Chapter-3

SHREDS OF DISINTEGRATED BEING:
_A Streetcar Named Desire, Summer and Smoke, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Suddenly Last Summer_

Tennessee Williams can be praised as one of the greatest dramatists of 20th century. He left a legacy of theatre classics including The Glass Menagerie, Sweet Bird of Youth, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and A Streetcar Named Desire.

In the plays of middle phase, Williams has presented the theme in a different manner, based on his moral system. His moral system is based on the rejection of life. The characters, who are guilty of such crimes, are duly punished. He has set of moral code that they have to observe. He like a judge feels if a person violates the moral code, he must be punished. We can see the theme of rejection of life in 'Summer and Smoke' (1948), Cat On a Hot Tin Roof (1955), and Suddenly Last Summer (1958) etc. the plays of his middle phase. Arthur Ganz feels.

"A whole group of Williams' plays including some of his most remarkable- A streetcar Named Desire, Summer and Smoke, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Suddenly Last Summer- is centered on this idea of the terrible punishment visited on one because of an act of sexual rejection."\(^1\)
These plays are the spirited advocates of unbridled sexuality but present a slight change to the repressed heroines of *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Rose Tattoo*, who do not accept the reality or accept it too late.

It is interesting to learn that the characters presented in these plays remain passive to sexual objects. Both Blanche and Maggie are married to sensitive men who are the suspected homosexuals. Their attitude to their situations throws light on fact "they are really as unlike as a moth and eagle."\(^2\) Blanche becomes horrified by the fact that her husband is homosexual and the disgust and depression on her face makes him to commit suicide. Arthur Ganz truly writes that she "endured as atonement for her act of rejection, ... Blanche sees the doctor who is to lead her off to the asylum, her punishment is complete."\(^3\) However, Maggie deals the affair courageously. She not only changes her husband from homosexual tendencies but also succeeds in resuming married relations with him. She also motivates her husband to atone for his earlier act. Williams in conversation with Arthur B. Waters tells,

> Blanche DuBois and Margaret share certain attributes, notably strongly passionate natures, … but whereas Blanche is weak and pitiful-- almost a mental case- Margaret is sturdy, strong and resilient.\(^4\)

Brick adopts alcoholism in order to escape from the reality of his homosexual friend's death whereas Blanche seeks to escape from the reality of the death of her same husband. According to Norman. J. Fedder:
Brick's escape in drink from the fact of his guilt in the suicide of his best friend, Skipper, reminds us of Blanche DuBois' defensive alcoholism to avoid the memory of her part in the death of her husband. In both cases the discovery of homosexual tendencies precipitates the rejection which results in suicide.\textsuperscript{5}

In these plays Williams has shown the hypocrisy and ambivalence of the moral codes of society with its effect on some of the sensitive members. The repressed sexuality indulges them to an act of promiscuity. Strangely enough, they are curiously virginal though they come to the category of prostitution.

In this another play, \textit{Summer and Smoke}, Alma is a girl who has lost her love and tries to cope with rejection realistically. Her reaction becomes more serious and she turns ‘sportive lady'. It is noteworthy to record an ironic anatomy lecture of her mate John who indicates, "This part down here is the sex-- which is hungry for love because it is sometimes lonesome."\textsuperscript{6} She rejects the advances of John and runs away. He clings another straw and she is let down by her mate and is driven to prostitution. Her Puritan society's norms create a compelling situation and like Blanche, Alma 'has committed the sin of rejection, is condemned to be tormented by the every urges she had fled from, and turns to promiscuity.'\textsuperscript{7} She is strongly sexual underneath the veneer of behaviour like a person shocked by sexual matters. Norman J. Fedder experiences that there 'beings in realistic documentation and ends in
expressionistic fantasy: the moth like Alma is suddenly transformed into a nymphomaniac fox."\textsuperscript{8}

His play, \textit{Cat on a Hot Tin Roof}, though a remake of \textit{A Streetcar Named Desire}, yet differs from the latter that here the rejecter, the sinner in this play, is man not a woman. Though Williams doesn't heavily punish him yet hurts his ankle in order to make him cripple for a while. The playwright makes him to atone but he is moved by announcement of his wife that she is pregnant. Arthur Ganz writes:

... a play designed for the commercial theatre, Williams could not then openly punish Brick for failing to be an honest- homosexual .... but it is worth noting that by mitigating Brick's punishment, Williams was relieved of the necessity of asking his audience to agree that Brick deserved castration for an act much of that audience would not have considered criminal.\textsuperscript{9}

Williams's most violent play, \textit{Suddenly Last Summer}, deals with Mrs. Venable's obsessive love for her dead son, Sebastian and equally passionate hatred for her husband's niece, Catharine. Sebastian being a homosexual and intimately close to his mother, never understood the real meaning of life. He had been travelling with his mother and writing only one poem each year. His rejection of reality of life led him to death. "Once more the pivotal figure, the exiled homosexual, has met a violent death before the opening of the play."\textsuperscript{10} Catharine who had been with him in the last journey, started to desire him. But after the Sebastian's death, when she is brought to Dr. Cucrowicz for
lobotomy, he becomes her sexual overtures; he resists it. "As result, Cucrowicz becomes a compelling sexual object for Catharine, since he both summons up her desire for Sebastian and Sebastian's desire for men." Catharine has to become a victim desiring Sebastian and accompanying him in his last journey. Norman J. Fedder observes realistically:

Like Blanche- running away to escape the memory of unsavory sexual experience- Catharine is only confronted with a more horrid one; she has accompanied Sebastian on his last summer and has witnessed his moral disintegration and horrifying death.12

**A Streetcar Named Desire** (1947)13, the most famous play of Tennessee Williams mainly deals with Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski. Blanche represents the aristocratic culture of the Old South with all its grace and decadence while Stanley symbolizes the barbarism of the North. Blanche has to encounter two opposite moods and temperament of behaviour and the play records her survival. "Her destructiveness is clear both in the immediate action on stage (her disruption of Stella's marriage) and in the expositional past (her attack on her husband Allan)."14

The play opens with Blanche in her prime of life, well dressed and born and bred on a Southern plantation, "Belle Reve." She arrives at home of her sister Stella, who is living with her animalistic husband Stanley Kowalski. Blanche comes out as a lady of refined speech and behaviour and from the very beginning of the play her identity as a 'lady' becomes fixed in the minds of the audience. As a child of aristocratic family she feels dismay in New
Orleans. She doesn't like even the residence of her sister. Blanche and Stella appear to be exact anti-thesis of each other. Stella is simple but for satisfaction of animal instincts, she lives happily with her virile and violent husband.

Blanche has no exact knowledge of his brother-in-law and she is shocked to learn about his primitive character. She tries to awake Stella against her brutish existence as well as Stanley Kowalski. Kowalski foresees in her a coming danger to his marital life.

Slowly-and-slowly, he starts to uncover her past and learns about her secrets of life. He finds that she had been married to a delicate and poetic young man Allan, but he was a homosexual. After the mystery of his homosexuality was revealed by Blanche, the young man had committed suicide by triggering his pistol into his mouth. Since then, Blanche resorts to drinking and sex and runs away from the fearfu reality and becomes a famous character in the town. The matter becomes serious when she is caught seducing one of her boy students and is expelled from the school.

After coming to Stella and Kowalski, another chapter of Blanche beings. She tries to make Mitch, an intimate friend of Stanley, favourable in the hope of marrying but Stanley reveals her past to him. When she wants to marry Mitch, he rejects her. In this way, every event contributes to upset an already disturbed person. Her condition becomes worse than earlier when Stanley rapes her while Stella is being in the hospital to deliver her child and
rejects to accept Blanche's story of the rape and judges her deranged and mentally disturbed.

In the final scene, mentally deranged Blanche is well-dressed and looks as if she is going to dance. After a short conflict with the matron of the hospital she walks out to the doctor, who shows certain intimacy and respects for her being a woman and takes her to the health centre.

The play deals with the conflict between the two civilizations- the dying aristocracy and the modern cynical democracy. Blanche represents traditions of aristocracy like idealism, civilization and refinement. In her defeat the dramatist tries to present the defeat of humanism and idealism by modernism. When she enters the play, "she's looking wonderful." (p.34) Williams describes:

She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, ..... She is about five years older than Stella. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. (p.11)

Apart from her physical charm, she is a learned lady as she often quotes Poe, Hawthorne and Whitman. She is well-versed in French and has been a teacher of American Literature. She is undoubtedly "a cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man's life- immeasurably!" (p.145).

She feels contemptuous when she reaches the locality of her sister and is outraged by the animalism of Stanley. Even in her evil days, she prides
upon her cultured heritage. She knows that life and tradition of the Old South have been vanished, yet she maintains the traditions with dedication and determination and possesses "beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart..." (p.145) She cries against the crude forces of violence, unsophisticated behaviour and is mouthpiece of the dramatist of the Old South.

Blanche is possessive and nostalgic of the dead past and like Amanda, the reflection of her past echoes in her and its glorious image makes impossible to compromise with her present ideals. She passes her life desperately "mainly in illusion, denying today and living in imaginary yesterday."\(^15\) She always tries to conceal her weaknesses. Even after a romantic heart, she seeks love even in the broken world. She is a woman constantly refused to acknowledge reality yet fired by it. Definitely, Blanche's refusal of reality, her denial of real sexual nature leads her towards tragedy. As a result, in the opening of the play, she has sold the family plantation and has been dismissed from her high school teaching job because of immorality. She bears Puritan and Cavalier instincts, but more than it she is a Belle Reve. She comes to Stella by a streetcar named 'Desire'.

Blanche holds a split personality. She consciously presents herself a genteel woman, while in her core of heart, she yearns for physical intimacy. Her marriage to Allan Grey, a homosexual person fails and she is responsible for his suicide. But she becomes more guilty by establishing physical relationship with boys and soldiers. She seeks sex to get relief from her pain
and for her, opposite of death is desire. After the death of her husband her intimacies with strangers crave to fill her empty and hungry heart. Her gratification of confused sex becomes more of an emotional necessity than of a physical want. Her unsuccessful attempt "to alleviate her guilt by a string of promiscuities, which she regarded as chances not to fail others as she her husband."16 Her confusions reveal a deeper expression of a deeper human need and through Blanche, Williams presents the story of the victims denying reality and real urge of natural sex which ends in the tragic guilts.

Her quest for sex as an unsatisfied desire goes on and she meets Mitch in Elysian Fields, and both of them have lost their mates. Blanche seeks her future in him and Mitch too finds a lonely person who needs same tenderness and love like her. Mitch also finds in her a perfect lady suitable to take home to his mother as he tells Blanche; "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be--- you and me, Blanche?" (p.110) The intimacy between them reaches climax and may also be seen in this statement of Mitch, "Just give me a slap whenever I step out of bounds" (p.103) But when he learns about the secret of her life, he rejects her and treats like a whore, a prostitute. Her last hope is also shaken and shattered.

Blanche is a victim of the hypocritical society. She finds herself unable to become either a woman who marries and has children or who has a sexual and life-giving pleasure. These standards of the society destroy her attempts to form a meaningful relationship. Her guilty past prevents her to seek a normal life. Mitch's rejection makes her the most isolated, lonely and
rejected. She now has no home to live. Her tragedy makes her helpless not even living up to her dreams. She has to face the cruelty of the nurse as being deranged and being frightened, Blanche is pinned to the floor. A Doctor takes care of her and lifts her. Blanche responds him with smile and follows him blindly. She has no lost her aristocratic nature even in the moment of her defeat and tells the doctor:

   Whoever you are --- I have always depended on the kindness of strangers (p.165).

   Blanche rolls down like a wanton piece of stone and moves here and there in search of happiness and after destroying her own married life she comes to Elysian Fields and becomes medium of disturbance in the happy married life of Stanley and Stella. Before her arrival they enjoyed an intimate and happy marriage by continuous love making. Stella had compromised with the barbarism and animalism of her husband's behaviour. When Blanche tells her about her uncultured and brute husband, she defends him and says to Blanche:

      But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark-- that sort of make everything else seem- unimportant (pp. 78-79).

   But she still knows that human kind is superior beyond physical or animal instincts. Stella is realistic in her approach and her points of view
explain that the ideals bringing pain and disillusionment to life are useless and life without a partner has no existence, no meaning and no context.

The struggle becomes intense when Blanche intrudes in Stella's personal life and it leads to her isolation and she is strained and cut-off from her sister and her lover. It also casts shadows on the lives of Stella and Stanley because life for them was never the same as earlier. Stella does not believe Blanche's story of the rape and she turns blind for the story and concentrates on her newly born baby. Joseph Wood Krutch truly remarks, "Stella, the representative of a decayed aristocracy, is rejuvenated by union with a representative of the people." Blanche makes her conscious of the aristocratic need-renderings, gentility and other finer feelings which have become negligent in her relationship with Stanley. But Stella loves reality but not dreamy aristocracy.

When the play starts, sympathy stands in favour of Stanley because Blanche is portrayed as an unwanted intruder in the family. She not only seeks a shelter there but also invades Stanley's domain with a traditional sensibility and culture and tries to rob Stanley from Stella. But in the course of the play this sympathy shifts. Stanley's inadequacy for compassion comes into focus with his rough acts. His cruelest gestures come on surface by the time he rapes Blanche, while his wife is in the hospital to give birth to a child. But he is not entirely wrong as he is bewitched and attracted towards her physical charms and she too responds him and tells to "close the curtains before you undress any further" (p.144) Blanche's attitude towards him
comprises conflicting emotions pulling in opposite directions. So there is a typical paradoxical opposite attraction between them which can't be discussed in principles and theories.

It is a sexual battle between Blanche and Stanley and the conflict is both inner and outer. She finds her match in him and firsts with Stanley which suggests that she acutely desires sex with him and he relieves his sin from by raping her. But the consequences of this brutal confrontation of bodies captures Blanche's reason, she is carried to an asylum where she is now "totally unable to distinguish between illusion and reality, giving herself over to the care of the doctor with a childlike simplicity and confidence." In this way, out of his ignorance, Stanley destroys both Blanche's hopes and desires as well as her illusions:

In Stanley Kowalski, Williams has incorporated all that he finds most reprehensible in the society: its insensitivity to aesthetic values, its unthinking cruelty, ... its vicious stupidity born of ignorance, its smug complacency in its own worth and in its perversion of love into the perfunctory extirpation of desire."

While discussing the tragedy of sensuality in the plays of Tennessee Williams, J.V. Szeliski observes, "Williams' sensitive protagonists cannot make successful adjustments to this kind of life-problem without becoming animals themselves. Failing this they are destroyed." It is a real conflict of animalistic men and women involved in animal acts which destroys them. Blanche is one of the vivid moth characters of Williams defeated by
circumstances and Stanley is the ultimate version of the harsh rivet. He is "marvelously selfish, a miracle of sensuous self-centredness."\textsuperscript{21}

Blanche, at last, is very much afraid of life and sex and is on the way of punishing herself for her betrayal of her homosexual husband, a sensitive poet. She becomes a guilt-ridden personality in the world where the homosexuality is an unmentionable disease. In the play she becomes crazy to commit suicide. She in downward progress toward salvation comes to the realization of her own responsibility for her suffering. She is identified as one of the leading characters in the plays of Tennessee Williams because of her extraordinary personality. She, at last, is a woman's parody and a definite version of antebellum girlhood.

The play is symbolical and identical with feelings of characters. 'Desire' is Blanche's streetcar on which she rides to reach Elysian Fields, her sister Stella and her brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski. Through the symbolic names, the dramatic art of the playwright comes out. Their importance is obvious here. Blanche in her painful life has experienced 'desire' and 'death'. Coming to her sister she is treated as an intruder and is expelled brutally. 'Desire' is not only streetcar for Blanche but also for Stanley because both ride on the same streetcar of desire and sex.

For the playwright, sex is the great leveller and a great life force in the play. Blanche and Stanley come on equal terms in name of sex. The genteel Blanche and raw Stanley are riding on the same streetcar though their reason to ride is different. Blanche rides in order to relieve the fragility of her life,
while Stanley rides because it becomes a necessary physical pull and function for his life. Both Blanche and Stanley are equally and clearly treated by the playwright.

Blanche's sexual disorder begins with her homosexual husband who becomes the centre of this major social disease. Williams develops a complex cluster of other indiscrimination of society in the play like prostitution, sexual obsession and others. Mitch's growing interest and attachment with Blanche seems to consummate in marriage but the sexual disease and confusion all symbolically planted in him, don't allow him to settle with Blanche. She becomes a victim of social disease.

We can confirm Blanche's guilt of her previous life, her uncompromising relation with her husband Allan, but she is also guilty of leaving 'Belle Reve'. It clears that she wants to live like a free bird quite unknown to the society to which she belonged and doesn't like to live in realistic chains of responsibilities. In her five month stay with her sister at Elysian Fields, she loses everything. It can be reckoned as a steady decline from the transcendental vision to her poetic life. Her classical knowledge with in-depth study of Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman etc. goes in vain. Every action of Stanley is violent towards her and forces Blanche to go down into the depth of her broken world. The rape by Stanley, incidentally on her birth day, brings her mental humiliation, a symbolic death. Blanche is ambivalent between sophistication and physical pull of sex and her sexual desire doesn't
end and continues like virile Stanley. They share the bottle of whisky, dress and undress in the view of one another and wish to occupy the bathroom:

*He rips the sack off a quart beer-bottle ..... she moves slowly toward the dresser, where she stands with her hands knotted together. (p.144)*

Blanche DuBois is a hyper-sensitive character and as she is victimised and raped in her sister's home which proves dangerous to her. Mitch also deserts her and she stands among the animalistic people and becomes a neurasthenic person producing severe mental illness that shakes and affects her whole body. In this connection, Stella becomes the representative of the decayed aristocracy and Stanley a natural man of virility while Blanche is regarded as a symbol of the decaying beauty and refinement, losing battle against the crude vitality of the progressive stream.

Blanche realizes her responsibility of suffering in her downward salvation and concludes that she suffers more from her own transgressions than the actions of her relatives. She confesses herself guilty and faces the side effects of her husband's death:

He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired-- so that the back of his head had been blown away!

[She sways and covers her face.]

It was because-- on the dance-floor-- unable to stop myself--I'd suddenly said-- "I saw! I know! You disgust me... "And then the
searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this-- kitchen-- candles... (pp. 109-110)

The play may be compared with D.H Lawrence's short story "The Princess". Norman J. Fedder writes that 'intensity of language and action in the portrayal of brutal conflict and mental disintegration leaves little to be desired and, granting the characteristic differences, compares most favourably with Lawrence's similar achievement in "The Princess".' In both A Streetcar Named Desire and "The Princess" we see a fragile heroine who runs away to an alien world of darkness and primitiveness. It is the fact that Blanche has a history of promiscuity behind her, before she enters the household of Stanley Kowalski. She loses her aristocratic family's fortune and her social condition, while the princess remains a virgin till she is forced to yield to Romero in the isolated forest cabin.

The attitude of Stanley is animalistic not only for Blanche but for his wife also, as it is seen in the conversation between Stella and Blanche:

STELLA:

When he's away for a week I nearly go wild! ....

And when he comes back I cry on his lap like a baby ....

BLANCHE:

I guess that is what is meant being in love. .... (pp. 23-24)
But, at the same time Blanche also tells her, "In my opinion? You're married to a madman!" (p.72) She continues:

What such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to go to bed with him! (p.77)

Blanche is an uncontrolled sophisticated woman of sex and alcohol and alcohol plays a prominent role in the play. It is a source of Blanche's hysterical escape from reality. Stanley drinks to induce a state of conjugal oneness. It also becomes a medium to bring both Blanche and Stanley closer.

Another feature of the behaviour of Blanche is quite suggestive and it is a combination of her sexual gestures toward Mitch. It also suggests her desire to resettle as she expresses before Stella:

I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes-- I want Mitch .... very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be any one's problem .... (p.92)

Blanche's struggle throughout the play is surely more with herself than with others. Her conflict with Stanley may be inevitable from the moment she entered his home but began with the suicide of her husband in the party. Thus the downfall of her future, however, springs not from the conflict other characters but from the rejection of Allan Grey on the floor of dance at Moon Lake Casino.
Stanley rapes Blanche without thinking about her nervous breakdown but he does so because he was physically attracted towards her and he has probably not been sexually satisfied due to growing pregnancy of his wife and the attraction and desire of Blanche stimulates him to do so.

When Blanche comes to New Orleans at the beginning of the play, her statement serves as a symbolic prophesy of her movement there:

BLANCHE: [with faintly hysterical humour]

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! (p.11)

Her arrival to Elysian Field is her search for life and to fulfil empty desires. But before coming here she doesn't purge herself from her crime, her responsibility for the death of her husband. She had to travel the sacrificial path before she came here. But she tells her sister that her extreme desire brought her New Orleans. We can witness the element of the play which encloses Blanche and Stella:

Stella could purge whatever inheritance of guilt she might have received. Blanche cannot. Denying herself or being denied the vivifying effect of the marriage to the future, she is trapped in the past. The barren woman condemned to an asylum becomes a perfect image of the South.
Blanche, at last, is trying to purify her guilt in the play and her ritualistic hot baths become symbolic for the process of purgation and purification.

When Blanche meets Mitch, a close friend of Stanley Kowalski, first time, she is attracted by him and introduces herself to Mitch:

Yes, Stella is my precious little sister. I call her little in spite of the fact she's somewhat older than I! Just slightly. Less than a year! (p.60)

and the conversation proceeds on

BLANCHE:

Married? No, no. I'm an old maid schoolteacher!

MITCH:

You may teach school but you're certainly not an old maid. (p.61)

Stanley reveals her past to his friend, probably he doesn't want to keep his friend in dark. Ram Narayan Panda experiences that Stanley's sincerity towards his friend Mitch also "runs counter to his animalism as he unfolds the details of Blanche's past, for he does not want his best friend to be betrayed."24 When Mitch confronts Blanche with the knowledge of the truth about her sordid past, she readily confesses her guilt:

Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan-- intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with ..... I think it was panic, just panic, that drove
me from one to another, hunting for some protection--- here and there, in the most-- unlikely places-- even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but-- somebody wrote the superintendent about it-- "This woman is morally unfit for position!" (p.136)

As we see in the play, Blanche spends much of her times trying to conceal her realities and has lost her natural graces. She is naturally guilty of sexual transgression. Her marriage to a homosexual husband has in effect been a logical extension of her desire. Her cruel exposure before her husband is the origin of her guilt. It ought to be atoned by her own sexual sacrifice. But she craves for sex, meets strangers which reflect her neurotic recoil from the real.

On the other side, Stella is pregnant and enjoying the fruits of her motherhood. But she is forced to refuse the reality as it becomes essential for her to deny her own sister. We also find a kind of ambivalence in the play which makes Williams an androgynous playwright. The playwright has not only locked the female and male relationship but has also created the sexual cruelty and punishment, unnatural frigidity and mutual consolation. It finally represents a divided sensibility of split-personality like characters in the play. The great price is paid for the rejection of the life in the play. Williams's characters are also the victims of modernity. They attract our attention, sympathy and concern. These characters are full of horrors of death and they imagine a world for perfect order.
The confusions are created by the author himself by creating a variety of sexual attitudes. G. Thomas Embrey highlights such sexual confusions and writes:

More confusion is created by the wide variety of sexual attitudes the heroine displays and acts on. Her incompatible, unreconciled notions keep her constantly at odds with herself, but rather than acknowledging that she is a confused and neurotic, the play seems to share her problems, for it provides no indication that any of her various attitudes are unrealistic or inconsistent.25

Tennessee Williams is essentially a psychological realist, who is concerned with what he calls "the ambiguity of men". The major characters are recognised by their polarity and the layers of such ambiguity can be realised which are the hidden personality of his characters. For instance, Stanley Kowalski is guilty of deliberate cruelty and animal habits. In his brutal rape of Blanche DuBois, his animal instincts are to protect himself. Blanche describes Stanley's animal habits to Stella

He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one talks like one! There's even something-- sub-human-something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something-- ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in--anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is-- Stanley Kowalski-- survivor of the stone age!" (p.80)
While Blanche who is the victim of Stanley's cruel attack and painful suffering from her past elicit our sympathy, goes out of her way to flirt with him. Stanley's rape of Blanche is brutal and destructive but he feels sex as a natural instinct and doesn't feel guilty of raping her. He takes it a part of game. He doesn't experience sex as a guilt or demand forgiveness. Such is the case with Blanche who condemns Allan for his homosexuality. Thus there are certain unmanly and unwomanly instincts of sex which are undetectable either by Stanley in his rape or by Blanche in her condemnation of asexuality. They are guilty in their own way for which they are unconsciously unknown. Ram Narayan Panda rightly observes:

However, Stanley's animalism becomes amenable to partial negation on the discovery of his warmth and sincerity towards his wife as he, "a good as lamb," repents for his behaviour on the poker night.  

But, Blanche herself is a desperate lady, still gripped by her confused and destructive sexuality. She lacks co-ordination of time and place. She has lost hope for the beauty of life and is waiting for death and decay surrounded around her. Jordan Y. Miller observes:

She makes her final stand alone against the predatory vengeful male; she fights and loses. She finally departs with dignity, while Stanley growls and grumbles. He has fired his ultimate weapon against her and has quite literally destroyed Blanche, but at the
same time he has destroyed any semblance he may have had of his own decency.  

But, Blanche's struggle throughout the play is more with herself than with Stanley. John M. Brown records her tragic downfall as such:

Her abiding tragedy comes neither from her family's dwindling fortunes nor from her widow's grief. It is sprung from her won nature. From her uncontrollable duplicity. From her pathetic pretensions to gentility even when she is known as a prostitute..... From the fastidiousness of her tastes and the wantonness of her desires.

At last Blanche is lost in the hell of disintegrated self and the salvation which is presented in the play is placed momentarily in Mitch. She wants to establish a positive relationship with him but in vain. In her attempt to enter the life of Mitch's sincere love is also shattered. The catastrophe has been inevitable, but there is also strange nobility in her departure as Jordan. Y. Miller records:

There is beauty and delicacy, love and devotion, an attractive side of life that Blanche insists upon Stella's recognizing and seeking. Blanche, having been abandoned, watching death and decay compounded around her, remains a person who, to most deserves, would seem to be on "right" side, carrying her colors with pride and dignity.
Williams also describes:

... her terror subsides a little. The lurid reflections fade from the walls, the inhuman cries and noise die out and her own hoarse crying is calmed. (p.165)

The play presents an imperfect world of sexual choices. In Blanche, it is allied with indiscrimination, in the form of a decayed sentimentality, and an attractive gentility while it is allied in Stanley Kowalski with a coarse new order, vigorous but rude and boorish. Stella's choice is not explicit in this connection. Though she cries with bitter grief for her sister, chooses her husband as a part of life. Here, we find Williams presenting sexuality against non-sexuality that Robert B. Heilman presents:

What is notable here is Williams' complication of the basic Lawrence melodrama, which as in Lady Chatterley's Lover and St. Mawr tends to put sexuality and all other virtues on one side and non-sexuality and the other vices on the other.\(^{30}\)

Williams goes on with Blanche to say that the crucial trauma in her was the discovery that her husband was homosexual. But he wants to be fruitful to improve her personality but the cruel fate changed the face of her life. He makes Blanche to reveal her husband's suicide and not to adopt a better life. The playwright transcends the story of the victim and generates complicity or tragic guilt in the heroine.
The whole play deals with the punishment that its heroine Blanche DuBois has to confront and bears atonement throughout her life only for her rejection of reality. Her sin is in the terms of Williams's morality and his action begins in the play quite late in the story. After the recommendation of doctor to lead her to the asylum, her punishment is complete in the court of playwright and asylum becomes her last resort.

At the first glance, Kowalski's primary function to destroy Blanche is clear but after the close analysis, his role changes and reduces his sin. By becoming Blanche's destroyer, he becomes very close to Allan, her homosexual husband; he avenges Blanche for Allan Grey. Thus, Stanley turns guilty of destroying Blanche, while she becomes guilty of destroying her husband Allan. Blanche has lost the plantation of Belle Reve, her beautiful dream of gracious gentility. Her sister's residence is now her exile. Like her homosexual husband, the ape-like Stanley Kowalski is another brutal, male torturer of lonely spirit. Blanche's life becomes a parade of shadows. Each gesture of love and lust echoes into her being at the moment of atonement for this guilt.

Blanche is a divided self or split personality as her sexual nature is contrary to her attempts to gentility, and this leads her to her breakdown. Even though, she avoids adult sexual relationship, yet she actively seeks affairs with adolescents. She later confesses that she had many "one-night-stands" with the young soldiers of the nearby army camp. She makes her relationship with the children because she feels guilty about the death of her
young husband. Her real aim for pursuing sexual relationship seems to quest for sex, as she describes Mitch:

..... There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water spout, and-- I met you..... I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle -- - .... ! (p.137)

Blanche's sex evokes the acute awareness for her physical attractiveness. She exercises her sexual charm to prove her beauty not for sexual satisfaction but to win a man. She pursues Mitch but she has no real wish for a mature man and woman relationship. Her attitude for Mitch is also self-centered. She sees in him a shelter for her future but considers it as a difficult dream, that she describes, "a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in!~ But I guess I was asking, hoping-- too much!" (p.137)

The virile Stanley takes Blanche's tears as a symbol of real sexuality and concludes it was pre-divided. For him, it was not rape but expression of natural bodily urge. Stella avoids all the events that have taken place in her house in order to save her happy home. Her womanhood is realistic and she is real woman of Williams. "Life with Stanley, sex with Stanley" is her highest value. Her refusal to accept Blanche's story of rape is commitment to self presentation rather than love. Thus, indirectly, Stella contributes to enhance Blanche's disintegration. In the end, Blanche is finally punished for her guilt and she accepts her punishment happily. But her aristocratic dream and cry of herself is yet maintained as an idealistic shelter:
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? [She plucks a grape] I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out on the ocean. (p.158).

In brief, Blanche apart from her physical relationship and unsuccessful love-affair is an aristocratic lady of her choice which leads her to uncompromising sexual relationship. Though her downfall is tragic and emphatic yet she is a typical character of the playwright who consoles herself even with her destruction. The lack of balance of mind is instrumental to her destruction. Anne Fleche keenly analyses her downfall:

After all, Blanche spends her life atoning for her one act of deliberate cruelty-- a homophobic act, one with murderous performative consequences-- by seducing young boys. ...\(^{31}\)

Blanche gets punishment for being the real cause of death of her husband Alan Grey. Her sexual transgression is a shifting spot which throws her into life-long downfall of lamentation. Her wheel of guilt has run full and she is completely punished. But she is also a sympathetic character and is more sinned than sinning.

*Summer and Smoke* (1948)\(^{32}\) is a love story of two young persons Alma Winemiller, the puritanical daughter of a Mississippi Minister and John Buchanan a non-puritanical doctor son of a physician. It is also an allegorical drama presenting the Lawrencian dual between body and soul, flesh and
spirit, "perhaps the greatest contemporary exponent of the varied forms taken by sexual desire." Alma is a sensitive and frustrated Southern woman while John Buchanan is a lusty; virile Doctor. "Alma is Spanish for soul" (p.50) and Dr. John is "unmarked by the dissipations in which he relieves his demontac unrest, he has the fresh and shining look of an epic hero" (p.7). Both become unable to harmonize the two poles to which they belong.

Since childhood, Alma has been in love with John, and he is attracted to her. Alma is a delicate and introvert character who has become young passing her life in strict Puritan tradition- whereas John is a promethium figure, who has passed a careful life. Despite their mutual admiration, their antithetical attitude towards life becomes hurdle between their communication and understanding. Once they passed a night together and Alma is lost in the memory of one night, while John becomes able to reconstruct his life marrying Nellie.

Some versions of the play contain a short prologue which presents the stories of infancy of Alma and John. It shows Alma and John as children at the foot of the statue, named Eternity. Alma gives him her handkerchief to use instead of his sleeves for his running nose. John feels insulted but intimacy grows. The prologue ends with the young Alma and John and shows that the Alma has been in love with John since her childhood. In another version of the play the prologue has been omitted and some material of it is included into another scene. Williams himself clears in 'the Author' note' on the setting of the play, "in one of version of this play there is a short prologue
which shows John and Alma as young children playing by the fountain. In the present acting version this prologue has been omitted and some material from the prologue introduced into another scene." (p.4)

The play opens in a park in Glorious Hill on the evening of 4th July shortly before the First World War. Here, Alma and John meet again as adults in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Winemiller. John has now become a doctor and Alma a music instructor. Alma has been frightened by John by throwing a firecracker near her as she is seated on the bench in the park. He has recently come from John Hopkins, taking the degree of a physician but is not sure whether he will take over his father's medical practice though he is granted with high honours from the university. Alma expresses her great admiration for his father Dr. John Buchanan Sr.:

Well, I am a great admirer of your father as well as a patient. It's such a comfort knowing that he's right next door, within arm's reach as it were! (p.11)

There is an instant revival of the old mutual attraction. A glimpse of Nellie is seen in the scene and she is introduced by Alma, "here comes someone nicer! One of my adorable little vocal pupils, the youngest and prettiest one." (p.14) John and Alma meet again but appearance of Rose Gonzales makes Alma desperate. She is the daughter of the owner of gambling casino on Moon Lake. John follows her, leaving Alma. In this way we see the game of love.
In the next scene Alma goes to John's residence pretending to see Dr. John Buchanan Sr., father of John. She has been under his treatment. There, she comes to know about the intimacy of John and Rosa. She asks John about his father but brushing aside Alma's questions and objections, he gives her some sleeping tablets for soothing her nerves. He has already diagnosed her as a person whose head and heart, flesh and spirit is fighting with each other.

Miss Rosmary reads a paper on William Blake in a meeting in the presence of John and Alma. Later on, John promises Alma to take her out on an excursion and they go to the Moon Lake Casino. When John asks Alma to go upstairs and consummate their desires, she becomes horrified and returns home by a taxi. John's interest in Rosa Gonzales increases because he becomes bored and irritated by Alma's spiritual talks. A party is held at John's place to celebrate an occasion with Rosa. Alma tries to stop John, telephoning his father and creates noisy disturbance. Dr. Buchanan Sr. becomes angry because he knows all about Rosa's alcoholic father. Angry John carries Alma in his office and gives her an anatomy lecture. He condemns Alma's spirituality by showing her the anatomy chart which does not show the place of soul in human body. He also justifies his sensuality. The scene presents the climax of their argument over the physical and spiritual sides of life.

Then John leaves to complete the medical services left incomplete by his father in neighbouring areas for the treatment of epidemic diseases. His successful mission makes him hero in the town. On his return Alma goes to
meet him and offers to accept a relationship on his terms. But she finds him completely changed. He has become attentive to young Nellie and is ready to be married. Alma learns about the engagement. She has been hopeful of coming closer to John. In an ironic transformation, John now accepts the place of soul in one's life as Alma has come to realize the importance of flesh. Their union becomes impossible, because John is now engaged with Nellie. The revelation of John's eminent marriage to Nellie sounds the death knell of all Alma's hopes. Her dream is shattered into pieces every way and at last she becomes helpless to take hand of a salesman for companionship which leads her to a life of whore.

*Summer and Smoke* is accepted as an epilogue of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Alma, heroine of the play, is a highly sensitive creation of the dramatist and stands very close to Blanche DuBois. Da Ponte describes, "Alma, in effect, is Blanche DuBois at the beginning of downhill slide to degradation. Blanche is Alma at the end of the road." At last both are driven out to prostitution where Alma looks to be dependent on strangers. The play derives from Williams's own short story "The Yellow Bird," which begins in realistic documentation and ends in expressionistic fantasy.

Alma's decay and sensuality looks in her behaviour. Williams describes:

*In MISS ALMA'S* voice and manner there is a delicacy and elegance, a kind of "airiness," which is really natural to her as it is, in a less marked degree to many Southern girls. (p.10).
He accepts the play as a "tragedy of Puritanism." This remark of Williams is rightly true, because the restrictions imposed upon her by the norms of Puritan society result in her future. She becomes a patient of hysteria due to conflict between the traditional propriety and her natural desire of the flesh. She is faithful to sleeping pills to subdue her sinful existence. She develops an extraordinary mannerism which makes her seem an elderly woman:

ALMA had an adult quality as a child and now, in her middle twenties, there is something prematurity spinsterish about her an excessive propriety and self-consciousness is apparent in her nervous laughter; her voice and gestures belong to years of church entertainments, to the position of hostess in a Rectory. People of her own age regard her age rather quaintly and humorously affected (p.8).

Most of Alma’s time has passed in the company of the elders because her mother had a mental breakdown when she was in high school and returned to church responsibilities leaving Alma who became different from other girls of her age. She escapes from the oppressive reality by hatching dreams around John and has always been watching from the window for his sight. She tries to get perfection in her romantic heart and Gothic cathedral becomes the symbol of idealism for her. Like Blanche, life becomes an everlasting struggle for her. She says:
To me--well, that is the secret, the principle back of existence--the everlasting struggle and aspiration for more .... "All of us are in the gutter, ..... but some of us are looking at the stars!" (p.48)

The play proves to be a tragedy of non-comprehension. Alma's aims and desires are unclear to herself as well as to Dr. John, with whom she is involved. She is confused and divided. "Her true nature is still hidden even from herself" (p.8). She lives in her ivory world with her delusion:

For Alma, the physical and sexual nature of a man is tinged with an animality which the human being must transcend. And yet she herself is possessed with a deeply sexual nature which threatens to overwhelm her. John treats her nature in different way and gives sleeping pills. He says to her, "Under the surface you have a lot of excitement, a great deal more than any other woman I have met. So much that you have to carry these sleeping pills with you" (p.49). But presently, Alma's notion is quite different and she tries to explain the role of a woman in a man's life, who may be mother of his children. She also highlights the importance of heart:

There are some women who turn a possibly beautiful thing into something no better than coupling of beasts!-- but love is what you bring to it.... But there are some people, there are some women, John-- who can bring their hearts to it, also-- who can bring their souls to it! (p.50)
Here, we see clear difference in the opinions of Alma and John regarding soul. For Alma it is less important and for John it is a part of body. They realize it too late and become unable to be close to each other. John blames Alma's attitude and clears situations and reasons of not loving each other at Moon Lake Casino. That night, he was more afraid of her soul than of his body. Her attempts to establish relationship with Roger Doremus, her Sunday school superintendent and others are also shattered. She is optimistic till the last moment and expects that John will realize a day the futility of living on the physical plane and will return to her.

Thus Alma's love becomes more idealistic than normal and leads a life of denial relationship and thus loses John. She closes her eyes from sexuality and destroys her life. Finally she likes a person who stands worst for her and increases her pain. But her intense love for John still exists in her and she changes her principles:

But now I have changed my mind, or the girl who said "no" she doesn't exist anymore, she died last summer--- suffocated in smoke from something on fire inside her. (p.72)

Her newly born principle asks her to break the chain of the Puritanism and tries to get self-fulfillment. Her submission before love saves her. John's attitude changes; he says:
I have a respect for the truth, and I have a respect for you-- so I'd better speak honestly if you want me to speak.... But I've come around to your way of thinking, .... (p.72)

But her every attempt of union with John fails. He has already come close to Nellie.

I John's rejection of Alma, we find the cruelty of Stanley Kowalski. Every quality of Stanley can be seen in the anatomy chart of John. The matter becomes important to think that, if he had changed, he would have gone to Alma not Nellie, a giggly girl. In the penultimate scene of the play, he is presented kissing Nellie. At last, Alma realizes that she has lost the battlefield of love and has no chance in John. She hides her tears from Nellie. But in her sacrifice she rises above herself:

Alma, unlike the heroines of the early plays who reject reality, develops in the course of the play from a woman who lives in the illusion of impossible aspiration and idealism in to a woman who accepts reality and who actively seeks what she wants. 38

The play is designed in a series of senses which differentiates Alma and John on the plane of the rectory on one side, on the other, there remains the doctor's office. Alma and John are the representatives of different qualities. Alma is champion of the soul while John is protagonist of flesh and body:

ALMA:
Some people bring just their bodies. But there are some people, there are some women, John-- who can bring their souls to it, also-- who can bring their souls to it!

JOHN: (Derisively)

Souls again, huh?-- those Gothic cathedrals you dream of! ..... Your name is Alma and Alma is Spanish for soul. Some time I'd like to show you a chat of human anatomy that I have in the office. It shows what our insides are like, and may be, you can show me where the beautiful soul is located on the chart. (pp.50-51)

The argument continues as John shows her the anatomy chart. He points three essential part of the body- the brain, the belly and the 'sex' all which must be fed. He emphasises down part much more than others:

This upper story's the brain, which is hungry for something called truth and doesn't get much but keeps on feeling hungry! This middle's belly which is hungry for food. This part down here is the sex which is hungry for love because it is sometime lonesome (p.60).

Upon this Alma replies, "here is not the anatomy of a beast, but a man," (p.60) and further says:

Yes, that's not shown on the anatomy chart! But it's there just the same, yes there! Somewhere not seen, but there. And it's that that
I loved you with-- that! Not what you mention! ... Yes, did love with, you John, did nearly die of when you hurt me!(p.60)

While John turns her statement of love away, "I wouldn't have made love to you. Even if you had consented to go upstairs. I couldn't have love to you.... I'm more afraid of your soul than you're of my body. You'd been as safe as the angel of the fountain--- because I wouldn't feel decent enough to touch you..." (pp.60-61)

Here, we see a kind of ambivalence in a violent but not very convincing young man who is soon going to lecture on the need of the sex is himself disinterested in sex. It is said that he is arrested under the crude shadow of death of his father who father was shot dead by Rosa's father in a confusing crowd of people. It has affected the relationship of Alma and John inadvertently.

Here, Alma should not only be blamed, if she talks about soul and sex, but John is equally responsible who discusses about the anatomy chart with a soul in it but the question of marrying Nellie, a pretty but light-headed girl is also concerned. On the other side, Alma already has now realized the reality and is ready to return him.

While writing the play, Williams had the idea of D.H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy* in his mind. The heroines of *Summer and Smoke* and *The Virgin and the Gypsy* are the daughters of autocratic ministers disgraced by their wives. They are left by the virile young men:
The two virgins are aroused by and have slight sexual encounters with the virile young men who leave them very soon after (in *Summer and Smoke*, Alma engages John's sexual attentions in a momentary kiss; in *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, the protagonists fall asleep together in the warmth of naked embrace against the frigid waters of the virgin's flooded bed room.)

The play also stands very close to Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Alma's spiritual consciousness is indeed very close to Miriam who is a prototype of Alma. Both the ladies participate in the realm of spiritual experiences:

Small wonder that John, although he absorbs to his advantage the spiritual element in Alma, like Paul in relationship to Miriam, finds it impossible to love her physically.

The play has been criticised for its too obvious juxtaposition of sensuality and spirituality. It is due to too sudden conversion of John to Alma's point of view. Both the characters, John and Alma represent a kind of sexuality which is regenerative and is the source of potentially destructive energy. Alma has no taste for sexuality. "In the course of the play she seems to undergo a moral education, realising that the spiritual focus of her life has denied her the vivifying consolation of human relationships. What she fails to understand, however, is the need for self in which the physical and spiritual combine." She confesses it but too late:
It's no longer a secret that I love you. It never was .... Why didn't it happen between us? Why did I fail? Why did you come almost close enough-- and no close? (p.73)

A significant rejection takes place in the play. It is encountered by the frail southern girl with her sensuality who is repressed by her puritanical background and a man who is seeking love through physical relationship. It is already presented by the playwright in the anatomy lecture, but while taking decision, she rushes off. Like Blanche, Alma commits the sin of rejection of life and is victimised by reality of life:

Like Blanche, Alma has committed the sin of rejection, is condemned to be tormented by the very urges which she had fled from, and turns to promiscuity. Yet because her sin has been somewhat mitigated by her realization of it, there is a suggestion at the end of the play that the travelling salesman she has picked up may lead her salvation rather than destruction.42

Her circumstances make her bound to take the hands of the stranger:

ALMA:

Are you stranger in town? ....

YOUNG MAN:....

I am a travelling salesman.

ALMA:
Ah, you're salesman who travels! .... But you're younger than most of them are, and not so fat! ....

The life of a travelling salesman is interesting.... but lonely.

ALMA:

All rooms are lonely where there is only one person. (p.77)

The play provides a good kind of the problem of love or sex-- but not both at a time. Here the playwright is willing to violate character's reliability in order to convey a particular idea. This play confuses again as it demonstrates the desire which is deconstructive. It concludes that both repressed sexuality and unrestrained sexuality both are equally dangerous. The play accentuates that desires if not controlled will go astray and will question the very existence of man or woman.

In this play Williams appears to be fending towards a tragic complexity. From very beginning of the play, we can witness divided characters with repeated confrontations. John looms confusions around himself of preferring worldliness. He punishes Alma by projecting her into world of confused ideals:

John for choosing the lower instead of the higher, for preferring worldliness, fleshliness, and deviltry to medical salvation for others, and for thus being false to himself. He, in turn, denies the soul, affirms body, and taxes Alma with confused ideals, artificiality, hysteria and self-delusion.43
The main reason of the tragedy is that both Alma and John are not certain for their future:

These two characters need each other to be whole, but instead each is transformed into the other, John sacrificing his capacity to reveal for Alma's earnestness, Alma sacrificing her belief in the soul for John's capacity to experience the passion of flesh.\(^4^4\)

The crisis which leads Alma to change her attitude is her complex feeling about herself and that of her life during the summer of her twenties. She feels that time of her youth is passing and she feels that she is considered as an old maid. Alma loves John but he is disturbed by her idealism. On the other hand, John's insistence on the physical relationship between man and woman also disturbs Alma. Idealism becomes illusory for Alma because she fails to understand its meaning. She has an exalted notion of the role of the woman as a wife or a mother. She rejects sexuality as no better than beastly acts and depreciates John's anatomy lecture based on sensuality and physical relationship.

The play displays a conflict of values, considerations and attitudes between John and Alma, rooted into a world of idealism and realism, body and soul, physical and sentimental. She confesses, "none of them really engaged my serious feelings" (p.49) and clarifies, "there is no reason to forget that I'm a minister's daughter. A minister's daughter's no different from any other young lady, who tries to remember that she is a lady." (p.49)
Alma's total situation and John's rejection reflects that she lacks a positive aspect of life. After physical collapse and mental turmoil, she decides to pursue self fulfilment. She realizes that she can no longer marry John but she reveals her new strength of love to him. She does not indulge in self-pity and tries to understand and evaluate her relationship with John. She concentrates that human love and relationship is not a matter of consumerism or salesmanship but it is anchor of soul and ocean of spirit. But such relationship cannot be regarded as a serious face of her feelings:

In the improbable final scene Alma picks up a travelling salesman in the square, and they make off to a night club. She seems to have said a permanent farewell to her soul.45

In the final analysis we can witness that Alma does not get the suitable person in John and therefore she tries to get another soul-mate. But her final choice becomes detrimental and she is victimised by her supposed nobility of ideas. Her childhood experiences of father's growling and emotional sounds with mother, when they lived in a single room in Mexico and had to sleep in the same room, still echoes in her mind. The background of relationship of her mother and father as man and woman deters her blossomed love making with her man-partner John. She is full of horrible and fearful father image of any man which disturbs her:

We all slept in the one room. And in the night I would hear the love-making. Papa would grunt like a pig to show his passion. I thought to myself, how dirty it was, love-making, and how dirty
it was to be Mexicans and all have to sleep in one room with floor and not smell good because there was not any bath-tub!
(p.55)

The play is, in brief, a conflict between man and woman, love and sex, body and soul, physical and sentimental and characters represent such attitudes and ideologies.

*Cat on Hot Tin Roof* (1955)\(^{46}\) is Williams's most healthy and moral melodrama, presenting "the sexual ambivalence of males toward females."\(^ {47}\)
It also "points to the simplest of human truths that there is meaning in life, that one must make his stand among the living, that detachment is no resolution for anything."\(^ {48}\) In the play dramatist seems to be sympathetic with Margaret, lovingly known Maggie and Big Daddy. In this play he looks far from the fragile psychopathic Southern hell, which made him famous. The play deals with "a world in which denial of reality is a primary concern."\(^ {49}\)

The play is centered on the Plantation home of Big Daddy, a rich Mississippi Delta family. He is a coarse, loud-mouthed man but millionaire, at the end of death. Except he and his wife Big Mama, everyone knows that he is a patient of cancer. Big Mama is a foolish lady while Big Daddy is fighting for his property even before his death. He is celebrating his sixty fifth birthday believing that new medical report will give him a certificate free from his dreadful disease. His whole family in order to wish him a long life is gathered but, in fact, they want to negotiate the rights of the property.
Brick, his favourite younger son and his wife Maggie live with him. Brick is an athlete, an alcohol addict, is getting poorer with his wife Maggie. He is broken in body and spirit and death of his friend Skipper, who committed suicide, when people including Maggie suspected their relationship. It has made Brick more desperate. He has lost all interest in worldly affairs and has no interest to make love to Maggie who feels like a cat on a hot tin roof. Brick's elder brother Gooper and his wife Mae have come to plantation with their five children-- Dixie, Trixie, Buster, Sonny and Pally in order to participate in the birthday ceremony of Big Daddy, but more than that to get hold of the paternal property after their father's death.

Maggie knows Brick's alcoholism and their childlessness and wants to capture Gooper and Mae in his favour. She lies that she is pregnant. Big Daddy and Big Mama become very happy and they confirm that Brick will be the inheritor of the property, not Gooper. In the last scene, Maggie is determined to make lie come out true and forces Brick to make love with her. He surrenders before her and "Maggie must be admired for the fight she puts up." 50

Robert B. Heilman considers that in 'terms of her vigor, of the frenzy of her struggle, and of the magnitude of her role, the play is Maggie's; after all she is the Cat." 51 Cat is a multi-symbolic word. It is the symbol of the sensual woman, the mystery, jealousy, vindictiveness and guilt closely associated with the sensuality. 'The cat of February' is a famous proverb for a lusty woman. The title of the play also signifies the highly sensual woman,
suffering from sex. Literally, Maggie is like a cat roaming on the hot tin roof desiring love.

In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Maggie symbolizes a modern American woman dissatisfied with sex. Unlike Williams's other heroines, she is a young, beautiful, voluptuous and vivacious lady who wants to become more beautiful in order to attract her husband. She is "a beautiful, sleek, slender and soft woman, immensely conscious and proud of her looks." Williams describes her as "a pretty young woman" (p.1); a woman who has a "gay, charming smile," (p.8) "lovely bare arms," (p.4). She "giggles with a hand fluttering at her throat and her breast and her long throat arched" (p.8). In spite of Brick's distaste in her she is deeply in love with him and hopes of a reunion. Even, she tells Brick about people's catching eyes of her beauty and craves probably to nourish his interest in her:

> Why, last week in Memphis everywhere that I went men's eyes burned holes in my clothes, at the country club and restaurants and department stores, there wasn't a man I met or walked by that didn't just eat me up with his eyes and turn around when I passed him and look back at me. (p.33)

Even after her sensual acts, he acts with complete disinterest. He has lost his interest in woman and suggests her to have a lover. But unlike Blanche, Alma, Alexandra, Lady Torrance etc. she remains a chaste lady. She continues to be devoted to her husband and says, "I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just see you! (p.24)" Her words of love explain
devotion and faith towards her husband. She wants only to seek loyalty of her husband.

Maggie entreats mocks, warns and even threatens to commit suicide for returning Brick back to life. She "combines the motherly attention of Big Mama and the sexuality and aggressiveness of Big Daddy. Her youth and her determination will clearly make her the sexual victor." 53 Brick's refusal to sleep with Maggie stems his disgust towards her and the world. The relationship between him and Skipper was the "one great good true thing which is true!" (p.42) He is disgusted with the people pointing a finger at their relationship which he believes tormented his friend so much that he ended his life. He believes that it was Maggie who brought him to the end of the life. He blames her:

 He, poor Skipper, went to bed with Maggie to prove it wasn't true, and when it didn't work out, he thought it was true!-- Skipper broke in two like a rotten stick-- nobody ever turned so fast to lush-- or died it so quick... (p.107)

Brick is right in blaming Maggie who is instrumental to death of Skipper to some extent. Since their student days Maggie has been suspicious of their friendship and recalls that it was always double-dating with Skipper and Brick. She tells Brick that every date "was more like a date between you and Skipper" (p.41). Brick becomes angry with charge of being suspected and shouts at Maggie, "I had friendship with Skipper-- You are making it dirty!" (p.42) But she tries to explain angry Brick and accepts Skipper's
innocence for a while. Brick holds her responsible for his death. Big Daddy compels him to confess and says:

Anyhow now!-- We have tracked down the lie, with which you're disgusted and which you are drinking to kill your disgust with, Brick. You been passing the back. This disgust with mendacity is disgust with yourself.

You!-- dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it!-- before you'd face the truth with him (p.108)

But Brick always idealizes his friendship:

Why can't exceptional friendship, real, real, deep deep friendship! between two men be respected as something clean and decent without being thought of as-- (p.104)

Brick has solely been devoted to his friend, he commits sin by idealizing his relationship and deserting him which cracks the building of idealism which was once built. He could not help Skipper and is not in position to help himself by discussing the homosexuality, the dirty thing. He is afraid of his latent homosexuality which is conflicting and compelling him.

Brick punishes Maggie by refusing to make love with her and believes that she is the main figure of the destruction of his intimate friend, but simultaneously, he himself is victimed by rejection of life. He is well-lost in alcohol in order to test of sexuality like his friend. Here he doesn't feel himself guilty but Maggie comes to know about relationship and turns
defensive. She associates the matter with paternal property for seeking his love. She reveals him the intentions of Gooper and Mae's for bagging Big Daddy's property and intensifies his fight for the share, "You can be young without money but you can't be old without it." (p.38)

Maggie is a lady who desires only her share. Nancy M. Tischler rightly compares Maggie with other characters of Williams and writes, "she has more fibre and vitality than Stella more reality than Rose Gonzales, more practicality and sense than Serafina."54 She shares Big Daddy's love for Brick and hatred for Mae and Gooper:

Big Daddy doted on you, honey. And he can't stand Brother Man and Brother Man's wife, that monster of fertility, Mae; she's down right odious to him! (p.6)

She is jealous of Mae's fertility because Big Daddy would be hesitant to pass over the estate if they haven't child. She yearns to have a child in order to end all taunts of her barrenness, for providing Big Daddy a heir for his property and to make Brick a responsible person. But Brick is not ready to do anything for getting the child:

BRICK: ...

---But how in hell on the earth do you imagine--- that you're going to have a child by a man that can't stand you?
MARGARET:

That's a problem that I will have to work out. (p.46)

Unlike Amanda, Laura and Blanche, Maggie doesn't look her past but concentrates on present and plans for her future. "Her flight is not to discover herself or order herself but to escape from being a victim." She is ever honest and is not afraid of telling the truth. She becomes a vigorous real fighter and does her best to get back her husband to life for reviving his interest in reality of the world.

Maggie tells a lie for her love for Brick and Big Daddy. It is 'as an alternative to death. And as such it is not only vital moral." Brick is dipped in alcohol and unknown from reality of the world while Big Daddy is suffering from cancer. She changes her husband tactfully and he does not resist when Maggie leads him to bed in order to make lie come true and tells Brick, "I told a lie to Big Daddy, but we can make that lie come true." (p.196) But the end of the play marks her victory. She relieves Bricks of his suspect that she herself does with help of nobody. Big Daddy always possesses a positive and favourable attitude towards her. He says, "Uh-huh, this girl has life in her body, that's no lie!" (p.190). She wins Brick by her qualities and brings him once again to life.

In the play, the relationship of Maggie and Brick is a repetition of Big Mama and Big Daddy. Both ladies and their husbands have the similar relations and Big Daddy is an older version of Brick. Williams describes he
"must have had something Brick has, who made himself loved so much by the "simple expedient" of not loving enough to disturb his charming detachment, also once coupled, like Brick's, with a virile beauty" (p.122-23). Both Maggie and Big Mama doubt their husband's love. Maggie presents her pain, "Living with someone you love can be lonelier-- than living entirely alone!-- if the one that y' love doesn't love you...."(p.12). Both, Brick and Big Daddy reply in the same way: "wouldn't it be funny if that was true..." (pp.62,150) Williams also clears the situation of Maggie's married life:

It is constant rejection that makes her humor "bitchy" (p.8)

The play highlights sense and sensuality and Maggie and Big Mama are the advocates of the physical love. Their surrender also involves respect and devotion to their husbands and it is 'certainly a more ideal possibility than Stella's surrender to Stanley or Serafina's use of Alvaro."

Williams believes that love never fails and it always conquers. In this play, Maggie is admired for her intelligence who asserts her marital rights by her own quality of strength. In fact, Maggie is one of the Williams's healthiest and passionate characters but her husband Brick doesn't sleep with her is the major conflict of the play. Brick's real problem is his homosexual friend Skipper who has been fellow athlete and they have deep understanding in each other. Brick realizes that Maggie is right but he doesn't deny the charge.
After death of Skipper Brick finds two alternatives-- either to commit suicide or to adopt alcoholism. The burden of his possible homosexuality disturbs him very much, though the playwright denies that Brick was a homosexual. In nutshell, Brick's sexual relationship with his friend and his wife is the central conflict of the play and all the characters are constantly centralised around the conflict.

Big Daddy also possesses every kind of evil in him and he is the soul of frustration. His love towards his son is more compelling but he is helpless to communicate his feelings. Thus, both, Big daddy and Brick love and hurt each other. Bother are aware of reality but they cannot face it. There are the genuine feelings in Maggie because she creates a meaningful life for Big Mama's love and devotion to her husband in old age and that of the children of Mae and Gooper.

Where we take up homosexuality in the play, two points become prominent-- first its unnaturalness and secondly idealization of friendship with a homosexual. Obviously, idealization of friendship is worse than homosexuality. Maggie recognizes it and tells Brick:

This time I'm going to finish what I have to say you. Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a little closer to you.... --And so we made love to each other to dream it was you, both of us! Truth, truth! What's so awful about it? I like it, I think the truth is-- yeah! shouldn't have told you.... (pp.39-40)
She continues her clarification:

I said, "SKIPPER! STOP LOVIN' MY HUSBAND OF TELL HIM HE'S GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT IT TO HIM!" -- one way or another! ..... 

HE SLAPPED ME HARD ON THE MOUTH! then returned and ran without stopping once, ... - In this way, I destroyed him by telling him truth..." (p.43)

Maggie considers that idealization of reality is more dangerous than the evil of homosexuality. On the other hand, Brick finds himself to face society and he confesses his guilt as consciously or unconsciously he has been involved in the act of homosexuality. It shows that both Maggie and Big Daddy are making the rightful charges.

Maggie determines to awaken sexuality in Brick because she is shocked when Dixie says, "You're jealous!-- You are just jealous because you can't have babies!" (p.45) She reveals her visit to a gynecologist in order to win the love of her husband:

Brick?--- I've been to a doctor in Memphis, a--- a gynecologist... I've been completely examined, and there is no reason why we can't have a child whenever we want one. And this is my time by calendar to conceive. (pp.45-46).

Big Daddy also tries to solve the problem and says Brick; "life is important. There's nothing else to hold onto. A man that drinks is throwing
his life away. Don't do it, hold onto your life." (p.68) He asks him, "why do you drink? Why are you throwing your life away, boy...?" (p.88) He further says, "I still have desire for women and this is my sixty fifth birthday." (p.77) He expresses his worry, "I didn't know it had gotten that bad with you. Why boy you're-- alcoholic!" (p.82) Big Mama evokes Maggie to solve the problem and to cooperate the family:

Brick is Big Daddy's boy; but he drinks too much and it worries me and Big Daddy, and Margaret, you've got to cooperate with us, you've got to cooperate with Big Daddy and me in getting Brick straightened out. Because it will break Big Daddy's heart if Brick don't pull himself together and take hold of things. (p.131). Thus we see Maggie, Big Daddy and Big Mama, all fighting against Brick's bad habits.

The play is the struggle of Maggie to save her husband for sex and for inheritance of property of the plantation and the play, in brief, "is a desperate struggle of the sexes with tooth-and-claw-baring attacks by Maggie the Cat."58 The playwright highlights her complicated character. She also bears the qualities of a Shavian character. Her simple look is dubious. Her devotion to her husband and his family is clearly seen in the play but she is more devoted to produce a suitable successor of the big property of Big Daddy than her devotion to family.
The play has closer intimacy with the theme and pattern of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, because "in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, however, Williams produces something much nearer the pattern of *Streetcar*. In fact, from one point of view *Cat* is simply a reworking of the materials of the earlier play."\(^5\)9 

Once again, Skipper is a motivating person like Allan Grey who is not visible in the play but is expressed by the death. Brick, a male, has taken the place of rejecter of life at the place of Blanche DuBois, a female. But the difference in the play is that Brick's wife is alive who makes him surrender before the forces of life, while in the previous play, Blanche's husband is dead and she becomes unable to start a new life with others.

Maggie turns violent, when she finds that she is failing in her mission. She warns Brick, even she is ready to plunge a knife into her heart:

> You know, if I thought you would never, never, *never* make love to me again-- I would go downstairs to the kitchen and pick out the longest and the sharpest knife I could find and stick it straight into my heart, I swear that I would! (pp.14-15).

She warns her husband to surrender. She tells him "I'm not living with you. We occupy the same cage." (p.19) Even, she asks her husband the period of his punishment of not loving her. Though she is not guilty, she asks for his pardon:
**Oh, Brick!** how long does it have to go on? This punishment? Haven't I done time enough, haven't I served my term, can't I apply for a--- pardon. (p.23)

She desires her husband with his domain and love. It reflects her attitude, tenderness and gentility.

The play has delineates complexity of hero's has the great fear of sex, his frequent use of alcohol and his homosexuality. But Maggie is hopeful about him because she considers Brick's relationship with Skipper but doesn't charge him of his homosexuality. At last she hurls his liquor bottles into the river and invites him to make her announcement true. Maggie announces. "Brick and I are going to have a child" (142) and makes Big Mama vary happy. She expresses her cheerfulness:

Oh, my, my! This is Big Daddy's dream, his dream come true! I'm going to tell him right now before he--- ...

I want to tell him before he goes to sleep, I'm going to tell him his dreams come true this minute! And Brick! A child will make you pull yourself together and quit this drinking! (pp.142-43).

When others are happy knowing the news of Maggie's pregnancy, Mae and Gooper don't believe it true. Mae presents her feelings before Maggie:

You can't conceive a child by a man that won't sleep with you unless think you're--- ...
We know it's a lie because we hear you here, he won't sleep with you, we hear you! So don't imagine you're going to put a trick over on us, to fool a dying man... (p.145)

She further says; "He drinks all the time to be able to tolerate you! Sleeps on the sofa to keep out of contact with you!" (p.193)

At last, Brick realizes the importance of life-force and feels himself guilty of his rejection of life and of ignoring sexual impulse of his wife. Here, the great strength of the play lies in Williams’ ability to present psychological, social and realistic atmosphere. "His central character is the man who himself committed the originating deed and who is on the edge of acknowledging his own guilt." Ultimately, lie decides to return in the veil of Maggie and says to her, "Thank you Maggie, that's a nice shot."(p.143) Maggie shuts the door and leans softly over Brick and expresses her satisfaction on her triumph:

   Brick, I used to think that you were stronger than me and I didn't want to be overpowered by you.... but now I'm stronger than you and I can love you more truly!

   Don't move the pillow. I'll move it right back if you do!... I really have been to a doctor and I know what to do and--- Brick?--- this is my time by the calendar to conceive! (pp.147-48)
The play ends with Brick's response to Maggie's declaration of love. He admires Maggie: "I admire you, Maggie," (p.196) and reckons her strength and finally Maggie emerges as a winner in the play.

_Suddenly Last Summer_ (1958)\(^1\) is a play of Gothic melodrama and the most violent play of Williams. It is the psycho-analytical and pathological investigation into "underneath its neat surface oppositions and familiar Gothic conventions."\(^2\) It highlights the definition of God, love and hate and that of Williams's dark view of the homosexual world. The story moves around Mrs. Violet Venable, and her poor victimized niece Catharine Holly. As the play opens, Mrs. Venable is seen explaining to young Dr. Cucrowicz ("a Polish word that mean sugar," p.11) her reasons for desiring a leucotomy done on her niece. She says that her niece must be stopped from babbling about her son Sebastian and circumstances of his death witnessed by her. Later, it becomes clear that he was eaten alive by flesh-hungry children on a Mediterranean island named Cabeza de Lobo. Mrs. Venable is determined to prove Catharine insane and a lobotomy done on her. "The story is revealed to us through a familiar Gothic opposition-- the rich, ruthless Violet Venable and her poor, victimized niece, Catharine Holly."\(^3\) Catharine's brother and mother also come together in her cruel purpose and think opposing Mrs. Venable would be harmful to them because Sebastian has desired an amount of money to the Hollys which would not come, if Catharine does not shut her mouth. Here, George and Mrs. Holly are the savage depictions of greed in the play.
Sebastian, Mrs. Venable's son was an obscure poet and has been writing one poem each year continuously for 25 years. They travelled every summer to any foreign land for delivering the poem after a nine month preparation. But in the last visit, Catharine accompanied him. Though she is innocent, Mrs. Venable blames her for his death and wants to punish her. Hence, she wants lobotomy on her but doctor is not ready to do so. He would not act upto her wishes without proper examination even after her concealed offer to support financially for his medical research.

Catharine a young and beautiful girl loves Sebastian. Suddenly, she reveals her past. She had passed a night with a married man and was recovering from its hangovers. After Sebastian's offer she travelled with him to Cabeza de Lobo. She comes to know that Sebastian had brought her for him and it was done previously by his attractive mother in her visits. She remembers the horrible Sea-beach, swim suit, and the people gathering around Sebastian. She was then discarded by him because his aim was fulfilled but the day after day, crowd increased and followed him wherever he went. On the day of his death, he was lunching at an open restaurant by the sea with people, and there a group of naked children attacked them for food. Sebastian grew frightened, and ran away to a steep hill, but the monsters soon overtook him. Catharine ran crying for help, but Sebastian had died, some part of his body had been eaten by flesh eating children before the other came to save him.
Since then, Mrs. Venable strikes Catharine to destroy her precious Sebastian. She orders Dr. Cucrowicz to remove the part of her brain which contains the true story of his son, "cut this hideous story out of her brain!" (p.93) though he is sympathetic to Catharine, yet doesn't save her from Mrs. Venable. Here, we see Williams once again presents a weak person destroyed by a strong evil. It is symbolically presented in the image of the sea-turtles and the flesh eating birds also.

Sebastian is only a name in the play but the main theme revolves around him. Mrs. Venable and Catharine are fighting over this dead man. Mrs. Venable wanted to publish his collection of poems, entitled, *Poem of Summer*. She also wants to deter her reputation which is in danger now. According to her, "its a hideous attack on my son's moral character which being dead, he can't defend himself from. I have to be defender (p.24)."

The relationship between the mother and the son has been the strong incestuous feelings. Therefore the son hesitates to call her mother but he (Sebastian) always called his mother, "Violet? Mother? (p.13) and his tongue felt easier to pronounce Violet than 'Mother'. Mrs. Venable also accepts the relationship:

We were a famous couple. People didn't speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said "Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian" (p.25).
Definitely, Mrs. Venable's love for her son has been abnormal. She stands very close to Gertrude Morel in Sons and Lovers by D.H. Lawrence, who has taken Paul Morel as her lover. Even when her husband is at the edge of death, she remains with her son not with her husband and allows him to die alone. "Her hovering concern has a Freudian ring as she speaks of the poems the two of them took nine months to produce, poems which he could not write without her."  Mrs. Venable confirms, "I made the hardest decision of my life I stayed with my son." (p.21)

Sebastian is a corrupt idealist who cannot express his love in physical terms. It is natural that love for his mother cannot be idealized and fruitful as he would not be able to have any other sweet heart. Catharine is only female partner in love with him, but his mother's relationship plays a strong hurdle between them. He fails to love Catharine romantically because he is mentally occupied by his mother and no other woman can replace her. His mother is the only woman in his life. Thus the relationship with his mother plunges him into a world of no romantic relationship with Catharine and he also rejects the reality of life. His relationship with his mother tends him towards homosexuality.

The emphasis on chastity and asceticism, unfortunately, works for a more distorted physicality than normality would have demanded: It has made her unconsciously incestuous and him homosexual.
Mrs. Venable doesn't prevent him from homosexuality and denies the reality of his life. Perhaps in his homosexuality, she foresees her harmless union with him. Her mother cannot provide him true pleasure of life. "But ironically in this play the sexual predator (Sebastian) becomes the sexual victim in horrifying rite of cannibalism, and by extension his mother becomes a victim as well because she has lost most important person in her life."

In the last trip, Sebastian took Catharine with him. Catharine's presence became hurdle in their business and deep hatred grew in the heart of Mrs. Venable for her:

We had an agreement between us which he broke last summer when he broke away from me and took her with him, not me! (p.76).

Catharine becomes a rival of Sebastian's affections for his mother and the sex-jealously is superheated. After the death of her son, she wants to destroy Catharine's life to "preserve the purity and the reputation of the departed Sebastian. Her willingness to lobotomize her niece is testimony to her veneration of her son and her viciousness."  

Mrs. Venable is a savage woman of harsh nature. Her garden is "inhabited by beasts, serpents, and birds, all of savage nature ...,"(p.9) which mirrors her sick mind and make her stand with these filthy beasts: She and her son have accepted the garden very close to God. They believe that "God
shows a savage face to people and shouts some fierce things at them, . . ." (p.20).

The garden also contains carnivorous flowers, insectivorous plants, newly hatched turtles in sand pits. And these turtles are being eaten by flesh eating birds. The universe presented by the dramatist from the animal to the group of children devouring Sebastian seems fixed. Mrs. Venable seems to be a monstrous woman who injures the health of her son and others. She made her son physically and mentally incapable of healthy sexual relationship. Her son is "string of pearls" (p.77) for her and she doesn't want to lose it. But at the last time when he took Catharine in their trip, she seems to punish her.

Catharine is also a sensitive girl, who mistakes Sebastian's act of kindness as his notes of love for her and therefore falls upon him heavily. It arouses a clash with Mrs. Venable. At last she is imprisoned in a mental hospital by her cruel aunt where "she'd run to the fence and make signs to cars on the highway" (p.54) by her cruel aunt. Signi Falk considers Catharine as "the rarest specimen in the entire literary jungle of Tennessee Williams: she is a normal human being. A decent, intelligent girl neither over sexual nor frustrated ...." But her pitiable condition leads her to frustration. Her life becomes a total eclipse of uncertainty and pain and she becomes a victim of her aunt. She turns a helpless creature and also stands in help by others.

In the play, both the women characters turn their eyes from reality of the life. Mrs. Venable doesn't realize the future of her son but cares more for her own relationship with him. She becomes afraid of Catharine for leading
her son to reality of life. But, like Amanda she hasn't lost her dignity and wealth and values. Catharine stands unaware of shrouded mystery. Both are struggling between life and death but it is definite that only one will survive. Their personal truths are opposite to each other and cannot exist simultaneously. Catharine becomes the victimized truth-bearer, and bears her name. Before her final crucifixion, she presents a glimpse of love, hate and God: "We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks!" (p.40) She further says, "we all use each other and that's what we think of love, and not being able to use each other is what's-- hate . . ." (p.63)

The play has some similarity with flesh and blood of Williams's relatives. His own sister Rose underwent a lobotomy against her wishes at her tender age. While his mother Edwina resumes Mrs. Venable to some extent. Williams confesses:

I cared for her (sister Rose) more than I did my mother. But it (lobotomy) didn't embitter me against Miss Edwina. . . . Just like Mrs. Venable you know, except that mother wasn't as cruel as Mrs. Venable, poor bitch. Whatever Mother did, she didn't know that she was doing.69

Thus the play proved cathartic in many ways for Williams's own family members than the cruel characters of it. He purred his anger and frustration and savage thoughts in writing the play. "For such a compulsive writer and
deeply disturbed person, this materialization of his ideas, passions, and motivation in his writing has a salutary effect."\(^{70}\)

Fundamentally, the play is the story of a woman who witnesses Sebastian's death and becomes the archetypal persecuted maiden of Gothic fiction. She is countlessly injected and put in mental institution. There she reveals her experiences of visit with Sebastian before Doctor:

Don't you understand? I was PROCURING for him!...

I had to do it the way that I just told you!-- Sebastian was lonely, Doctor, and empty the Blue Jay notebook got bigger and bigger, so big it was big and empty as that big empty blue sea and sky....

I knew what I was doing. I came out in the French Quarter years before I came out in the Garden District. .. (p.81)

In the presentation of the theme of the play, Williams stands quite close to the Gothic tradition as Robert F. Gross pertinently points out:

Williams transposes the theme of personal integrity from the physical register of virginity and rape to the metaphysical register of true speech and mental ravishment. Yet in this transposition, he has not effaced the sexual imagery and libidinous charge of the traditional Gothic; rather he has harnessed those energies toward the exploration of this new theme.\(^{71}\)

Williams has put Catharine in a paradoxical and contradictory situation. On one side, she is presented as thread of Mrs. Venable tapestry which
indicates to what had happened at Cabeza de Lobo, on the other side she signs to passing vehicles to get her message out. In the play, Robert F. Gross realistically comments, "Dr. Cucrowicz is placed at the center of the conflict between two women, since he established as the only character with the power to judge the truth of Catharine’s story." He neglects both Venable's offer of money and Catharine's physical charm.

Through Mrs. Venable, Williams has presented Sebastian's creation of his poetry of maternal process in "the length of pregnancy" (p.14). She has been the agent of Sebastian's artistic creativity. Mrs. Venable admits that she could not help him in this final Poem of Summer, which mirrors that his art was completely dependent on his mother. "Although, Sebastian chose Catharine as a substitute for his mother, .... she proves a poor companion on two levels. First, since she does not function in the world of the Imaginary as does Violet, she cannot help him write his Poem of Summer." The poem becomes symbol of mother and son relationship Mrs. Venable also expresses:

Poem of Summer, and the date of the summer, there are twenty-five of them, he wrote one poem a year ... ....

One for each summer that we travelled together. (p.14)

In this summer, Sebastian chooses Catharine as a substitute for his mother. He couldn't write for two reasons-- first, he was not interested and secondly, he was sexually attracted towards Catharine as she accepts:
He liked me and so I loved him ..... If he'd kept hold my hand I could have saved him! --- Sebastian suddenly said me last summer; "Let's fly north, little bird--- ... (p.40)

Sebastian's death also reflects religious meaning through the rich multivalent word 'Pan'. It is the name of a highly sensual as well as sexual Arcadian God:

The god Pan, indiscriminate in his origins and his couplings, becomes an appropriate figure for Sebastian's sexual intensity during his last summer. The traditional explanations of Pan's name also provide grist for interpretation here.\textsuperscript{74}

In view of this interpretation, Sebastian stands on a plane of cosmic principle.

The study of the play reveals three images of the destruction running through the play. First, one woman is trying to destroy another; secondly, the birds destroy the newly hatched turtles; and thirdly the group of hungry children destroys a young man. Here, Mrs. Venable is not only trying to destroy Catharine's life but also Dr. Cucrowicz's career by offering him money to perform lobotomy on Catharine. But the tools of destruction of Sebastian's life are those in whose hands he seeks:

Sebastian is a homosexual who is eventually destroyed and consumed by those whose company he seeks.\textsuperscript{75}

The way of Sebastian's death is important. He runs up the hill to save himself. But the band of the naked children pursues him. They cut parts of him with
their hand knives and jagged tin cans. While running away to save his life, he doesn't think of his mother and Catharine. Bruhm writes about the death of Sebastian:

The rent and eaten flesh foreshadows Sebastian's death at Cabeza de Lobo and, for critics of the play, marks the poetic justice that Sebastian had coming to him.\textsuperscript{76}

Here, Williams's portrayal of Sebastian is quite opposite with the ancient saintly person St. Sebastian who loved all and was loved by people while this Sebastian offers hate instead of love.

The last trip with his cousin is also marked with frustration. Sebastian wants to use her to attract young boys for him therefore once he brings a swim suit for Catharine which becomes transparent in water. Catharine explains the incident to Dr. Cucrowicz:

My God, yes! It was one-piece suit made of white lisle, the water made it transparent! . . . --I didn't to swim in it, but he'd grab my hand and drag me into the water, all the way in, and I'd come out looking naked! (p.80)

Marlon B. Ross writes:

The climax of the play is a "revelation" of humanity's darkest secret, the urge toward cannibalism, both metaphorical and literal. But this very "revelation" is also further closting, a way of hiding the darker darkest secret of the desire to be devoured.\textsuperscript{77}
The punishment of Sebastian is suitable for his crime of purchasing children's flesh in order to satisfy his sexual hunger.

The play is placed in group in which the rejected exile becomes a home of rejected and condemned the sinner for which he is punished. Sebastian, an exiled homosexual, gets the violent death punishment. "Sebastian's death to be the appropriate punishment for such sexual adventures." He is eaten up by the children in the same way as the birds are eating live sea turtles in the garden of her mother. The characters of all these plays display a world of Tennessee Williams's crime and punishment. They suffer because of inappropriate and unjustified decisions made in their lives regarding sexual treatment. Finally, they mirror shreds of disintegrated beings of the playwright.

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