Chapter III  
Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams, (1911-1983) was one of America’s greatest playwrights, and the greatest ever from the South. He was a playwright, novelist, story writer and poet, who received many of the top theatrical awards for his works of drama. Nearly all of his plays are set in the South and approach universal themes. One of the hallmarks of his plays is the conflict between nostalgia for a genteel, mythic agrarian South and a critique of an industrial North. The South despite its grotesque aspects was a rich source which Tennessee explores literally and imaginatively. His background- his homosexuality, his painful and joyous relationships with members of his family was the strongest personal factors shaping his dramas. Plays, stories, poems, and personal essays are all drawn from the experience of his persona. Williams saw himself as shy, sensitive, gifted man trapped in a world where mendacity replaces communication, brute violence replaces love, and loneliness is the standard human condition. These tensions in his works are identified as a terror at what he saw in himself and in America. Tennessee gathered ideas, images, themes and phrases as he wandered through life. Tischler says about Tennessee that “He saw himself as the archetypal outsider; a poet in a practical world, a homosexual in a heterosexual society. Living in the century of progress, he preferred candlelight to electricity”.(1) According to him the idea or the image represents an element in human life. Because of his own anguished life, Tennessee portrays the love/hate conflict of the family. He explores the masculine/feminine identity.

Williams won the Pulitzer Prize for drama for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards for *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Night of Iguana*; and the Tony Award for best play for *The Rose Tattoo*. In addition to twenty-five full length plays, Williams produced dozens of short plays and screenplays, two novels, sixty short stories, over one-hundred poems and an autobiography. The Pulitzer Prize plays *A Streetcar Named
Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof both includes references to elements of Williams’ life as homosexuality, mental instability, and alcoholism.

Williams struggled with depression throughout most of his life and lived with the constant fear that he would go insane like his sister Rose. He was close to his sister Rose, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia at a young age. The theme of defeated heroine that appeared in many of his plays seemed clearly influenced by the life of his sister Rose. So characters in his plays are often seen as representations of his family members. A young Tennessee Williams declared in a letter the theme of his work: “As you have observed by now, I have only one major theme for all my work which is the destructive impact of society on the sensitive, non-conformist individual.”

His dramatic vision were less romantic and more in tune with what he really understood about life in America which he strove to capture in his work. In his essay, Tennessee Williams Presents his Point Of View, Williams employed a more appropriate idiom to explain his stance and goal as an artist:

People are humble and frightened and guilty at heart, all of us, no matter how desperately we may try to appear otherwise. We have very little conviction of our essential decency, and consequently we are more interested in characters on the stage who share our hidden shames and fears, and we want the plays about us to say “I understand you.” You and I are brothers; the deal is rugged but let’s face and fight it together.

It means he is writing about a tragic hero, but about the contemporary common man or woman who is struggling with his or her problems and dreams in a culture that encourages individuals to be responsible for making as much of a success of their lives. After the world wars, modern and contemporary dramatists’ focus shifted from a protagonist hero’s quest for the moral order of the universe to characters who are bent upon exercising their right to exist in a society that has become increasingly hostile to their individual needs and desires. These characters are trapped in a materialistic world which interferes with their essential
humanness. The characters are pushed into becoming outsiders, survivors, and non-conformists. In other words, they become victims of overpowering social order. Williams’ aim in his plays is to draw the attention to the frustrations and disappointments that the individual faces when he or she is trying to find a place in society or forge an identity. Securing one’s sense of space, freedom, identity, and self, it is this trait that Williams’ plays are dramatizing constantly.

Williams’ chief common ground is the portrayal of men and women who suffer disaster, who destroy themselves or move toward self-destruction. In Williams’ work the sufferers who do not make the grade have an air of illness or something close to it. Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* cannot meet the ordinary problems of life, Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* lacks stamina to bear up under the stresses that experience brings. Laura stays at home; Blanche ends up in Sanatorium. The anti-hero basic concept is the source of Williams’ ideas. For instance, evil is not only to be found in society, evil also exists within the self and Blanche, Big Daddy, Jabe Torrance, Sebastian, Boss Finely, and Shannon are dramatic demonstrations of it. All have weaknesses of the flesh and are selfish. Corruption whether in others or one’s self is a cancer that gradually consumes and kills. And it causes its victims to hate, destroy, and kill, too.

Williams’ treatment of the theme of noncommunication— he shares with the absurdist dramatists— is found in his short play *I can’t Imagine Tomorrow* (1966), in which a man, named simply Two, is emotionally unable even to complete a sentence without the help of his only friend a women called One. Two is terribly afraid of the changes time brings, says he has always found it “difficult ... to put what I think and feel into speech...... to look in the eyes of another person.”(4) If man’s ability to use language is what gives him the power to know and define himself, then Williams seems to be suggesting that without her Two’s identity as an individual is incomplete.
In plays written between 1945 and 1961, Tennessee Williams chose to feature women as major characters more often than men. All suffer from physical or emotional mutilation. For them, communication with another person in itself becomes more difficult and unattainable as happened with Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*, or their restless search for a mate goes on without hope of fulfilment as happened with Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It is true that many of William’s characters, especially female characters, speak with Southern accents, close scrutiny reveals that their problems are the old, universal ones of the human heart in its search for reality and meaning in life.

There is a general sympathy for the different worlds he creates, full of people trying to escape from one trap or another. The only outcome that seems to smooth out events is death. Death and illness form a large part of all his plays, and he uses this focus to bring out his characters' reaction to the ultimate uselessness of all human striving. Williams in his later plays, traces the corrosive influence of immoral action on individual. In the last works, “he begins to show some progress toward a limited solution of human ills.”(5) And his latter movies are deeply and explicitly religious. Indeed, the Williams movies are concerned with the most universal and existential issues: the human condition of loneliness, sexual repression, depravity, decadence, and despair.

The absence of African American characters in Williams’ drama is unintentionally meaningful in the dramatic text that might be said to signify by means of its implicit presence. Wolfgang Iser argues that “*what is said only appears to take on significance as a reference to what is not said; it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning.*”(6) The failure of Tennessee Williams to write explicitly about issues, such as race for example, does not mean that his works are silent about such matters. *King of Earth* is the only Williams’ work where a character of colour, Chicken Ravenstock, plays a major role. Because Chicken’s racial and ethnic presence lies outside the performative experience of a dominant culture, he has been marginalized in a play
in which he should rightfully dominate. A dominant white critical establishment has illegitimatized Chicken through a culturally imbalanced discourse.

This chapter is a discussion of three of Williams’ plays: The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire and The Night of the Iguana. This analysis will contain many points touching the source of trouble the American modern society faces. Some of these points are feminism, family problems, social relations, psychological disorder, the failure of the American Dream, the effects of capitalism, the cost of civilization and technological advancement, and the cultural clash. All of these facts are signs of the cultural mutation in America.

The Glass Menagerie (1945) was Williams’ first major theatrical success which established him as an important post-war playwright. It projects a vision of lonely human beings who fail to make contact who are isolated from each other and from society and not a series of violent confrontations. Tom, the poet-narrator in the play, organizes the drama symbolically through language and image. This is the “New Plastic Theatre”, a revelation through the allusive power of the word which bear the meaning but not through dramatic struggle. The play hints the picture of the new individual's despair in modern society. The Glass Menagerie is about Tom’s effort to find himself and to rediscover his sister through the art of this play. Cardullo says that, “The character of Tom, of course, is based in part on Tennessee Williams himself, whose given name was Thomas, even as Laura is modeled after Williams’ only sister—Rose.” (7) It is to approximate artistically the conditions under which he lived at home, the conditions which led to the frustrations that he faced in not being free and in not being able to take charge of his own life. The tension between Tom and his mother served as a vehicle for exciting drama, pursuing certain truths about the self in a culture where every person is considered his or her own person, an individual, who must care for his or her self. Williams, through Tom, says that he has given us "truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion". (8) For Williams, the truth behind the experience of his past lay in the emotions that he felt while living at home under the constant supervision
and control of his mother, and the frustrations of his developing into the person that he felt he was supposed to develop into a poet or an expressive individual. Because Tom was burdened with the responsibility of having to work in a warehouse in order to support the family his father abandoned, and because he had no respite from Amanda's constant directions on how he should live his life, Tom's own purpose in life was being destroyed. Williams claims that such is the image of modern man—poised as he is between the contrary imperatives of his world.

Therefore this play is primarily about some aspects of the cultural change and mutation that will be traced through the analysis of the play. It is a tragic play set during the Great Depression. It has explored the failure of the American Dream and has raised tension and trouble in the familial relationship. It shows the fragmentation of family as it is not yet a whole harmonious unit. It also contains some psychological problems such as escape, illusion versus reality, fear, and past haunted the present and many other psychological distorts. Capitalism negative impacts are also shown and modern technologies entered the American daily life. Cultural change and generation gap should also be discussed. The poetic language and the brilliant dramatic discourse of Williams also an important trait of this play.

*A streetcar Named Desire* (1947) is another famous play by Tennessee Williams, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1948. It deals with a cultural clash, a social conflict between two symbolic characters, Blanche Du Bois—a fading gentlewoman, a southern belle, of the old south and Stanley Kowalski a member of the industrial, urban immigrant class. The character of Blanche is thought to be based on Williams’ sister Rose who struggles with her mental health and became incapacitated after lobotomy. Some critics believe A Streetcar Named Desire to be essentially a social drama. Some argues that Blanche and Stanley represent archetypes of cultures or species. Thus Stanley and Blanche’s clash is not human against human but rather species against species. Others focus on Blanche and Stanley as unique individuals and not as types—such as hero versus antihero, and of villain versus victim. The play is about the
destruction of the sensitive and the delicate by the brutal forces of modern society. The play is, thus structured on the principle of presenting the two worlds, the harsh real world of Stanley and Blanche’s world of shadow and illusions; establishing what each world believes in, and then placing these worlds in a series of direct confrontations till the soft fragile world of Blanche is destroyed. The conflict in the play is a representation of William’s nostalgia for vanished, decadent Southern aristocracy and his horror of vital industrial proletarianism.

The third play to be discussed here is Tennessee Williams's *The Night of the Iguana* (1962) which is the last of the distinguished American playwright's major artistic, critical, and box office successes. *The Night of the Iguana* won Williams his fourth New York Drama Critics Award. Like other plays by Williams, it focuses on sexual relationships and odd characters, including one crippled by his desires, the Reverend Shannon. Many critics see this play as the link between stylistic eras, from early writings to middle to late, for Williams. They argue that Williams reveals more of himself in this play than his previous work. Unlike many of Williams's plays, this play ends on a positive, hopeful note. The iguana, which spends most of the play tied up on the edge of the veranda, is seen as a symbol for a number of things, including freedom, what it means to be human, and Shannon. The play seems to be in the end full of hope, redemption, and optimism. There is also a kind of guidance and help among the characters embodied in the character of Hanna and her role with Shannon, a matter that draws an attention to the critics and audiences. The main characters, who are unified in a shared existential struggle, appear ready to help each other in some way.

The duality of the human nature is expressed in contradictory images of light and dark, man and beast, and epitomizes the split in personality between the known and unknown parts. The dark side of human nature is portrayed in religion as the demonic, in psychology as the unconscious, and in Tennessee Williams’s play, *The Night of the Iguana*, as the shadow. According to Jung’s theory of the
unconscious, the shadow is defined as the “negative side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide”.

Amanda, in *The Glass Menagerie*, never sees the irony of her position. She has failed to establish control with reality and continues to live in her illusion, that is a fact of her tragic condition. Each character here resists the illumination, rejects the self-knowledge which might give tragic dignity to their failure. If there is real tragedy in Laura and Amanda whose world has been wrecked by changing social conditions, it is the fact that they do not have any recognition of their failure. Also, they cannot adapt to a different status in life and cannot come to any understanding of their situation, the tragedy is perhaps one of the whole society from which they are derived. The title image itself underlines all of the Wingfields’ illusions. As such, it points directly to the last line of the play and Tom’s injunction to “Blow out your candles, Laura.” Here Laura is afraid to tell her mother she has left the business school till Amanda comes back home disappointed after knowing that her daughter does not go to business school. Then Laura reveals tragically,

*Mother, when you’re disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus’ mother in the museum!* 

It is a very tragic image. Laura feels that she does not fit the world outside the home so she left the school. At the end of the play, the blackout is more catastrophic, for it serves as a reminder of the blackout of war which surrounds the world and all hope of resurrection has been lost in this damned universe where belief turns into metaphor. The failure, of getting the daughter married is less tragic for the daughter than for the mother. Williams suggests her heroism is her attraction. When Tom leaves, Amanda herself is in greater need for the sympathy than the quietly resigned Laura, says Williams, “her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty”.

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The Glass Menagerie embodies Williams’ vision of the fundamental human situation as one solitude in a universe indifferent to our fate. Amanda sums up Laura’s position by saying:

*I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren’t prepared to occupy a position. I’ve seen such pitiful cases in the South- barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister’s husband or brother’s wife!- stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room- .....without any nest- eating the crust of humility all their life!*(13)

Here, Williams presents the south voice to the fore in a form of suffering of being a women and southerner simultaneously.

The Glass Menagerie embodies the fragility of Laura’s world and stands in contrast to the harshness of the other world which can shatter it so easily. A south fantasized in the national imagination during the Depression makes Laura look more abandoned. The play is a dramatic elegy that plays within three spheres of time: the time of the Second World War, in which Tom speaks to the audience as a merchant seaman; the time of the Depression in which Tom lives with his mother and sister in St.Louis, and the time that Amanda thinks of as a vanished golden age- her girlhood in the rural South. The play is cradled in the playwright’s recall of the Depression years when he worked in the warehouse of the International Shoe Company by day and wrote by night.

A streetcar Named desire also contains the best example of a tragic wounded female in Blanche DuBois. She is a character so opposed to her past that she chooses to create a history for herself with the intention of subverting reality. Blanche recognizes her condition and wishes for a return to innocence. Blanche is discontented with her choices in life, and her inability to face the consequences of her choices leads to her flighty nature, her lack of a lasting intimate relationship, and the denial of her past. Blanche in Williams’ play A Streetcar Named Desire tries every means to survive in an indifferent and cruel environment and pursues her passion for love, freedom, and independence, her constant conflicts with unconquerable force that comes from social ethical codes and patriarchal ideology.
practiced in her society. It is her internal conflict that brings her constant suffering and leads to her inevitable tragic end. (14)

The play has many tragicomic elements. A comic motif that turns tragic is Blanche’s insistence on behaving like a Southern lady in a hostile environment to such elegant manners. In the last scene, as she walks through the room where the men are playing poker, Blanche says, “Please don’t get up. I’m only passing through”. (15) It is a repetition of what she says earlier in scene three when she and Stella return home before the game is over. Her repetition reflects her inability to change her behavior to fit her new circumstances. Her inability to change expresses a tragic commitment to values and radiations, “beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart”. (16) These values are not relevant in Stanley’s world and they are finer than anything that might replace them. Blanche’s repetition raises a sense of sadness and loss. But the hope, the sense of salvation for Blanche is shown when she tells Mitch:

_Honey, it wasn’t the kiss I objected to. I liked the kiss very much. It was the other little – familiarity – that I felt obliged to – discourage ... I didn’t resent it! Not a bit in the world! In fact, I was somewhat flattered that you desired me! But, honey, you know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she’ll be lost._ (17)

It follows the tradition of classical tragedy in way that a classical tragedy always allows for the possibility of redemption sometime in the middle of the play. Blanche’s hope lies with Mitch, but later it is Stanley who reveals all her flaws, destroys all her hopes though it seems that Blanche may succeed in freeing herself from her trapped situation. But the reality is that she is homeless. She tries to find a place for herself but in vain. She is rejected by such a cruel society of modern age. She becomes strained in a world loses all human values and neglects the simple and primary considerations of her trap. All refuse to help her out of her illusionary world and in contrary she couldn’t accept the world of reality. The source of most of her difficulties is recognized in her narration of her tragic
marriage with the young Allan. Here is the man she loved “unendurable” but whom she is unable to help.

In addition to the tragic vision shown in the play, *A Streetcar Named Desire* also traces the effects of the World War II on American society. The play introduced a diseased post-war America to truly adult fare – prostitution, homosexuality, rape, domestic violence, alcoholism, mental breakdown. Recovering from the great depression, World War II, Americans were familiar with violence in their daily lives and even on the stage. The violence was not the shocking element of the play. Critic C. Bigsby notes:

> The shock of Streetcar when it was first staged lay in the fact that, outside of O’Neill’s work, this was the first American play in which sexuality was patently at the core of the lives of all its principal characters, a sexuality with the power to redeem or destroy, to compound or negate the forces which bore on those caught in a moment of social change. (18)

The moment of social change had come after the World War II. Thousands of Americans struggled to renegotiate their places at home after the war. Women returned from work to the domestic sphere. Gender roles were changing, and with them, expectations about sexuality.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki stand as signposts marking an era of moral ambiguity and uncertainty. The moral ambiguity began after the United States dropped the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, causing untold destruction and death reach more than 200,000. To save American lives, most Americans supported the dropping of the bombs and ending the war. But Pauly indicates an important part saying, “Now deprived of a clear, identifiable enemy, the moral indignation generated by the nation’s war effort was turning back upon itself and growing self-conscious. The previous sense of purpose and conviction was being replaced by guilt, anxiety, and above all, troubled introspection.” (19) The troubled violence which Blanche faces in New Orleans clearly proves the effects of the World War II; even the violence she sees in Stanley who returns from the war reflects the stress by experiencing the major traumatic events in the
Many soldiers return with varying degrees of battle fatigue, known today as post-traumatic stress syndrome in symptoms including depression, irritability, guilt, and flashbacks. People are fighting hard to find a domestic status quo, a struggle that A Streetcar Named Desire reflects through the domestic violence. Blanche never imagines the conditions of Stella’s living with the violence that accompanies it, even sexual violence.

Like sufferers of post-traumatic stress, Blanche also lives in two simultaneous times— the past and the present. The trauma caused by the suicide of her husband never left her, and the sudden return of the memory must have looked familiar to families dealing with soldiers who found themselves suddenly mentally transported back to the battlefield. Her reaction, combined with the polka music, suggests the level of trauma that resulted from her experience:

[Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.]

**Blanche:** We danced the varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later— a shot! [The polka stops abruptly] [Blanche rises stiffly. Then, the polka resumes in a major key.] I ran out— all did!— all ran and gathered about the terrible things at the edge of the lake! I couldn’t get near for this crowding. Then somebody caught my arms. ‘Don’t go any closer! Come back! You don’t want to see!’ See? See what? Then I heard voices say— Allan! Allan! They Grey boy! He’d stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired—so—that the back of his head had been—blown away! (20)

The problem of domestic violence was ignored in American society such as wife-beating that was considered a family matter rather than a crime or seniors social issue until 1970s. Domestic violence should not be ignored. It is clearly shown in A Streetcar Named Desire where Stanley actually strikes his pregnant wife, Stella. Koprince says, “But Williams knew the subject of domestic violence first hand, having observed spousal abuse in his own family.” (21) From a modern sociological perspective, Stanley is batterer—a man whose aggressive masculinity and desire for control are perfectly reflecting him as an abuser. Stella, his wife,
matches the sociological profile of the battered woman; she is a submissive, self-deprecating wife who tolerates and excuses her husband’s behaviour. This battering cycle explains Stanley’s most brutal act of violence: the rape of Stella’s sister, Blanche Du Bois. Stanley’s emotional abuse of Stella also includes intimidation, especially through violence directed at household objects, for example, the slamming of doors, the throwing of dinnerware, the hurling of radio out the window. There is a primary example of physical abuse also against Stella. In Scene Three, drunk and angry, Stanley first tosses the radio out of the window and then beats his pregnant wife.

The failure of the American Dream is also expressed and portrayed in Williams’ plays. Tom, in The Glass Menagerie, hates job at the warehouse and goes to the movies every night in order to find some type of escape. Like Tennessee Williams, who also worked at his father’s shoemaking company, Tom thinks of the warehouse job as destructive to the creative endeavours of man. That’s why he says:

How lucky dead people are! ... But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! And you say self–self’s all I ever think of.\(^{(22)}\)

Here, Amanda is looking for better future that her son can secure their future and achieve the American Dream. She asks him to stop smoking, the money thus saved will be “enough to give you a night course in accounting at Washington U”, and that would be wonderful. But Tom continues to smoke. She looks for a bright future for her children even when Amanda sees the new moon, she makes a wish. She wishes for “success and happiness for my precious children”.\(^{(23)}\) This reminds Tom to his mother’s constant wish for a gentleman caller for Laura to give their life meaning.

Although Tom is trying hard to become a poet by trying to use his spare time at home to practice his art, the fact remains, Tom is tremendously frustrated at not being free to develop his talents in the way he desires to. In fact, so intense is Tom's frustration at being forced to take care of his father's responsibilities at
the expense of having to sacrifice his own life and self, that he is desperately
depressed and annoyed, and he even desires death during one moment of heated
exchange with Amanda about how Tom should live his life and bear his
responsibilities:

You think I'm crazy about the warehouse?... You think I'm in
love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to
spend fifty-five years down there in that--celotex interior!
with-- fluorescent-- tubes! Look! I'd rather somebody picked
up a crowbar and battered out my brains--than go back
mornings! I go! Every time you come in yelling that Goddamn
"Rise and Shine!" "Rise and Shine!" I say to myself, "How
lucky dead people are!" But I get up. I go! For sixty-five
dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being
ever! And you say self--self's all I ever think of.\(^{(24)}\)

Tom as Williams was able to transform the raw materials of his life in a way that
eventually enabled to liberate himself from the people who had for so long
followed him in his mind, making him feel guilty of his action of leaving. This he
needed to grow out of and not let it restrict him in his search for his true self and
mission in life.

On one side, Amanda, in *The Glass Menagerie*, dreams to secure her
daughter’s future. She does her best encouraging her daughter to be well
connected to the society by pushing her to the typing classes in business school.
She asks her to have charm to cover her little deformity of being slightly crippled.
She sees that her daughter’s future will be secured if she gets a job and be well-
connected with the society around her. In the other side, Amanda also dreams of
financial security by her son Tom and his un-adventurous job which he has no
interest in. she motivates him but in vain. But the result is that Amanda lectures
Tom on the merits of business by financing a secretarial course in business school
for Laura, her daughter. When Amanda finds that Laure is too nervous to learn to
type, she decides that the girl must marry. Tom rejects the possessive love of his
family because he can accept it only by shouldering the responsibility and
accepting the imprisonment that go with it. He breaks all her dreams and getting in
quarrel with her. Finally, he decides to leave them. Amanda becomes a house-wife without a house. She loses her husband who leaves them 16 years ago, her son who leaves for adventures, and her daughter who leaves to her imaginary world. Thus all her dreams fail mainly because of her severe press and daily harpings on her children. She creates their awareness to high extent and that negatively affects them and creates destructive impact on the family. Consequently, her final line is: “Go, then! Then go to the moon- you selfish dreamer!”(25) Here her dream has been smashed by reality, but has not been forgotten.

Amanda’s anxieties are in large part economic and there is money behind many of her illusions; her mythical suitors were all wealthy men. She computes the money Tom would save by giving up smoking. When Tom complains of the grimness of life in the shoe factory, she replies that he should try and he will succeed. This is another of Amanda’s illusions and it is shared by her fellow Americans, as the traditional motto of the American dream of success. It is Jim who is the spokesman for the American dream. To Jim the warehouse is not a prison but a rung on the ladder toward success. He believes in self-improvement through education. He says about the material progress of America:

\[
\text{All that remains is for the industry to get itself under way!}
\text{Full steam- knowledge ZZZZZP! Money- ZZZZZP ! Power!}
\text{That’s the cycle democracy is built on. (26)}
\]

Willy in “Death of a Salesman” insists on his children that through well-liked and smile on the face is the way to achieve the success they dreamed of, the American dream. Here in The Glass Menagerie, Amanda is like Willy. (27) She insists on her daughter to develop charm and vivacity to overcome the difficulties to achieve success. Amanda says:

\[
\text{LAURA [In a Tone of frightened apology]: I’m- crippled!}
\text{AMANDA: Nonsense!...Why, you’re Not crippled, you just have a little defect hardly noticeable, even!}
\text{When people have some slights disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up}
\]

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for it- develop charm- and vivacity- and- charm!
That’s all you have to do!(28)

But later, Amanda wants her daughter to get married to rich man and achieve her dreams to secure their financial circumstances and live happily. But she doesn’t succeed.

The strongest representation of the American Dream in the play *A Streetcar Named Desire* is through the character of Stanley. Stanley represents the American Dream that all men are born equal and can succeed equally, whereas Blanche represents the old world, where class and race are still important issues. Stanley has power despite his lower social class, but, as he is well aware, it lies in his physical actions. Talking of his domination of Stella and the difference in their social backgrounds, he comments: "I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it."(29) The social significance of his physical action, like familial domination and rape of Blanche, suggests that the sources of power have changed in American culture and that Stanley is willing to grasp at whatever power he can find in order to assert his place in the family and society around him.

He could be said to represent the new social order of modern America as a contrast to the decayed gentility of Blanche's Southern manners. This is also seen in the fact that Williams makes him an immigrant who is proud to be part of the new society of a multi-cultural America. As such an immigrant, he is not concerned about traditions or old hierarchies of land ownership or the power and wealth brought by family positions in society. Stanley's determination to belong to American society is a response to being called a "Polack." As he forcefully explains,

*I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is a one hundred percent American ... so don't ever call me a Polack."*(30)

As he is an immigrant representing the American Dream, he couldn’t achieve the American Dream as it is shown by his living conditions. As a result of that he
turns to use his physical power and domination over his family. The loss of Belle Reve also from which he expects to get much money is another failure to achieve the dream. Consequently, he turns to destroy Blanche as a result of losing his American Dream source, the Belle Reve.

Blanche’s essential humanity is reaffirmed by the doctor who comes to her aid as the kind stranger. Also, with this kind stranger’s appearance in coming to Blanche’s aid, Williams reaffirms one of the basic tenets of the American Dream, the realization that no one anywhere will be denied his or her inherent human dignity. Williams confers dignity on Blanche by letting her articulate the truth behind the pain and sorrow of her condition through the most famous line in his oeuvre:

\[ \text{Whoever you are- I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.}^{(31)} \]

But the experience of the 1930s did not turn Williams into social realist, but it opened up for him a darker vision of American life which he suggests to his audience but which is denied to his characters, a belief that the American dream is itself a shame and a failure leads to economical and social changes.

The changing economic and social modes affect the individual and the family unit. Williams in his plays explores the fragmented family relations. *The Glass Menagerie* explores a family who is trying to survive under powerful social and economic forces. In this play Tom Wingfield narrates his youth in St. Louis during the depression of the 1930s, when he lived at home with his mother, Amanda, and his sister Laura. Laura is a delicate person who is extremely self-conscious because she is physically challenged. Amanda fails to conform to the material feminine roles prescribed by a society. Tom, at the end of the play, retreats to a life at sea but cannot escape his guilt memories of his sister. Thus, Amanda is an overly protective mothers; she intensely scrutinizes her children to the point of psychologically harming them. Once, Tom comes to the table for dinner, Amanda says:
AMANDA: (to her son) Honey, don’t push with your fingers....Chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

TOM: I haven’t enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It is you that make me rush through meals with your hawklike attention to every bite I take. (32)

She also makes Laura feel so self-conscious before a date that she cannot even answer the door to a gentleman caller. However, Amanda fails in the traditional role of comforting her husband and children. Her husband leaves her even though it is during the Great Depression because she drives him out with her constant nagging and intense scrutiny.

Apparently, Amanda seems to comfort her children, but this is an illusion. In reality, her daily harpings and impossible expectations and directions only serve to push them away from her. Tom retreats into movies and then into sea life and Laura retreats into her glass menagerie.

AMANDA (to Tom): where are you going?
TOM: I’ am going to the movies.
AMANDA: .......... Go to the movies, go! Don’t think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who’s crippled and has no job! Don’t let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! Just go, go, go to the movies!
TOM: All right, I will! The more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I’ll go, and I won’t go to the movies!
AMANDA: Go, then! Go to the moon- you selfish dreamer! (33)

This scene is dominated by the selfish cruelty of all the family members, especially Amanda. In this last scene Amanda calls her son a “selfish dreamer” and her daughter a “cripple”. Similarly, earlier in the play Tom tells his mother to her face “you ugly - babbling old - witch”. Cruelty between mother and child abounds in the play. Some said that, “Amanda has a neurotic pathological hatred
for her husband, and intentionally inflicts psychological harm on her children to get revenge on her husband for leaving her." (35) Amanda creates the prison of self-consciousness by exploiting her daughter rather than encouraging her. That’s by comparing Laura’s lack of marital prospects with her own past when she herself was visited one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain by seventeen gentlemen callers.

Nevertheless, Amanda values her son with $65 a month he brings home from his warehouse job. Tom accurately depicts the reality of most individuals’ existence in a twentieth century American capitalistic society when he says to his mothers.

TOM: ...... I go! Every time you come in yelling that damn “Rise and Shine”! “Rise and shine”! I Say to myself, “How lucky dead people are!” But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and bring ever. (36)

What really hurts him is the fact that his own mother perceives him solely for his money. Tom is psychologically damaged by his commodification and feels alienated from his true self.

Bigsby, in keeping with his socio-economic interpretation, feels that it is Amanda who bears the greatest burden in this play: “twice abandoned and left to watch over her daughter ... she is allowed moments of touching vulnerability when she exposes the nature of her own pain”. (37) The result of women’s dependence on men resulted in great agony, alienation, isolation and many problems. The patriarchal system is no more useful to female characters in Wingfield family. They are left in a time they are in extreme necessity and need for a man to secure them financially in a harsh capitalistic society. In such a way the women of the time are lost and struggling for their rights.

The separation of the family is resulted from the fact that Amanda has not comforted her husband and children. She perceives them as changeable commodities through the powerful capitalistic social forces that pervade twentieth
century American society. Thus the separation of the family unit is breaking the Grand narratives of the family system as a whole unit. Each of the family members has gone his or her way; the farther heads to Mexico, Tom heads for adventure, and Laure heads into her imaginary world. As a result, Amanda is a homemaker without a home, her husband and children have left her, and the lights have been turned off. The final interchange between Tom and his mother illustrates the fatal features of the controlling parent and how children break this convention of patriarchal system. Tom, as his father, leaves the family; it breaks the Grand narratives by escaping away from one’s responsibilities and leaving home and family which should be a complete unit with integration and harmony.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche suffers the pitiful fate under the patriarchal monarchy system. Blanche lives under the pressure of her former guilt and the social rules, in which her brother-in-law Stanley is the tyrant in the family. Marxism feminist theory argues that economic factor is the root of the oppression that women suffer from. The economic dependence on men deprives women of the right to dominate their own fate and the strength to struggle against men so that they are reduced into the Other affiliated by men. The economic structure of plantation in the South removes women from productive labour so that they cannot obtain the independent economic status. Blanche has a miserable situation,

> A teacher’s salary is barely sufficient for her living expenses. I didn’t save a penny last year and so I had to come here for the summer.\(^{(38)}\)

Her salary is not enough so that she has to turn to men for help after the suicide of her husband, death of relatives and loss of her manor. She considers that as the only choice to face the cruel environment. She dates with different men until she is asked to leave the city. Then she depends on Stanley but her behaviour of Southern culture of delicacy doesn’t fit in with him, then on Mitch but she fails. Here it is shown that if women place their hope and fortune on men, they cannot change their oppressed status and their dream of happy life is bound to break. Her dependence on men in patriarchal society serves as one of the factors that result in
Blanche’s destruction and hence, the destruction of the old South and the culture she represents.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche’s problems are distinctly women’s problems, her limitations and strategies are peculiar to powerless women. Stella is another kind of woman. And her final decision is a concession to the constraints on a woman, not only in twentieth-century America, but in most of human history. The mythology of Southern womanhood elevated the white woman to a position of veneration. The Southern lady is black woman being perceived as lusty and compliant, the white as puritanical and lily-pure. As a Southern lady, Blanche's narrowly defined social role has kept her from admitting her natural appetites and pursuing them. She and Stella both realize that the traditional woman has few choices: she must be the good daughter, sheltered and virginal; the good wife, protected and faithful; or the good mother, loving and wise. If she is forced by circumstances to work, she must undertake womanly tasks - teaching the young or nursing the old.

Some feminist critics have attacked Tennessee Williams for portraying these women as victims and losers. Williams was not prescribing behaviour for his female characters. He was describing the behaviour he had witnessed. In other cases, like his own mother's, the woman might be forced by economic circumstances to endure years of either physical or psychological abuse. Blanche is both a villain and a victim, the cause of her husband's suicide and the suffering widow as a result of it. Also Stella, as a Southern Belle, has been conditioned to embrace the traditional notion of womanhood. Stanley makes all the decisions and Stella plays the part of the submissive wife. Here is what Blanche is commenting on. She is criticizing such style of life and believes. Stella, a battered wife, accepts her relationship with her husband as it is even telling Blanche that “I’m not in anything I want to get out of.”

Stella denies that there is a real problem in her marriage. Like many battered women, Stella puts up with his abuse because she
does not want to lose him, and because she feels helpless to change the way that he treats her.

It seems that Williams criticizes the man’s use of his wife heritage in the state of Louisiana. That is one of Napoleonic codes and it is “modes of acquiring ownership of things:

STANLEY: ... and when you’re swindled under the Napoleonic code I’m swindled too. And I don’t like to be swindled... Then where’s the money if the place was sold?

STELLA:  Not sold – Lost, lost!^{40}

Williams has attempted to show how Blanche’s over-delicate and over-sensitive nature was the reason she sought escape from her failure with her young husband by turning to alcohol and to intimacies with strangers. There is another pet theme in William’s drama which is the superiority of difference; it is considering his female heroins such as Laure in *The Glass Menagerie*, Magie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Molly Haskell, the feminist critic, has pointed out that the Williams screen heroines were much sexier than many. In Haskell's view, Williams's heroines departed from the screen conventions of the time in that they were male-oriented and motivated by lust, not love, for younger men.^{41} Williams's characters helped to legitimize a new kind of behaviour for both men and women, allowing each gender to display a wider range of emotions and feelings. Thus, his heroines are on one level extremely sensitive, fragile, and weak; and on another strong-willed, stubborn, determined, and a bit masculine. It is proved by the roles of Maxine and Hanna respectively in *The Night of the Iguana*. Their roles are of two directions supported by the demands of the feminist movement of the 1960s. Hanna plays the role of wise character who is realistic and carrying high social values. She interacts with Shannon and helps him gets out of the prison and the psychological dilemma and breakdown. She proves that woman can be an effective member in the society. Woman can be like man, that is to prove the mistake in the
conventional believe which limits women’s role in America before 1960s. It demands the equality between men and women which is a basic demand of the feminist movement. Nevertheless, Maxine plays the role demanding the complete freedom of women including sexual freedom. It also reflects her lust desire which is shown in Maxine and the emptiness in her life after her husband’s death, despite the financial success in her 2nd rate hotel. Hence, both of them symbolize two essential demands of feminist movement in America during the cultural revolution of the 1960s. Here, Tennessee Williams traces a kind of a cultural mutation in the American society.

*The Night of the Iguana* idealizes women as Hanna is described as a medieval saint. Hanna embodied the feminist movement by her good nature in helping Shannon. The priest, Shannon, was in a situation of depression, despair, and loneliness meets a holly lady in the Mexican coast so that she could guide him and lead him the very right direction of life by giving him many examples of endurance and suffering that human beings might face patiently. Hanna is the symbol of religious redemption and she is the maker of reconciliation and social reintegration illustrated by the end of the play. She discovers that Shannon is in need for contact, home to remove psychological problems, loneliness, and despair. That reflects the necessity for social integration in such a social condition.

Some critics have stated that the *The Night of the Iguana* marked a major departure from Williams’s earlier works, suggesting that the ending of the play allowed for some positivity—a bit of optimism and a sense of hope absent in previous works and it is the social integration. In *The Night of the Iguana*, the exchanges between Hannah and Reverend Shannon are some of the most significant passages in the play. They reveal intimate details about each character and help to reveal the themes of the play. Hannah identifies Shannon’s central problem as being simply that he needs something to believe in:

**SHANNON**: *What is my problem, Miss Jelkes?*

**HANNAH**: *The oldest one in the world – the need to believe in something...*
SHANNON: Your voice sounds hopeless about it
HANNAH: No, I’m not... In fact, I’ve discovered something to believe in
SHANNON: ...God?
HANNAH: No... Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it’s just for one night only... One night communications between them on a veranda outside their... separate cubicles, Mr Shannon.

[.............]
SHANNON. I didn’t think so. Then what?
HANNAH. A little understanding exchanged between them, a wanting to help each other through nights like this.\(^{(42)}\)

The play’s conclusion is positive. The focus on the emotional, spiritual, and philosophical intimacy seems evident in this exchange. Why is the fact that Hannah is concerned with emotional intimacy rather than physical intimacy significant? It was because she, too, has struggled emotionally and spiritually. She also represents that the true social relationship is highlighted spiritually and emotionally rather than physically.

HANNAH: Yes. I can help you because I’ve been through what you are going through now. I had something like your spook—I just had a different name for him. I called him the blue devil, and We had quite a battle, quite a contest between us.\(^{(43)}\)

Hanna could convince Shannon that struggle and endurance are matters of fact in life and supporting her views by examples from her experience. What is cited above indicates widespread cultural problems such as loss of faith and mental instability.

Hannah seems to have none of Shannon’s dirty associations with sex. The encounter for her is not cause for guilt or disgust. Rather, it was a connection that she shared with an unknown man in which she discovered a depth of loneliness she was previously unaware of:

SHANNON: You mean it didn’t disgust you?
HANNAH: *Nothing human disgusts me unless it's unkind, violent. And I told you how gentle he was... delicate about it.*

The fact that Hannah is sexually un-dirty and non-guilty is why Shannon is so fascinated by, and receptive to her. She has a completely different outlook towards people and in this possesses something that may be of help to Shannon. This outlook is the strategy of connection to others and communication between people as an approach to attain meaning. Her reaching out to Shannon may therefore be seen not only to be a means of helping him – but also as a means of generating meaning for herself. Therefore when Shannon argues that birds do not make homes in impermanent places, Hannah retorts:

*I think of a home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can... well, nest, rest – live in, emotionally speaking... I’m not a bird, Mr Shannon, I’m a human being and when a member of that fantastic species builds a nest in the heart of another, the question of permanence isn’t the first or even the last thing that’s considered.*

Because of her extraordinary concern for others, as well as her seeming sexual purity, she offers Shannon an utterly different possibility for existing, one concerned with outer relation. In this way she encourages him to move from his inner (part) object relations – associated to a Paranoid-Schizoid mode of functioning, toward a mature (whole) object form of relating that is outwardly directed – associated to the psychologically healthy Depressive position.

The defrocked priest Shannon, in *The Night of the Iguana*, is a man in search of divine forgiveness. Shannon, like others of Williams’ protagonists, is haunted by a sense of guilt- a guilt which he describes as a “spook”. Sins and guilt of Shannon reflect the loss of his values and his searching for forgiveness embodies his wish for regaining his lost social values.

Hanna’s individuality is not in receiving but in giving, she believes not in repressing but freeing, not in being false but in being truthful. This she does by
conducting herself not from a sense of possessiveness but from her faith in the primacy of individual conviction. To her, individual success means being able to liberate people from their deepest dilemmas.

Williams explores the psychological condition and the crisis of illusion versus reality. All the four characters in *The Glass Menagerie* are victims of their illusions, and these illusions cloud reality. Amanda relives her days as the most desirable belle of Blue Mountain. When Jim comes to call on Laura, Amanda seems to confuse things and relives her past. Tom’s great illusion is also the belief that his joining the Merchant Marine and sailing to all parts of the world will fill the emptiness in him. Jim O’Connor’s illusion is the product of the hollowness of the American Dream, which is myth. Jim wants to believe in the myth. He thinks that if he works hard to develop his special ability, nothing can keep him from being an executive some day. Williams says through his poet narrator Tom that the stage magician:

.....gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth, 
I give you truth in the pleasant guise of illusion.\(^{(47)}\)

The fire-escape, a physical symbol, is used to represent various aspects of being trapped or as a method of escape. The play represents Tom’s frustrated attempt to escape from his intolerable job, situation and life. For Amanda, the escape is seen in terms of the gentleman caller who will rescue her daughter form impending old – maidhood. For Laura, the escape is seen as her means of retreating from the outer world to her glass Menagerie. It is her protection from the outside world that stares at her physical deformity. Whereas for Tom, it is an escape to the outer world, for Laura it is an escape from the outer world that she dreads so much.

Amanda’s sense of unreality is caught in the first episodes as she lives in her past in a world of servants talking about gentlemen callers on her:

\*Why, sometimes there weren’t chairs to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish home.\(^{(48)}\)\*
It is hard to believe that she had as many as seventeen gentlemen callers on a single Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain. What is important is that Amanda now believes this story so strongly that it has become a reality to her. If life is paranoia for Amanda and she is overwhelmed by her fears of losing the people around her, she tries to counter this fear by embarking on a blind route to safety, because she too, like the vast middle class of America, had matriculated in a school for the blind. Therefore, for her the alternative is to resituate herself in her past and repossess vicariously, through her children's lives, the opportunities that she missed and the material things that she could not have. Her blindness comes from her belief that regressing into her past self and play-doing the things that she couldn't do will solve her problems of the present. She is fearful of change because she believes that the only time worth living was before she got married, before her children were born.

Tom tries to make Amanda see that Laura is different from other people. He doesn’t want his mother to expect too much from Laura. When he refers to her as crippled, Amanda rejects the reality and reminds him never to utter that word. It means she rejects reality and lives in illusion. But Tom wants Amanda to face facts, he says about Laura:

*She lives in a world of her own a world of little glass ornaments and old phonograph records.* (49)

That’s to prove that Laura is different and unique. Symbolically, the unicorn represents Laura’s own self. The author explains, “Stemming from this, Laura’s separation increases till she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf.” (50) As soon as the unicorn is broken, Laura realizes that now she does not feel as freakish. Losing the horn, Laura thinks, is a blessing but in disguise because it makes the unicorn more like the other horses. She says: “I’ll just imagine he had an operation.” (51) Jim teaches Laura to have some confidence in herself, shows her that she is different from
other people and should stay that way even if it means never moving from the self, being left alone. It is the gentleman caller who speaks:

\[
\text{The different people are not like other people but being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people are not such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You're one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're common as – weeds, but you –well you’re – Blue Roses!}^{(52)}
\]

Symbolically, Laura is feeling more normal now than she has ever felt. Even though, Jim has achieved his objective of bringing Laure somewhat out of her world of retreat. After he makes his confession of being engaged to Betty, Laura presents the broken unicorn to him as a souvenir. One may see in the broken unicorn Laura’s shattered hopes, or may say that the broken unicorn is no longer unique like Laura, but instead it is ordinary like Jim.

Feminists believe that patriarchy suppresses women in many aspects such as politics, economy, society, culture, education and so on, and mistakenly defines women’s psychology as being unilateral, unsound, irrational, illogical and impulsive. Under this kind of bias and discrimination, women’s psychology is easily distorted, and cannot develop healthily. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche is a contradictive lady with very complicated character featured by a distorted psychology, sexual desire, fantasy, hypocrisy, and illusion. The key word in this play, “desire” also serves as one of main factors that contribute to Blanche’s tragedy. In South, a kind of puritan ethics are carried out, and homosexuality is universally unacceptable as an immoral Deed. When she finds the boy she loves deeply is a homosexual, she is shocked and hurt. Her reaction leads to the suicide of Allen; it is a forever-existing wound in her heart. After that, she begins to retaliate upon the puritan ethics, because they ruin her happy life forever, and her desire erupts ever since. She indulges herself in sexual desire, and develops intimacy with one stranger and another even a dishonourable action on a seventeen-year-old boy. However, her rebellion cannot release her. Instead, the
more men she dates with, the more confused she feels. Thus the stronger the desire becomes, the deeper she bogs down. And the final result is destruction. (53)

Hypocrisy and pretension constitute another facet of Blanche’s character. What lies behind the hypocrisy and pretension is her lack of sense of security and the need of protection. Since she is unable to adapt to the new environment and culture, she chooses to be an escapee. She is at a point of desperation. Her explanation of her Belle Reve as lost and her recounting of her frequent encounters with death, serve to account for Blanche’s present neurotic state. She has always been the type who is unfit for the world of reality. Blanche has lied to Mitch about her age and avoided the light. But being forced by Mitch into the light makes her realizes and confesses her past life. Blanche’s whole theory of living involves magic and illusion. She says: “I don’t want realism, I want magic.” (54) She cannot face reality. Forcing into the light makes her see how her life actually is instead of how it ought to be. Here, Mitch is enforcing Blanche to face her reality; facing the reality to get rid of the illusionary world she is living in.

The grievous loss and how it came about left a deep trauma in her psychic life. Then the trauma of the deaths of her father, mother, sister Margaret and an old cousin Jesse, each contributing to her loneliness and fear of death and disease. In addition to the compounded the nervous anxiety that she suffers leading her to indulge in intimacies with men, intimacies which she confesses that she needed to prove to herself that she was not dead:

Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. And 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 her position!" (55)

Her grief drives her to drink, hysteria and nymphomania. Blanche having lost her all – husband, family, financial security from inheritance, her job, and her youth as
also her fair reputation, reaches New Orleans to look up her sister Stella. Her
delicate beauty, her fragile nerves and her uncertain manner, show her as sensitive
women in brutal world. Calvin Bedient says about her:

Blanche ... is hopelessly fragile, afraid of being deserted,
afraid of the future, afraid of the post, afraid to love, afraid of
crowds, afraid of light, afraid of death. Afraid and guilty. She
is the victim of male pride and paranoia.\textsuperscript{(56)}

In addition to a series of inner conflicts, her confrontations with Stanley give her
complex emotions; both fear and attraction, which reveals the dual world of
Blanche’s existence and the tension between Blanche and Stanley. Stanley
demonstrates that reality is as brutal as she fears. She has no choice but to retreat
into illusion. Blanche suffers her tragic fate as a consequence of the shattering of
their illusions by her cruel reality.

The psychological crisis is also shown in \textit{The Night of the Iguana}. Shannon
emerges from a deep psychological crisis; he is tied up by Hannah and Maxine so
he can do himself no harm, to accept the possibility of a new life with Maxine.
Maxine and Hanna join forces to prevent Shannon from taking a suicidal dunk in
the ocean. Lindy Levin in his essay \textit{Shadow Into Light: A Jungian Analysis of The
Night of the Iguana} in the Tennessee Williams Annual Review says: \textit{“His feelings
for God and Mama are split: he loves his mother but hates her anger. He loves
God but is afraid of His wrath. He likes physical pleasure but feels disgust. He
appears to be compliant but is in reality defiant. He becomes a minister but rejects
the God of his forefathers. He has sex with young girls but degrades them
afterwards. He believes in goodness but acts without integrity. He needs “human
contact” but loves “nobody”\textsuperscript{(57)} These are contradictions in his personality. Here,
it is the core of all his psychological problems. But Hanna represents the
possibility for Shannon’s salvation and rebirth and describes the path to recovery.
She observes that he is guilty of self-indulgence. He threatens both philosophical
and physical suicide- either by returning to the Church or by taking a long swim to
China.}
With the arrival of Hanna Jelkes and Nanno, Shannon immediately warms to the old poet. Shannon is going to face the same trouble and struggle of Nanno as it is intended that Nanno is a future version of Shannon, who still, as a result of actual rather than psychological blindness, refuses to recognize the people around him as who and what they are. He lives in fantasy and he is completely opposed to Hanna. Heintzelman and Smith-Howard in their Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams said: “What “the spook” is to Shannon, “the blue devil” is to Hanna, and in both cases the conflict is the same, that of reality and fantasy.” (58)

Considering the extent to which his sexual impulses have harmed him already, Maxine poses a potentially aggravating threat to his psychological well-being. Hannah occupies completely the other end of the psychic spectrum for Shannon. She is fiercely principled, sexually avoidant and deeply concerned for him as a fellow human being. Shannon has found himself at the Costa Verde in danger of psychological collapse. His interaction with Hannah is of greatest importance in the play. Through it, he seems to overcome many of his demons and moves toward a more mature mode of relating to others and toward himself. She shows him that in communication - and caring relations towards other people, one can perhaps obtain some meaning in a world that may otherwise be the desperately lonely and scary place he fears. Likewise, she points out that there is good and bad in everything, and that his dichotomization of these principles is a fallacy. Through this, Shannon is given the opportunity to shift from his immature relation towards mature whole object relations.

Shannon, when he was a child, was caught by his mother while he was amusing himself with himself. Maxine Faulk identifies the genesis of Shannon’s psychological crisis: “And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls.” (59) Therefore, Shannon would have strongly repressed sex but still found that he had a need for it. The constant assault against his sexual urges, started by his mother punishing him and frightening him by God’s anger, would lead to a sense of frustration and
resentment would develop towards his mother and God. He is reality mixed with fantasy. He is helped to face the real world through the final conversation with Hannah, in which she both reveals some of his attitudes to himself, and explains with some of her own.

The presence of duality and an inconclusive view of existence are in this play in such as this dialogue between Hannah and Shannon about dual nature:

**SHANNON:** Don’t tell me you have a dark side to your nature. (He says this sardonically.)

**HANNAH:** I’m sure I don’t have to tell a man as experienced and knowledgeable as you, Mr. Shannon, that everything has its shadowy side? Everything in the whole solar system has a shadowy side to it except the sun itself—the sun is the single exception.

The dialogue presents the notion of duality. There is also a concern of duality and contradictions: Nonno completes his last poem but dies shortly thereafter; Shannon realizes that there are people who care about him, but it is implied that he will choose to stay with Maxine in the absence of love; Hannah is free from any constraints following the death of her grandfather but has lost her family and now finds herself alone. Although duality is addressed in many of his other works, *The Night of the Iguana* is the clearest presentation of this concept, ultimately fueling the great success of the work.

Many characters in this play display loneliness as well. The first example is Maxine. She has always been lonely even when her husband was alive, but after he died she became lonelier. Shannon is probably the loneliest character in the play. He lost respect from the church, does not have a wife, does not seem to be close with his family, and has no close friends to count on. He chose the job at Blake Tours because he has nothing else to do and is wandering around Mexico until he can figure it out. He had sex with Charlotte just because he needed
contact. He has no one to fill his need for attention, and his actions prove that he is lonely:

SHANNON: *I’ve always travelled with trainloads, planeloads and busloads of tourists.*

HANNAH: *That doesn’t mean you’re still not really alone.*

[........]

HANNAH: *...You have always traveled alone except for your spook, as you call it. He is your traveling companion. Nothing, nobody else has traveled with you.* 

Shannon is a thinker and a moralist, but these only contribute to his isolation from society: His thoughts on God and morality get him locked out of the church of which he is the pastor.

The loss of faith is a cultural problem arisen in the play *The Night of the Iguana*. The characters in the play, especially Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, seem to suffer from a loss of faith of some kind, whether it is religious in nature or a loss of faith in humanity. Shannon represents everyman suffering from such a problem that caused him psychological breakdown. It means that Williams wants to highlight this cultural problem that hits the society and leads to instability and social disorder. It is a kind of cultural change happened in the society with deep and dangerous effects. But by the humanistic role played by Hanna, it is clear that such a problem can be overcome by the reintegration into the social mainstream and in most by regaining faith in God. Shannon’s interactions with Hanna prove that solution. It indicates that human will and endurance are necessary elements in the course of solution. 

Shannon reacts angrily, with his fierce sermon denouncing the typical western conception of God:

*All your Western theologies, the whole mythology of them, are based on the conception of God as a senile delinquent, by God, I will not and cannot continue to conduct services in praise and worship of this... angry, petulant old man...*
He deserts the church because his conception of God has been split and established as ‘bad’ whereas, previously a loved object perceived as ‘good’. And I think this is the main cause behind his despair, frustration, and loneliness and if he believes in the merci of God, nothing of this will happen to him but he loses this belief. Although, his redeeming his gold cross “from a Mexico City pawnshop…” shows a certain degree of wanting to repair his previous relationship towards God, Miss Fellowes has accused him of being a defrocked minister.

Freeing the society from the restrictions of religions is a kind of cultural mutations. Consequently, the Williams people are driven like the writer in the short story, *The Night of the Iguana*, to say that he has to depend on himself. But the more knowledgeable people know that because there is no providence, human beings must take social responsibility for each other. This play is based on what could be called a pagan morality. The writer seems to have little or no belief in God, and so all events in the world are understood in terms of fate and destiny. Each character is landed with their personalities and circumstances, and they have to survive harrowing experiences in their lives, without any ultimate purpose. This means they look for compensations for their empty lives, in dominating one another and in giving in to their weaknesses. Here it is a clear prove for the cultural mutation happened in American society.

*The Glass Menagerie* explores lower middle class family under a ruthless capitalist system during the Depression. Wingfields are indeed victims of a larger social failure, for humane democratic values have been redefined and inverted by Jim as a use of knowledge to gain power and money. In this Depression world, as Tom tells us: “it takes a war to make adventure available to the masses to release them from the social trap. Which is of course precisely what happened.”(64) Here Laura Wingfield qualifies as a romantic superwoman. She represents the fragile ego brutalized by life in the industrialized, depersonalized cities of the Western World. She is someone of romantic temperament would escape the mid-twentieth century urban predicament in St. Louis through art and music, through the beauty
of her glass menagerie. Laura has a love for nature and art shown in her glass
figurines that are even absent from the area. Her nick name, Blue Roses, signifies
her attraction for the natural flowers. This beauty is also symbolized by her
favourite unicorn, as well as the place Laure used to go where she saw tropical
flowers which could be said to come from another world. Inspite of all the
romantic aspects, Laure seems alienated from the outside world and the society
around her. So Romanticism as not accepted in the 20th century capitalistic
industrialized American society is a clear sign of social and cultural change within
the American society.

Jim’s real-life adventure will be limited to accumulating knowledge, money, and power in that order. But it is the foundation of rampant capitalism for
most of us. Jim’s dream of material success may point the diversion in which the
postwar world led by America must go, but Laura and Tom embody what world
will lose by going there. The loss here carries the meaning of change that will
happen to the society and how material gain overcomes the human spiritual and
artistic value.

Amanda’s primary concern is about her own financial situation and she
projects this onto her daughter, Laura. Laura is not worried about money, but her
mother is. Getting a gentleman caller for Laura is not motivated by love, but rather
by Amanda’s love for money and financial security. Thus the sociological
relations between the mother and her husband and children are dominated by
materialism. Tom narrates Amanda’s growing obsession with finding a gentleman
caller:

Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image
of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment. (65)

Amanda, affected by the capitalistic values, values her son Tom as nothing more
than $65 a month he brings home from his warehouse job. Tom depicts the reality
of most individuals, existence in American capitalistic society, he says to his
mother:
He is not comfortable with changes and the values practiced in the society brought about by capitalism which neglects other human values and wishes.

People think that science clears up all the mysteries of modern life but in *The Glass Menagerie* according to Amanda, science creates more mysteries and life becomes somehow complex:

AMANDA: *Isn’t electricity a mysterious things? Wasn’t it Benjamin Franklin who tied a key to a kite? We live in such a mysterious universe, don’t we? Some people say that science clears up all the mysteries for us. In my opinion it only creates more! Have you found at yet?*

Here, Tennessee Williams through Amanda criticizes the modern technological advancement because it creates and adds more mysteries. Williams regards the modern technologies and inventions that entered the Americans’ daily life as mysterious such as electricity. Thus mysterious inventions create a change in style of life in American society.

Tom is a poet who is unhappy in his warehouse job and yet frustrated in his poetry. Since Williams has some experience of such trap, he speaks with feeling about the sufferings of the machine age. Believing that many, like himself, are poetic rather than mechanistic, he considers surrender to the machine a perversion of man’s nature. His escape is a “necessary and wholesome measure of self-preservation”.

Nevertheless, Laura’s nervousness and inability to use the typewriter reflects that she can’t cope with modern devices that become essential nowadays. She doesn’t fit to the modern age of modern technologies. She feels unwell and even vomiting, like Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* who gets frightened and can’t stop the tape-recorder and calls for Howard to stop it. Both of them don’t fit the modern age. Laura’s failure to use the modern technologies
which are essential to get a job and survive in modern era makes her dependent, jobless, and alienated. She retreats form the outside world into inside world of her own. She can’t face the reality hence, she escapes and retreats to a world of illusion. She is unable to adapt to the modern scene of electro–dynamics, so she lives in a world of candlelight and fantasy. In her case the encounter with the machine age is useless. Another effect of modern technologies is that Amanda’s husband, who was a telephone company employee, has deserted her. He falls in love with long distance. It portrays the modern technologies which enter the daily life such as the telephone in this case that cause the father’s desert of his family leading to big trouble and catastrophe. The modern technologies succeed in breaking and shattering the family, but fail in keeping the harmonious unity of family in such a case.

As time moved on, industrialization continued in the cities. While the plantations continued to decay, urban growth and capitalism flourished in the cities. Stanley and Blanche, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, are symbols of the urban and the decaying traditional plantations respectively. Hence, the brutal, harsh, urban society of Stanley verses the tender rural plantation environment of Blanche. It is a kind of a serious change happens in the American society and thus to the culture. Blanche and Stanley are from different worlds where money has different values. Stanley here values money more than Blanche, it means the modern capitalistic society which he represents values money over human values and wishes. Stanley becomes angry as he thinks that Blanche is still not like other commodities he has and enjoying the things that are his, “*his car, his radio, everything that is his, that bears the emblem of the gaudy seed – bearer*”.(69) Blanche has lived in his apartment, eaten his food and drunk his liquor, but she is definitely not his; in fact, she is openly antagonistic toward him.

Williams summarizes his view of American life from which he would temporarily avert his attention by saying: “*Somehow we Americans have never stopped fighting .... The very pressure we live under, the terrific competitive urge*
of our society brings out the violence in the individual. As usual, Williams criticizes civilization. Here in *The Night of the Iguana*, the setting of Maxine’s hotel reflects a civilized oasis surrounded by violence. The world at large is in turmoil, but in this tranquil, tropical setting, Williams can allow his characters to explore the relationship between God and mankind. Williams wants to say that civilization brings about violence as well as the civilized man loses the relationship with God. This loss is a kind of breaking the Grand narratives and leads to nervous breakdown and instability of characters’ life. That is represented in the character of Shannon who was a priest and because of his sins, he becomes defrocked.

Considered closely, the hotel is the representation of the civilized world we live in, populated by the desperate masses who want to win and hold on to personal and material wants. The characters meet in the hotel, including the iguana, reflect their different wants. Iguana, the symbol of human being trapped, is trying to get free from its goddam rope. But the iguana’s condition is also Shannon’s, as he is too, like the iguana, trying to keep up with the rat-race and find a secure place in the world. Nanno, the old poet, is trying to finish his poem and end his struggle of constant travels. Hanna, the idealized and spiritual character, also wants to get free of her life-time suffering and travelling. Maxine also wants to fill up her emptiness by staying with Shannon after the death of her husband. Here we see that these civilized characters are suffering for their personal wants. But the solution is offered by Hanna and it is the spiritual endurance and the acceptance of good and bad in everything in life. It shows how Williams criticizes the civilization as it brings about social disintegration and somehow harmful cultural change.

Under the intensive effect of capitalism and civilization, a strong sign of cultural mutation represented by the generation gap is clearly observed. The difference between Amanda and Tom, in *The Glass Menagerie*, is most clearly seen in Scene IV in their discussion of instinct. He feels that he is being destroyed
as an individual by being forced to live in that apartment and in the city. He seeks love, adventure and romance. Amanda views instinct as something bestial and vulgar. She desires a comfortable life within the bounds of prescribed propriety. She also refuses to recognize that her children have different views from hers. She knows that Tom is reaching a point of desperation. Tom says to his mother:

*And you say self—self’s all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, mother, I’d be where he is Gone! (Pointing to his father’s picture) As far as the system of transportation reaches.*

(71)

Also she is worried about her financial situation and money whereas, Laura is not. It signifies the generation gap between the two generations of theirs. Amanda is affected and frightened about her and her daughter’s future in such a capitalistic society.

The prospect of miscegenation appears to Williams as at once a frightful and an inevitable consequence of multiculturalism, exacerbated by the expansion of urban landscapes and a technological revolution. In rejecting Blanche’s characterization of him as an animal, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, however, Stanley responds, as many immigrants and children of immigrants did, by asserting his American identity:

*I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is a one—hundred—per-cent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it, so don’t ever call me a Polack.*

(72)

As the child of Polish forebears, Stanley struggles to assert his identity apart from both his polish heritage and the black population with which he is associated by means of animal imagery. To assimilate successfully, to establish more than a provisional claim to a domain generally afforded only to white men, Stanley must deny his ethnic heritage and erase the traces of Otherness reinscribed by Blanche’s unexpected and disrupting presence in New Orleans. Stanley’s attempt to define himself as American is also an attempt to assert himself as white. In the play, Stanley defies classification of opposed terms – gentleman (white) or beast.
(black). May be he is offered as a solution to the irreconcilable opposition of black and white. He may represent the prospect of miscegenation. In a racialized discourse, Blanche says: “May be he’s what we need to mix with our blood now that we’ve lost Belle Reve”.\(^{(73)}\) this suggests the possibility of miscegenation. Tennessee Williams represents the miscegenation in the American society without the presence of Africans although it refers to them and many other communities that had been brought to America. It is a cultural mutation.

Cultural clash in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a dominant aspect of the development of the plot throughout the play caused by the cultural differences and the new ideologies occupy the American society. The social culture of the South where the heroine Blanche grew up is what causes her destruction. The main characters serve as archetypes of different cultures and symbolize the integration of Europe in the United States and a turn in the evolution and the definition of American culture itself. Jacob H. Adler in his *Tennessee Williams’s South: The Culture and the Power* argues that all of Williams’s plays set in the South deal with the confrontation between culture and power, though in *A Streetcar Named Desire* that is not all that is at work, he says:

> What is primary is story and people as they are, as they inevitably are; what is secondary is Blanche and the others as representative of the culture-power dichotomy and the southern dilemma; what is tertiary [...] is Blanche as representative of the sensitive individual lost in the complex, impersonal modern world. \(^{(74)}\)

*A Streetcar Named Desire* portrays the decline of Blanche’s culture and the subsequent rise of Stanley’s one. Blanche embodies Old Southern America values, defined by the Old South culture. Many southern whites used it with nostalgia to represent the memories of a time of prosperity, social order, and white supremacy. It is also a reference to the past times of slavery and the plantation economy. Stanley Kowalski embodies a rising member of the industrial immigrant class but also the devil of the cold war period. He’s the personification of modern practicality, crudeness and brutality.
The cultural clash in the play creates a tension and an instable environment between the main characters of Blanche and Stanley. Stella serves as transitional character in the culture clash. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the tension is symbolized by the Old South and the New South cultural encounter. Stella and Blanche come from a world that is rapidly dying. The two sisters, symbolically, are the last living members of their family. At this point, Stella becomes a key figure in the cultural change: She’s the transition between the two cultures. She mingled her blood with a man of blue-collar stock, and Blanche will enter the world of madness, which can be explained by this cultural shock. Ruby Cohn says about Blanche: “Blanche appears to believe in her role of proper Southern lady, and that way her madness lies.” Blanche’s cultural relativism is extreme: she inappropriately judges Stanley’s actions and culture, calling him a Polack hence excluding him from being part of the New South culture. Stanley brutally reacts:

*Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy! [...] what do you think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said every man is a king! And I am the king around here, so don’t forget it.*

Blanche’s final decline symbolizes the decline of civilization, the trampling of man's finer instincts by the brutality of the modern world. The play has a strong cultural orientation, which result from the post World War II environment, in which a materialistic and insensitive industrial society followed. The postmodern assumption that human identity and thinking are the product of culture and that culture and society create individuals as well as all their thoughts and attitudes, is clearly demonstrated by Blanche’s collapse in the new southern culture.

*A Streetcar Named Desire* can be read as a series of encounters between the Stanley Kowalski world and the Blanche DuBois world. In the first encounter, Stanley’s rough common, brutal questions hit the most sensitive aspect of Blanche’s past life, her marriage. Stanley’s animalism destroys Blanche’s sensibilities. The conflict is, thus, between the over-sensitive aristocratic world of Blanche and the brutal, realistic, present day world represented by Stanley. It
symbolizes the triumph of the brutal world over the ethics world as a kind of social and cultural change appears in the American society. In a next encounter, Blanche recognizes that Stanley’s world is destructive to people like her. She says about her dead husband:

*I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can’t!*(77)

Blanche’s view of Stanley in next encounters does characterize the essential nature of Stanley and illustrates how different he is from the type of men Blanche has known. It is a confrontation between the two concepts of life represented by Stanley and Blanche. Then Stanley starts revealing her shameful past to start his plan to destroy her. Stanley is tired of being referred to as vulgar and common by Blanche. Thus, he will re-establish his own sense of importance only by proving how degenerate Blanche actually is. So he must destroy all the illusion Blanche has been creating.

The cruel treatment Blanche faces by the society and Stanley, the harsh urban modern man changes her. Stella says:

*You didn’t know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change.* (78)

Stanley represents every aspect of life which Blanche is unable to cope with. She is not strong enough to defend herself against his hostile force. It is not the actual act of rape that causes her madness, but the idea that she has been raped by a man who represents everything unacceptable to her. She is symbolically unable to cope with the brutal realistic world represented by Stanley. As a social or cultural figure, Stanley is a villain, in mindless opposition to civilization and culture—the “Newman” of the modern world whom Williams seems to find responsible for the present – day decline in the art, language, and culture. The conflict between Blanche and Stanley allegorizes the struggle between effeminate culture and masculine libido. In the climax of the play, Stanley subdues Blanche by a brutal
sexual assault. Culture and tradition are desirable but make one an easy prey to the unenlightened. (79)

According to David Birch, the use of language in a dramatic text becomes "distinct communicative acts aimed at influencing the thoughts and actions of other people" instead of simply being "representations or expressions of something else, some other semiotic system or text." (80) Amanda's actions towards Tom, Laura, and even the gentleman caller, Jim, in The Glass Menagerie, display an overwhelming record of the variety of ways she uses language and her position as the mother in the family to control and dominate the people around her in order to perpetuate and validate the self. Amanda's "hawk like attention" and ceaseless nagging are initially irritating to Tom: "Chew your food", "You smoke too much", "Eat a bowl of Purina", "Do me a favor, comb your hair". Also Amanda's hectoring gets even more moralistic, judgmental, and controlling: "Tom you go to the movies entirely too much!", "Promise, son, you'll--never be a drunkard!", "You smoke too much. A pack a day at fifteen cents a pack. How much would that amount to in a month? Thirty times fifteen is how much, Tom? Figure it out and you will be astounded at what you could save. Enough to give you a night-school at Washington U!". (81)

In the play, Amanda often resorts to language that is infused with slave imagery. Being born and raised in the slaveholding south, it is not surprising to hear in Amanda's language, references to the benefits that servant or slave labour availed white southern families. Furthermore, Amanda's treatment and control of Tom reminds one of the way servants were held responsible for the work in the household, while being denied the freedoms the masters enjoyed. Tom himself complains of his slave status after he finds out that Amanda has returned his books to the library: "House, house! Who pays the rent on it, who makes a slave of himself to--". (82) Here the idea behind controlling Tom as a slave is evident because Tom himself likens Amanda's authority over him as a master's authority over his slave. In fact, one can easily make a case that Tom's inability to leave
home is directly related to his status as Amanda's possession or slave because the only way Amanda will give him his freedom is when she finds a replacement, as she tells him:

But not till there's somebody to take your place... I mean as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her,... then you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows you!"(83)

Amanda furthers her use of language by her intonations and angry accusations to control Tom and Laura by manipulating their sense of guilt and shame. Amanda is aware that by arousing Tom's guilt she will be able to disturb him sufficiently into distracting him from focusing on his own self and needs. She thinks that through this scheme her possession of him will be more secure. She rebukes him for thinking too much about himself and she asks him to overcome his selfishness.

Williams takes colloquial speech, often the colloquial speech of the South; its imagery and symbolism lifts it to the level of poetry. It is real speech that communicates the inexpressible, the very essence of character, emotion and situation. Many of the dialogues are made up of brief exchanges with the repetitive rhythmic patterns of verse, Tom, in The Glass Menagerie, talks to his mother about the gentleman caller:

TOM: I've asked him to dinner.
AMANDA: you really did?
TOM: I did
AMANDA: And did he – accept?
TOM: He did! (84)

Instead of saying “for” or “and” she used to say ‘Fo” and “an”, Williams uses Amanda’s speech to create the nostalgic atmosphere of the play and to show that Amanda herself is out of place in the real world. That Amanda’s Southern accent should remain after many years away from Blue Mountain is a reminder to the audience that she still clings to her Southern values and illusions. Tom is the poet and his diction confirms this. In the third scene he says:
Listen! You think I’m crazy about the warehouse?... you think I’m in love with the continental shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty five years down there ..... I go! Every time you come in yelling that God damn “Rise and Shine!” “Rise and Shine!” I say to myself, “How lucky dead people are!” But I get up. I go!*(85)

Several of his other speeches throughout the play bear the same quality of intensity and beauty. As narrator, he speaks even more like a poet.

Laura actually does not say much in the play. Nevertheless, her speech generally comprises short, almost breathless sentences like “I am not expecting any gentlemen callers.”, “Mother I’m afraid I’m going to be an old maid”.*(86) On the broken unicorn, she comments: “I’ll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less-freakish!” *(87) Laura’s dialogue reflects her naiveté and withdrawal. Her soft, shy speech is well suited to her exotic, fragile nature. Whereas, Jim’s speech is an effective contrast to Amanda’s. His diction is of a person who has taken a course in public speaking. After he has told Laure that he’s engaged to be married, he tries to comfort Laura:

I wish that you were my sister. I’d teach you to have some confidence in yourself. The different people... They are one hundred times one thousand. You’re one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They’re common as – weeds, but -you-well, you’re- Blue Roses!*(88)

His dialogue reflects his character. He speaks with the confidence drilled into him by a culture very different from Amanda. It means it reflects a cultural change and mutation even through the speech of American characters in modern drama.

Readers of Tennessee Williams’ plays recognize in the voice, the inflection, and the idiom of characters such as Amanda Wingfield, Blanche Du Bois, and Big Daddy, a language variety that distinguishes the South from other regions of America. Making abundant use of art, poetry, lighting, dance, and music help delivering a message that dialogue fails to accomplish alone; that’s what Wagner termed the “Plastic Language” of arts.*(89) Blanche’s exit line, in A Streetcar Named Desire, addressed to the doctor, intensifies her pathos: “Whoever you are-
have always depended on the kindness of strangers." But we know that Blanche has found no kindness among strangers, but to fill her empty heart after the death of her husband. It is mainly through her dialogue that Blanche underlines her manor–born superiority. She recognizes that the lines on Mitch’s cigarette case belong to a sonnet by Mrs. Browning; she has evidently taught American literature, since she mentions Poe, Hawthorne, and Whitman. She calls the newspaper boy a young prince out of the Arabian nights, and Mitch her Rosenkavalier, Armand, and Samson. Blanche’s speech is distinguished by her cultural references and the use of correct grammar and varied syntax. But when she uses images, they are stale or incongruous. Her images are most inadequate. When she insists upon her superiority to Stanley, she can summon only the cliché phrases of popular magazines:

But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart and I have all of those things aren’t taken away, but grow!”

Whatever Williams may have intended, Blanche DuBois is trapped by the poverty of her imagery which reflects the poverty of her dreams, like Miller’s Willie Loman. Blanche is challenged and destroyed by a strong antagonist, Stanley Kowalski, whom she views as her executioner.

The manner in which Shannon eventually communicates with Hannah, in The Night of the Iguana, suggests such a relational shift. He is asking more questions, seeming to be sincerely concerned and interested in what Hannah has to say. Now he must reconcile his extreme split. Hannah offers him some advice that helps him to do this. Hannah points out to him that this either-or mentality is untrue by saying that:

Everything in the whole solar system has a shadowy side except the sun itself – the sun is the single exception.

Hannah is arguing, he must accept that life involves simultaneous good and bad in almost every experience. One may speculate that the reference to the sun as having no dark side represents God who lights all things. The central message is felt to be
that there is usually simultaneity of darkness and light, good and bad within experience and objects – and that Shannon typically denies this fact defensively.

Shannon’s compulsion to seek the extreme, the ideal, is even apparent as Hannah recounts the manner in which she overcame her own demon (‘blue devil’):

HANNAH: *I never cracked up, I couldn’t afford to... I nearly did once... But I was lucky. My occupation, this occupational therapy that I gave myself – painting and doing quick character sketches – made me look out of myself, not in, and gradually, at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see this faint, very faint grey light – the light of the world outside me – and I kept climbing towards it. I had to*

SHANNON: *Did it stay a grey light?*

HANNAH: *No, no, it turned white*

SHANNON: *Only white? Never gold?*

HANNAH: *No, it stayed only white, but white is a very good light to see at the end of a long black tunnel.⁹³*

Shannon asks here if the light became gold because he is not seeking the good (white light) – he is seeking the perfect, omnipotent and fantastic ideal. Hannah simply and beautifully argues that white light is wonderful following a dark tunnel – and herein suggests that goodness is all that is required in life, not perfection or omnipotence as Shannon has falsely been assuming. In such stillness and non-effort, goodness can be apprehended. Through this, peace and freedom from anxiety is found. His communications with her eventually express genuine empathetic concern for her. He says: “*How will it seem to be travelling alone after so many years ...*”.⁹⁴ It is obvious that he wishes to continue such contact with her as a kind of regaining the broken social integrity. Here, the case of breaking social integrity from whole into part in Shannon’s side is a sign of breaking the Grand narratives and this break leads to terrible consequence in social integrity and wholeness. It is also a witness for a change happened affecting the thoughts and the beliefs of people as a sign for cultural change.
The final scenario of *The Night of the Iguana* is Nonno getting his very last poem said, just before his death. Shannon is untying the iguana, Nonno says the poem and Hanna writes it down. It is as if the old man's mind was released just before death to say something pleasantly beautiful. The poem has great simplicity, expressing the fact that the main characters arrive at some kind of peace, there is some salvation somewhere when the storms abate. The poem finishes with:

\[
O \text{ Courage, could you not as well,} \\
\text{Select a second place to dwell} \\
\text{Not only in that golden tree} \\
\text{But in the frightened heart of me". It is a cry of hope.}^{(95)}
\]

In *The Glass Menagerie*, the protagonist pursues his journey toward selfhood by exploring the alternatives mirrored within the image of his own consciousness. Williams thus examines a comprehensive theme of twentieth-century arts, the search for identity; the journey toward meaning. The theme of escape is one of the most common in modern drama because of the deterministic cynicism of the twentieth century, which has left no other solution. Tom, like his father, is more than justified in running away, as he says, “I haven’t got a thing, not a single thing left in this house that I can call my own.”^{(96)} The play seems to suggest that the standardization of the twentieth century capitalistic American society has turned social relations into means of production. This ideology of perceiving individuals as commodities goes beyond the warehouse – the filial relationships within the Wingfield family, especially the mother-child relationship, become relations between things. Amanda’s perception of her children is contrary to the traditionally prescribed role of maternal femininity that American society idealized. Tom leaves the family and gets free of his responsibilities. The press caused by the family members in specific and the society in general leads to alienation as it is in Laura’s condition. So it is breaking the Grand narratives of familial and maternal relations, showing a cultural mutation.

The tensions in *A Streetcar Named Desire* come partly from cultural conflict- the worlds of Stanley and Blanche are so opposed that neither can
understand the other. This play introduces us to a tragic world in which the female character Blanche has no voice, no choice. Her flaw consists in her unfitness to struggle for survival. Her personal features contradict the objective conditions and that’s why she fails to succeed. She represents a great number of people who cannot adjust to a rough world in which people have to be popular, skilful, intelligent, charming, fearless, and so on in order to survive, compete, and fulfil the expectations.

* A Streetcar Named Desire * was well received because it spoke to some of the basic anxieties that were circulating in American popular culture: sex, violence, cultural clash, and displacement. Stanley was a kind of American power, a former soldier, an everyman, and, like America, he was capable of abuses of power. Though audiences were shocked by his rape of Blanche, they were likely to forgive him as they forgave themselves for dropping the atomic bomb. Blanche is the enemy who invades the home and breaks up the American family. Suddenly in the last scene, it is Stella who represents the mounting public understanding of violence. Stella talks to Eunice before Blanche is taken away:

  STELLA: * I don’t know if I did the right thing.*
  EUNICE: * What else could you do?*
  STELLA: * I couldn’t believe her story and go on living with Stanley.*
  EUNICE: * Don’t ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you’ve got to keep on going.*

Stella acquiesces and comes to accept Stanley back into her life just as Americans accepted the reality of violence into their own lives. Stanley’s violence, Blanche’s displacement, and Williams’ sexual frankness all spoke to a moment of national confusion when soldiers returned home uncertain as to who they were and what they had just done after the World War II.

Blanche is one of such females born and brought up in old South who feels difficult in mastering her own fate and facing conflicts by industrialization and
commercialization under the restriction and oppression of patriarchy, and only hides herself in imaginative world to release herself. However, it is evident from what Williams depicts about women that once they yield themselves to patriarchy, instead of struggling fearlessly for their freedom, their miserable situation will not be changed. There are many facts leading to the core point of the change happening in the society. Blanche is used to smoke and drink. Bestialism and animalism are shown in those people of the modern urban world, who play games, drink and create violence everywhere. The bad conditions of Stanley and Stella and their friends are shown in their style of life - small apartment with no doors only the bathroom door. The bestial and brutal treatment of Blanche by her brother-in-law, Stanley, leads to revealing her shameful past and unforgettable sins. The change of values and the huge cultural change differentiate old America from now America of immigrants. In the play there are many events showing the breaking of the Grand narratives in the American society. That proves the huge cultural mutation affecting the society.

A new trend in the writing of Williams is obvious in *The Night of the Iguana*. Nonno is able to complete his last poem; the iguana is set free; and Shannon recognizes that there are people who care about him and are ready to help him, people who share an understanding of his condition. That indicates the positive ending of the play with hope and salvation, and it is a new trend in the writing of Williams. With the flowering of the Renaissance came even more freedom of thought; some people abandoned religion altogether, and many of those who remained Christian turned to science to explain many things that the Church had previously explained. Because of Shannon’s social conscience, he cannot endure the spiritual loss and changes happened in the society. That causes him a nervous breakdown. Williams creates blue devils and spooks to show that the inner demons are the source of self torture and cruelty to others. In *The Night of the Iguana*, the death of Nonno, the fact that Hannah is left alone with no one to call for help, the presence of the Nazi party that reminds us of the immense evil
and suffering in the world, and the fact that Shannon may stay with Maxine despite an absence of love between them prove instability as a cultural problem.

Williams’ early plays are one-movement studies of people caught in the ambiguous world of the twentieth century. He shows the corrosive effect of the materialistic ethic in the rural South. His early plays are concerned with the struggle of the individual for self-realization. In the middle period of his development the playwright begins to equate his accounts of individual crisis with more universal phenomena, especially to trace their effect on society at large. In his later works Williams seems to relate these personal crises to the timeless progress of mankind in the moral universe. Williams, with his twentieth-century accounting of human transgression, attempts to serve moral function: to articulate, transform, and purge human ills. Tennessee Williams saw the South as a broken and damaged place in which the decay was somehow charming. He wrote about the South because he thought the war between romanticism and the hostility to it is very sharp there.

Tennessee Williams is sympathetic to the losers and the outsiders. Their tragic fate makes the reader suffer and be aware of the cruel and complex world in which he lives. Blanche and Laura are weak, losers, unfit but they are human beings and when a human being fails to succeed the whole society loses something and must be blamed for. It is difficult to be happy in a society which worships the Social Darwinism in which the weak have to be defeated instead of being helped. And although the two plays take place in the American society in the ‘30s and in the ‘40s, Tennessee Williams depicts the dark side of the whole society and through his characters and their tragic fates he criticizes the lacks of humanity, friendship, love that prevails and pervades most of our social and ordinary praxis. Hence, his drama explores the fall of Grand narratives, the fall of enlightenment, the failure of American dream, the psychological disorder, and many disasters. So his drama in a capitalistic society reflects a deep cultural mutation. It is better to conclude this chapter by Williams’s philosophy of life:
Then what is good? The obsessive interest in human affairs, plus a certain amount of compassion and moral conviction, that first made the experience of living something that might be translated into pigment or music or bodily movement or poetry or prose or anything that’s dynamic and expressive – that’s what’s good for you if you’re at all serious in your aims. William Saroyan wrote a great play on this theme, that purity of heart is the one success worth having. “In the time of your life – live!” That time is short and it doesn’t return again.⁹⁸
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