CHAPTER V

PERVERT AND PROMISCUOUS: DESUBLIMATED SELF

The psychological neurosis, which goads the modern protagonists to end alienation through physical contact and embrace harmony of human relationship, often leads to promiscuity, sexual aberration and, above all, homosexuality - an unconscious erotic attraction to persons of the same sex. This biological urge motivates and directs their actions and thought patterns. In the American fiction, in the novels of Scott Fitzgerald, Jack London and James Baldwin, such a perversion is found in abundance - sometimes overt, at others latent. Tennessee Williams was the first playwright in the American theatre to introduce such broken and lost souls as desperately struggle for human contact through sexual intercourse. Of course, the homosexual never appears on the stage, but in language, symbols and dialogue, and in characters, the homosexual perversion is predominant.

Dr. Irving Bieler regarded homosexuality as "a pathological biosocial psychosexual adaptation consequent to pervasive fears surrounding the expression of heterosexual impulses." Freud classified homosexuality as an "illness" rooted in the
experiences of early childhood. Kaplan treats homosexuality 
"as a perverse solution to anxieties about identification... Like any psychological symptom, a perversion represents a compromise between the expression and inhibition of a forbidden wish."² This being a happy hunting ground for the psychiatrists, they have been busy making researches to locate the origin of homosexuality. As a result four major factors have emerged: mental instability; "misadjusted" family life; sexual repression which "springs from genetic imbalance of certain harmonies,"; and alienation due to social pressures. In some cases promiscuity becomes a matter of habit - an antidote to boredom or self-doubt. Whatever the causes may be, the majority of the psychiatrists concede that this kind of perversion debases and dehumanizes a personality because it signifies homosexualist's being "unable to integrate his emotional and sexual needs, incapable of maintaining a long standing sexual partnership, and doomed to an eternally hopeless quest for the ideal relationship."³

Both the Catholic and Protestant churches have traditionally been the sworn enemies of the homosexual. Although the recent American sexual establishments have sought political rights for the homosexuals, yet it cannot be denied that a homosexual is a social rebel of a peculiar sort. "The freedom he demands," as Camus said of Sade, "is not one of principles, but of instincts."⁴ He is not a champion of humanity, rather he is a victim of the sexual urges the satisfaction of which is denied to him by the social system. No wonder society insists on
calling him an "egocentric," a "libertine," a "non-conformist," a "pathological case." The emergence of such a pervert as a protagonist was facilitated by the vogue of the anti-heroic in the post-World War theatre.

The theatre of Tennessee Williams is erotic, sensational and lurid as the playwright writes about the pervert and promiscuous unheroic heroes, their alienation, moral and psychological pressures, and sufferings. Stanley Kowalski, of course, has moved in the other direction. A champion of the promiscuous, the passionate, he is the male animal in all his magnificence. Anyway, he is an example of the hero as a primitive who is devoid of all moral sensibility and aesthetic tastes. Such "survivor of the stone age" can be a hero only in an anti-heroic age like ours.

In Cat On A Hot Tin Roof (1955) there are four overt homosexuals, but Jack Straw, Peter Ochello, and Skipper are dead before the play opens; the fourth one is a student who never appears on the stage. Like Blanche, Brick becomes alcoholic to avoid the memory of his part in the death of his friend, Skipper. In both cases, the discovery of homosexual relationship precipitates the rejection which eventually results in suicide. The suicides of Allan and Skipper act as controlling forces in both the plays. "You! - dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it! - before you'd face truth with him!" Skipper turned to drink probably on realizing that he was in love with Brick, and that he had enormous difficulty coping with his homosexuality.
Since "... it was love that never could be carried through to anything satisfying or even talked about plainly" (Cat, p.41), Skipper had committed suicide; as for Brick, "the conventional mores of homosexuality are so widely and so profoundly rooted in him, that he cannot admit or face the truth."

This unowned homosexuality disintegrates Brick's personality and prevents him from rising to heroic grandeur. Once a football hero, a young and muscular athlete, he becomes the victim of mental paralyses because of his guilt. Of course, the playwright has not squarely faced up the theme of homosexuality as a perverting human tendency. No wonder Richard Hayes indicted Tennessee Williams for denying the audience "an integrity of experience." Eric Bentley and Walter Kerr also accused the play of "being a drama of evasion." Anyway, homosexual guilt directs all complexities of Brick's thoughts and actions. He takes refuge in alcohol - into that peaceful "click". His disgust, nausea and loneliness are the product of his perversion. At moments, he becomes a borderline personality for he is too sensitive to cope with the mendacity of human existence. That is what brings Cat "perilously close to spelling psychoanalysis."

Brick's real dilemma is that he is a prisoner of conventions and of the image of virility that American society has imposed upon him. His psychological dilemmas cause him to suffer not at Skipper's death but at Skipper's confession which revealed to him their feelings for each other. Brick suffers a split personality when his ideal virility comes in clash with sexual
morbidity of Maggie. Remembering his adolescence as something pure and innocent, he is scared to enter the adult sexual world: "One man has one great good true thing in his life. One great good thing which is true! - I had friendship with Skipper." (Cat, p.42). He refuses to have sexual relations with his wife, for he is committed to preserve his adolescence. As Brick's homosexuality stems from the ambiguities of his adolescence, one could say that in Brick Williams offers an image of the man who cannot catch his breath in "a world that is smothering him." Brick is thus a symbol of American hypocrisy that stifles the male personality by refusing men the right to full expression of their desire to love their fellows.

As Miss Marya Mannes noted, there is a special kind of violence in the unheroic sexual repression of Brick - a violence perpetrated on his wife, Maggie, to expiate the guilt of past perversion. His unheroic passive detachment retards his sensibility, wrecks his idealism, intensifies his morbidity, and urges him to a point of hyper-consciousness. Throughout the play, he is seen afraid of his latent homosexuality, and thus he becomes a victim of his own conflicting drives. Had he got the courage to acknowledge the homosexual tendency within himself, he could possibly get reconciled to the situation. Instead, making too much fuss over his natural perversion, he clings to the illusion of ideal virility and blindly accepts the world's judgement upon it. In the words of Nancy M. Tischler: "Brick is foolish to feel disillusioned; to come to satisfactory
terms with life he need only modify his dreams. But we know that Brick won't change. That is precisely what makes him an anti-hero.

The "victims" of libidinal forces, Williams's protagonists desperately seek their identity, freedom and salvation only through libidinal performance. As the projection of such perversion as heroism got fitted into the tradition of the anti-hero, many of Williams's successors emulated his example. For instance, William Inge whose friendship with Tennessee Williams inspired him to turn to the theatre. Openly declaring his debt to the author of The Glass Menagerie, Inge dedicated his The Dark At the Top of the Stairs (1957) to Tennessee Williams. The similarities in characters and situations in works of both the playwrights are obvious: sexual fantasies, lonely frustrated women, the devirilization of "stud-heroes," repressed homosexual desire, and perversity and disintegration of the protagonists.

Inge's protagonist is an anti-hero of Stanley Kowalski type - a virile animal. Dressed in a conventional uniform of blue jeans, cowboy boots and T-shirt, he is equipped with bulging biceps and enormous sexual potency. He proclaims his manhood at the very outset of a play and impresses the women by his virile sex appeal. The Greek heroes were inspired by the sentiments of love as they regarded love as an ideal, a spiritual "marriage of two souls." It was a way of life and urged the heroes to achieve glory and sublimation. Love was a passion with them which often led them to tragic grandeur. But the
contemporary playwrights project sexual love of the protagonists who lead a frigid and alienated life. Not heroes of epical dimension, but stud personalities are the contemporary anti-heroes who miserably lack maturity, experience, intelligence and the knack to grapple with the predicament of life. Outwardly, a "stud hero" is robust and muscular, but inwardly he is a shallow dud lacking aspiration, idealism or heroism of any grandeur. "He is awkward in any place smaller than a stadium, he is gauche, and he is crude. He is destructive but commanding, and it is this quality which makes him irresistible."^11

The first appearance of such an anti-heroic "stud" in Inge is felt in *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1950). The protagonist, Turk, is "a big brouny bozo." Even before he enters, the audience learn from his girl friend, Marie, that he is an athlete. When he appears in "faded dungarees and a T-shirt," one can see that he is long on bulging biceps but short on brains. His very name symbolizes the myth of exotic virility, and his physical prowess and masculinity excite the sexual passions in women. Marie's "muscle-bound Adonis, Turk, performs in track and field instead of football, but he is Joe College in the living flesh."^12

His virility disturbs Lola. Now thirty years old, she is unattractive, overweight, sloppy and shiftless, but she was once "Beauty queen of the senior class in high school,"^13 and the centre of attraction of many young suitors like Dutch McCoy. It is her "worn-out" impotent husband, Doc, who has made
her emotionally morbid and biologically sterile. Doc’s alcoholism and maniac outbursts having made Lola lonely and frustrated, she feels sexual fascination for Turk, for she has always hankered for the sheer animal pleasure which a brute like Turk could provide.

LOLA: (Unconsciously admiring his stature and physique and looking him over). . . . I’d think you’d be chilly running around in just that thin little shirt.

TURK: Me? I go like this in the middle of winter.

LOLA: Well, you’re a big husky man.

TURK: (Laughs) Oh, I’m a brute, I am.

LOLA: You should be out in Hollywood making those Tarzan movies. (Little Sheba, p. 18).

Essentially a pure woman all her life, Lola now feels somewhat cheated at never having known any man other than the impotent Doc. As the action develops, her involvement in Turk increases and he fires her sexual inclinations when he talks about his training:

LOLA: What are you in training for now?

TURK: Spring track. They got me throwing the javelin.

LOLA: The javelin? What’s that?

TURK: (Laughs at her ignorance) It’s a big, long lance. (Assumes the magnificent position). You hold it like this, erect — then you let go and it goes singing through the air. . . ." (Little Sheba, p. 15)

Since the image of javelin reinforces the fundamental phallic attraction which Turk’s virility symbolizes, Lola is so much enamoured of Turk’s physique that she allows Marie to
have her "best drawing" in her living room. Inge does not stop here; like D.H. Laurence, he parades male virility on the stage. Doc is appalled by the scene of Turk's striptease, but Lola approves of it and even takes positive action to promote it by welcoming Turk to the house and by leaving Marie alone with him. In fact, Turk becomes an object of her envy.

**MARIE:** (sits on the couch) Turk's the best male model we've had all year. Lots'a athletes pose for us 'cause they've all got muscles. They're easier to draw.

**LOLA:** You mean . . . he's gonna pose naked?

(Little Sheba, p.23)

When Turk appears in "semi-nudity," the spectacle of Turk's flesh "dazes" Lola and her presence excites promiscuity in Turk: "Hey can't you keep her out of here? She makes me feel naked"

(Little Sheba, p.24).

Turk's muscular bravado makes him a "bum," without any moral, social or aesthetic tastes. His rugged masculinity debilitates his intellect and dehumanizes his personality: he remains a "stud" throughout, wanting in fine tastes, noble aspirations and amiable manners. No wonder, when Marie asks him to start conversation concerning subjects like "politics or philosophy or religion," he passionately counters, "How about sex?"

(Little Sheba, p.40). His rugged manners, uncouth sensibility and crude tastes are unworthy of heroism: "Honey, I know I talk awful rough around you all times; I never was a very gentlemanly bastard, but you really don't mind it. . . ."

(Little Sheba, p.42)
Hal Carter in *Picnic* (1953) is another version of Turk's "stud" heroism. He too is "an exceedingly handsome, husky youth dressed in T-shirt, dungarees and cowboy boots. In a past era he would have been called a vagabond, but Hal today is usually referred to as a 'bum'." Like Turk, Hal is an accomplished athlete—"a football player, a swimmer and a parachutist. 'Like Turk, he was a model in college: "They made me pose raw in front of a whole class." Hal continues the striptease tradition of Turk, for as he tells Alan: "Yah! They took a lotta pictures of me with my shirt off. Real rugged" (*Picnic*, p.91). In fact, Hal has had a much more colourful past - reform school for having stolen a motorcycle, unsavory companions etc.

The quintessence of sexuality in the play, a handsome delinquent, a sex object, Hal proves sexually disturbing young man, "a phallic representation about which a bevy of confused, dissatisfied, and frustrated women dance." His magnetic animalism attracts all women - widowed, single, adolescent and virgin. His rambunctious virility excites different passions and emotions in them.

Mrs. POTTs: . . . Have you girls seen the handsome Young man I've got working for me?

ROSAMARY: I think it's a disgrace, his parading around, naked as an Indian.

Mrs. POTTs: . . . I told him to take his shirt off.

(*Picnic*, p.87).

Indeed, Mrs. Potts is enamoured of Hal's good looks. The vulgar, frustrated Rosamary too pulls up his trousers to see his legs:
"Never saw anything so ugly. Men's big hairy legs! ... You man, let's see your legs" (Picnic, p.121).

This spinster school teacher is a faded youth. During dance on the picnic, stimulated by an unaccustomed swig of whisky, she throws herself at Hal in such an obvious manner that even he gets embarrassed and resists. Filled with despair, she gives vent to her frustrations:

You think just 'cause you're a man, you can walk in here and make off with whatever you like.
You think just 'cause you're young you can push other people aside and not pay them any mind.
You think just 'cause you're strong you can show your muscles and nobody'll know what a pitiful specimen you are. But you won't stay young forever, did ya' ever thinka that?

(Picnic, p.124).

Hal's rejection of Rosamary rouses Madge's sympathy for Hal and leads ultimately to their having an affair. His bull-like virility makes the play "a kind of naturalistic round dance of women hungry for what they have lost or never had or were better off without." 16

Hal's homo-sexual perversity with Alan is not a higher form of love in the Laurentian vein; instead, it is a sexual outburst, an escape from lonely existence. No wonder, this "friendship" changes to hatred when Hal becomes the rival of Alan in courting Madge. At this stage, physical contact between them degenerates into sadomasochism. In their friendship one can easily discern the homoerotic ingredients: youth and
refinement, jealousy and amorous rivalry, a sensual urge for physical relationship that degenerates into sadomasochistic confrontation. This relationship, a major force in the play, is not nourishing and life-enhancing; it is neither meaningful nor valuable but very significant because it highlights the "gutter-personality" of the protagonist as outlined by Rosamary Seymour: "You'll end your life in the gutter and it'll serve you right, 'cause the gutter's where you come from and the gutter's where you belong" (Picnic, p.124).

The anti-hero Hal "belongs to the gutter" - a "rejected stuff," a liar and a "bum." A dull cow-boy with unsavory past, his adventure with a pair of nymphomaniacs, who sexually assaulted him when he was hitchhiking, is a testimony of his "gutter personality." Indeed, he strikes in the play as "a big goof of a he-man whom the audience can laugh at or lust after." Empty from within, he is "a person one might pity in his ability to use what talents he has in a valid contribution to society." Bo Decker in Bus Stop (1955) is another pervert cowboy portrayed in the tradition of Turk, Hal and Milkman - a 'stud' anti-hero, proud of his Tarzan-like militant masculinity. Like Hal and Turk, Bo had been a striptease, "And what's more, had my picture taken by Life magazine." A rodeo champion prominent for his provincial male virility, he is naive and uncouth, unmannerly and boorish, lumpish and rash, and, above all, an image of sex. Marked by loud and clumsy personality, sexual virility, and adventurous vulgarity, he is solely motivated by
his impulses. When Cherie, threatened by Bo's sensuality and crude manners, seeks "protection" in Will, the local sheriff, Bo is fired by his militant virility and is ready to "break all's bones" to get Cherie. He wants to marry the girl in a bullying style, and his primitive love making is bumptious and boisterous. Henry Heues has observed in him a certain perversion and immaturity that "manifests itself in a noisy brashness and stupid bad manners, the most serious of which is the abducting of Cherie to his Montana ranch with the intent of forced marriage." Sensual and gross, Bo is an aggressively virile man who brags about his sexual exuberance: "Ev'rywhere I go, I got all the wimmin I want, don't I, Virge?" It is not love that he has for Cherie but animalistic lust.

ELMA : He says he loves you.
CHERIE : He dunno what love is.
ELMA : What makes you say that?
CHERIE : All he wants is a girl to throw his arms around and hug and kiss, that's all. The rest the time, he don't even know I exist.

(Bus Stop, p. 70)

Obviously, like Hal and Turk, Bo emerges as a "stud cowboy" who can be heroic only in vulgarity. Being a pervert, he has no sense of generosity, tenderness and responsibility. He is alien to civilization for he spent his life in the company of animals in Timber Hill, Montana. Anyway, like all perverts, he has never in life considered the possibility that he might love someone who did not reciprocate his love:
WILL : You're overlooking just one thing, Cowboy.
BO : You're so smart. Tell me what I'm overlookin'.
WILL : You overlookin' the simple but important fact that the little lady don't love you.

(Bus Stop, p.53).

This leaves Bo dumb-founded. Discarded and constrained, the sensual protagonist finds solace in the company of his buddy, Virgil, who is far more sensible and refined than Bo. The love Bo offers to Cherie is typically sensual love - an all-demanding love which has no knowledge of humility and softness. When rejected by Cherie, Bo howls and cries like an "injured panther" and tells Virgil; "I been so lonesome, I ... I jest didn't know what t'do with miself" (Bus Stop, p.69).

Of course, at the end Cherie does go with Bo, but that is not out of love. Forced by insecurity and loneliness, she finds an excellent "catch." Cherie knows that there is a lacklustre future before her, that Bo is "the picture of the China-shop Ox of Montana" fit for sexual gratifications, but then she needs someone to defend her against a world that has been exploiting her in its shabbiest way. Materialistic and pragmatic considerations, rather than any genuine affection, prompt her to "tame a cowboy" for her life.

These "Cowboys" in Inge's plays, though externally virile and wild, are inwardly shallow and rugged. They have no individuality, no awareness, no insight into the values of generosity, tenderness and nobility, and thus emerge as true
specimens of anti-heroism. If Tennessee Williams brings male castration and emasculation, Inge undermines apparent virility of his protagonists through domestication by women - through devirilization.

Edward Albee's plays have been subjected to relentless psychological analysis and the critics have often explored homosexual perversion in his protagonists. Robert Brustein dismissed The Zoo Story (1960) as "sexual-religious claptrap" which yields more readily to clinical than theological analysis. He found "masochistic-homosexual perfume," hanging heavily over the play. Indeed, below the surface of the plot there flows a homosexual undercurrent as the play is replete with homosexual insinuations. The Central Park, where the meeting occurs, is a famous meeting place for New York homosexuals. Jerry has all the attributes of a homosexual pervert: he is lonely, seductive, aggressive, virile, rebellious and all out for physical contact. The play describes the life which man has created for himself as a "solitary free passage" characterized by indifference towards others. The isolation resulting from this attitude towards life is stressed by the image of the zoo - a valid image for man who has come to accept loneliness as the norm of existence. In the words of C.U.E. Bigsby:

Albee's thesis is that there is a need to make contact, to emerge from these self-imposed cages of convention and false values so that one individual consciousness may impinge on another.23
Jerry, a young semitramp, pushes Peter onto a bench, as he says: "You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground."
Throughout the play, Jerry's speeches get related to two groups of symbols - animals and vegetables. Dogs are symbols of masculinity, cats of femininity. Jerry's conversation with Peter expresses his homo-erotic fantasy to seduce Peter. When he states that he attempted to seduce his land lady's dog, he indirectly announces his homosexual designs. Now an animal rejects homosexuality, whereas a "vegetable" like Peter is more yielding. Peter is "reticent" like women; Jerry is talkative and imposing like homosexuals. No wonder sometimes Peter is frightened by the aggressiveness of Jerry:

PETER: I didn't mean to seem . . . ah . . . it's that you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions and I'm . . . I'm normally . . . uh . . . reticent. Why do you just stand there?

JERRY: I'll start walking around in a little while, and eventually I'll sit down. . . .

Jerry shows no reluctance whatever about recalling his own private life. Thus it is revealed that although he is not married, yet he has had plenty of one-night sex experience with women and was even, at one stage in his perversion, a homosexual:

. . . Oh wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen . . . and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late . . . I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l. I mean, I was queer. . . . And for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son . . . a Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine except he was a year older. I think I was very much in love. . . . may be just with sex.

(Zoo, p.30)
Richard Kostenlanetz reads Jerry's homoerotic seduction in the closing scene. In an act of despair and disappointment, the pervert protagonist impales himself on a knife: he has given Peter to feel the ecstasy of physical touch. The knife is held like a phallus, and Jerry "impales himself upon his blade with rhythms suggestive of an orgasm ... ." (Zoo, p. 59) Thus, the pervert Jerry desperately struggles to get the physical contact to assuage his erotic passions:

"I came unto you ... and you have comforted me, dear Peter." (Zoo, p. 61)

In short, The Zoo Story is the story of a homosexual protagonist who can cure his distress in death. Such a protagonist can't be called heroic in any sense - classical, neo-classical, or modern.

Robert Anderson is another playwright whose plays abound in "love and sex and death and marriage." Of course, he is different, for his plays reveal his commitment to a dream of feelings and sentiments. No wonder Gerald Weales found his plays sometimes "verge on soap opera." Anderson himself claimed that he is the only American playwright of his generation who writes about "the normal sexual relationships between a man and woman in marriage." Now, if Tennessee Williams dramatizes the atypical and neurotic sexual relationship, and if Miller avoids it in his plays, Anderson's protagonists are alienated and isolated lovers who, disillusioned with life and love, often
indulge in sexual relationship. In *Eden Rose* (1948), Nan and Ted, Roger and Madge are involved in sexual affair to escape from pervasive loneliness of material society. His *All Summer Long* (1953) and *Tea and Sympathy* (1953) are based on the inevitable need of sexual fulfillment to end alienation.

Robert Anderson's *Tea And Sympathy* presents Bill Reynolds as a fine specimen of homosexual pervert. Homosexuality occupies a central pattern in the play, as it directs and motivates all the characters in the play. Some critics openly accused the playwright for taking up such an unconventional subject. In defence Anderson denied his play being about homosexuality. It might not be the main theme, but surely one layer of meaning does pertain to the initiation of perversion and the tyrannical attitude of the society toward the alienated and psychologically oppressed young men of America. At least the audience were attracted towards it - a "record run for 712 performances" - because of the frank and open discussion of the problem of homosexuality on the stage.

There are two major protagonists in the play, Tom Lee and Bill Reynolds. Tom has feminine traits, and is "very sensitive" and "very lonely." Deprived of love and affection since his childhood, Tom is called "Grace" by his schoolmates because of an ill-considered moment of unbridled verbal enthusiasm over a Grace Moore performance. He played the part of Lady Teazle in the school production of *The School For Scandal*. His attitudes, tastes, feminine shyness, girlish long hair, interest in taking
female roles - all these factors excited the homosexual perversity of Harris who took him "in the dunnes" and was caught swimming naked. Tom's good looks prompt his roommate, Al, and Laura to think of him as a homosexual. Tom's father, Herb Lee, wishes Tom "to learn to run with the other horses", for his son is shy and "doesn't even play tennis like a regular fellow. No hard drives and cannon ball serves." 29

Tom falls in love with Laura, the young wife of the headmaster who gives him more than tea and sympathy. Tom is "always trying in thinly veiled ways to tell her he loves her" (T.S., p.14), for she provides some semblance of a home atmosphere and a compassionate ear that listens and understands. Laura gives motherly love to Tom out of tenderness and affection and she acts "as a kind of mother substitute," 30 but this motherly love degenerates into sexual promiscuity at the end. Laura is emotionally inclined towards Tom because of his resemblance to her previous husband, John, who was Tom's age when they married. Tom also strikes Laura as "kind and gentle and lonely" like John. Laura finds an image of her lonely and miserable present in Tom's loneliness. She first stimulates Tom's passions who "impulsively" embraces and kisses her "passionately," and later protests with "No, Tom . . . No" when he "would kiss her again" (T.S., p.145). Rejected by Laura, Tom sees no avenue left except to try his male virility with Ellie Martin, a waitress known for her promiscuity. He attempts to have sexual relations with her, is unable to do so, and tries to kill himself in
desperation. Ellie stops him, calls the police and circulates the story around the town. On hearing the unfortunate episode, Laura feels morally culpable and rises to the situation to save Tom from eternal infamy, disgrace and expulsion:

Yes, I am responsible, but not as you think. I did try to stop him, but not by locking him in his room, or calling the school police. I tried to stop him by being nice to him, by being affectionate. By showing him that he was liked . . . yes, even loved.

(T.S., p. 170)

Laura-Tom relationship forms the central texture in the play; it acts as a force to reveal the latent homosexuality of Bill Reynolds and his sadomasochism. On the exterior, Bill is a man's man, "large and strong" with a tendency to be "gruff", but his sadomasochistic aversion towards Tom Lee flows from his perversion. As U. David Sievers has observed, "the aversion originates in his own latent homosexuality." Bill's persecution of Tom is an expression of his perverse homosexual spite, for in his heart of hearts, Bill has been enjoying the sadistic pleasure while torturing Tom. Being an "impotent stud," he could not tolerate Tom to develop amorous relations with his wife Laura. He warns her for not becoming "a bystander":

Look Laura, when I brought you here a year ago, I told you it was a tough place for a woman with a heart like yours. I told you you'd run across boys, big and little boys, full of problems, problems which for the moment seem gigantic and heartbreaking. And you promised me then you wouldn't get all taken up with them. Remember?

(T.S., p. 51)
Bill remained a bachelor until forty probably afraid to test his masculine virility in a marriage. But finally, he could not endure the constant "ribbing" of his colleagues and their wives and decided to marry Laura, a former actress, when they met in Italy. But being impotent, Bill did not need her; he had been always happier in mountain climbing with boys than in the company of women:

LAURA: You've resented me ... almost from the day you married me, you've resented me. You never wanted to marry really. ... Did they kid you into it? Does a would be headmaster have to be married? Or what was it Bill? You would have been far happier going off on your jaunts with the boys, having them to your rooms for feeds and bull sessions. ...

BILL: That's part of being a master.

LAURA: Other masters and their wives do not take two boys always with them whenever they go away on vacations or week-ends.

BILL: They are boys without privileges.

LAURA: And I became a wife without privileges.

(T.S., p.174)

A "homosexual hoax," Bill is a "bluff headmaster whose obtuseness precipitates in pain." Laura, knowing that Tom is in love with her, insists that the boy is normal but Bill remains adamant and must expel Tom. Now Laura accuses Bill of being sadistic, being threatened by Tom's virility. Throughout the play, Bill is seen in a sadomasochistic struggle to clear Tom from his way to cling to Laura. "Forced into a marriage he did not really want, the sex act has become a vindictive striking out against Laura, and the marriage had, like the sports arena,
a proving ground for virility." Bill makes love to Laura in a sadistic manner, hiding his "homosexual spite" and proving himself a "regular fellow." He formulates his own code of male virility and equates it with aggressiveness which Laura resists: "Manliness is not all swagger and swearing and mountain climbing. Manliness is also tenderness, gentleness, consideration" (I.S., p. 173). Bill is a spent-up "queer", one who cannot feel for love and knows only sexual jealousy in anti-heroic tradition. Assessing the quality of her marriage to Bill, Laura observes, "We so rarely touch anymore. . . . you seem to hold yourself aloof from me. A tension seems to grow between us. . . . when we do touch . . . it's rather a violent thing. . . . no quiet times. . . ." (I.S., p. 112)

Bill starves Laura sexually who recoils at the end when she fails to overcome the volcano of her sexual repression: "Did it ever occur to you that you persecute in Tom, that boy up there, you persecute in him the thing you fear in yourself?" (I.S., p. 175). Bill is fully exposed; he is too weak to face its truth. As for Laura, "it's good riddance" to break away from Bill. Laura goes to Tom, partly out of altruistic emotions, and partly to quench her sexual thirst through physical contact with Tom. She tells him she is leaving Mr. Reynolds, starts to walk out, and, in a last-minute decision, bolts the bedroom door, comes over to the bed, and begins to unbutton her blouse. She sits on the bed, takes Tom's hand and says, "years from now . . . when you talk about this . . . and you will . . . be kind" (I.S., p. 180).
The analysis of the text proves that neither Tom Lee nor Bill Reynolds is free from perversion. Tom Lee acts like a homosexual. No wonder, he reveals all the homosexual tendencies which one can possibly find in "a queer": his being intensely in love with an older woman, his awkwardly walking habits, his odd manner of playing tennis, his love for music and poetry, his refusal to wear a crew hair cut, and his shyness with girls. Undeniably, these tendencies of Tom evoke homoerotic feelings, and his naive naked swimming with Mr. Harris creates a sensation among his friends, Al, Ralph and Laura. Ralph expresses this sensation to Al: "Yeah . . . That's why all the guys leave the shower room at the gym where he walks in" (T.S., p.87). Al even decides to quit the boarding house to "move over to his house."

Himself naive about perversion, Tom stimulates homoerotic feelings. Lacking individuality, his personality is feminine, and he has no understanding of the human relationships. A victim of sexual and erotic forces, he suspects his male virility and goes to Ellie Martin only to prove to himself that he is masculine: "I'm no man. Ellie knows it. Everybody knows it. It seems everybody knew it, except me. And, now I know it" (T.S., p.179). No wonder Laura too feels affinities with Tom. He emerges as the other self of Bill Reynolds who confesses to Laura, "I used to lie on my bed just the way Tom does, listening to phonograph records hour after hour" (T.S., p.51). Had not Laura come in his life, he would have got lost for ever, probably turned neurotic. It is Laura who embodies Anderson's message that "you
must give more than tea and sympathy to someone you discover is in need. You have to involve yourself and risk that you will be hurt in order to help.”

Thus the post-World War II playwrights dramatized pervert and promiscuous protagonists to highlight the grotesque condition of contemporary man who, under social and psychological pressures, finds solace in primitive eroticism. These protagonists' male virility is rooted in their need to love and reach out to someone. Now this passionate frenzy is quite antithetical to the quest of love of the mythical Greek heroes. In the old heroic literature "love and the hero" is a subject carried to tragic elevation and sublimity. The Greek, medieval and classical romances glorify adultery and physical passion of the protagonists whose "central preoccupation is amorous suffering and love enterprise." Aeneas suffers because of his passionate involvement with Dido. But Aeneas' love for Dido is spiritual and heroic. "When love assumes the form of a yearning for the unattainable, it can become an analogue of a mythical quest. The great lover-heroes of literature are victims of destruction and degradation - but also paladins in the service of an ideal.”

Negating traditional heroism, Tennessee Williams, Robert Anderson, Edward Albee and Williams Inge enacted sexual and homoerotic passions of their protagonists in a sensual and lurid style. Brick, Turk, Hal, Bo, Jerry, Tom and Bill are pervert protagonists and their urge for physical contact eventually results in the loss of their freedom and individuality in the tradition of anti-heroism.
Notes


2 Donald M. Kaplan, "Homosexuality and American Theatre: A Psychoanalytic Comment," Tulane Drama Review, 9, No.3 (Spring 1965), 30.


4 Quoted in "Homosexuality and American Theatre: A Psychoanalytic Comment," p.36.

5 Tennessee Williams, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof (New York: New Directions Books, 1955), p.39. All subsequent page numbers refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text, the title having been abbreviated as Cat.


7 Commonweal, 67 (3 June 1955), 231.


9 The Reporter, 12 (15 May 1955), 41.


14 William Inge, "Picnic," 4 Plays by William Inge, p.76. All subsequent references are from this edition and are incorporated in the text.
16 "New Play in Manhattan," Time, 61 (2 March 1953), 72.
17 Harold Clurman, Nation, 176 (7 March 1953), 213.
18 Jordan Y. Miller, "William Inge: Last of the Realists?", p. 22.
19 "New Play in Manhattan," Time, 65 (14 March 1955), 58.
21 William Inge, Bus Stop (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 41. All subsequent page numbers are from this edition and are incorporated in the text.
24 Edward Albee, The Zoo Story (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1960), p. 22. Subsequent page numbers refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text, the title abbreviation being Zoo.
29 Robert Anderson, Tea And Sympathy (New York: Random House Inc., 1953), p. 25. All subsequent page numbers refer to this edition and are incorporated in the text, the title abbreviation being T.S.
30 Thomas P. Adler, Robert Anderson (Boston: Twayne Publisher, 1978), p. 78.

33 Thomas P. Adler, Robert Anderson, p.80.


36 Ibid.