themselves emotional release and self-fulfillment. In Williams' aristocratic ladies, the conflict between carnal desires and super ego plays no small role in the repression of sexuality. But repression of natural urges, irrespective of the reason, often leads to the physical and spiritual devastation of these women.

Besides, the female protagonists of the two playwrights are maladjusted in conjugal relationship. Very often the discontent with their marital state arises from their sexual dissatisfaction. However, while the Lorcan woman like Yerma and the Shoemaker's Wife remain loyal to their men and smother their physical urges, Williams' women like Lady Torrance are not troubled by any scruples of conscience, and have extra-marital relations. Unfulfilled motherhood is yet another common cause of frustration of the heroines of both Lorca and Williams. Maternity is a cherished goal for a Spanish woman and its unfulfillment a cause of tragedy, both personal and social. This is the reason why Yerma desperately longs for a child. Though motherhood does not constitute such significance for an American woman, yet Williams has created women like Margaret, Lady Torrance for whom maternity signifies spiritual rejuvenation. They share
Verra's despair for their sterility.

No where do Lorca's and Williams' women differ so much as in their attitude and reactions to death and mortality. The Lorcan woman, living in accord with the Spanish tradition are not scared of death. They realize only too well that death is an inescapable element of existence. For Williams' women, however, awareness of the extinction of life and creativity constitutes a major cause of regret and despair. They are constantly haunted by a sense of loss, a sense of impotence and fear of death that they cannot live properly the short life they have been allowed.
NOTES


7. Ibid., p. 104.

8. Ibid., p. 142.


16. Ibid., p. 381.


2. Five Plays, p. 186.


5. Three Tragedies, p. 150.


10. Three Tragedies, p. 106.


12. Three Tragedies, p. 140.


15. Orpheus Descending, p. 143.


19. Three Tragedies, p. 94.

20. Ibid., p. 211.


40 Anderson, p121.