

Chapter IV

CHAPTER IV

QUEM QUERITIS :AN EVALUATION OF “NON-BLACK PLAYS”

“It’s strange how many people suffer from it,

I don’t only mean fear of closed spaces and fear of

heights, but fear of death and what’s worse, fear of life...

I’ve sometimes thought it was the most besetting humour of
man, and I asked myself at one time if it was due to some deep

animal instinct that man has inherited from that primeval

something that first felt the thrill of life.”

(The Razor’s Edge, William Somerset Maugham)

Tennessee Williams’s “Non-Black” plays centre round ^{the} “quieter elements of existence”. The moot-point of this chapter is to identify the “quieter elements”. All “Non-Black” plays (i.e. the plays written after 1960), may not conform to all the norms laid down for them. Even, the “Non-Black” plays display presence of the “Black” elements, i.e. the “destructive elements” (according to the playwright’s coinage) in them. Of course, Williams has clearly emphasized : “all non-black plays may not be all white”, and therein lies the crux of the coinage.

Since the plays are labelled as “Black” and “Non-Black”, a notion of dichotomy emerges ; it can be either Manichaeic or Apollonian-Dionysian or Puritan-Bohemian. The latter two are simply the dichotomies mentioned in tandem, so it is best to call it Manichaeic. What exactly Manichaeic Dichotomy is? As stated in “Encyclopaedia of Philosophy” Vol. V of Paul Edwards, “The chief characteristic of Mani’s system is a consistent dualism which rejects any possibility of tracing the Origins of good and evil to one and the same source. Evil stands as a completely independent principle against good and redemption from the power of Evil is to be achieved by recognizing this dualism and following the appropriate rules of life... The present world and man in particular, presents a mixture of Good and Evil, the result of a breach of the original limits by the powers of Evil. The whole purpose of the founding of the universe was to separate the two principles and restore the original state of affairs rendering Evil forever harmless and preventing any future repetition of intermingling”.¹

“The Non-Black plays not being all white” try to seek support from Mani again : “The Manichaeic myth begins with the two primal principles of Light and Darkness, each dwelling in its own realm, coeternal but independent. Perception of the Light excites envy greed and hate in Darkness and provokes it to attack the Light. In response the Father of Greatness calls forth the Primal Man, who arms himself with five powers and descends to battle with the Darkness. He is defeated however, and the five powers of Darkness devour a part of his light and thus bring the mixture into being.”² Hence, “Black” elements cannot altogether be done away with in the “Non-Black” plays and vice-versa.

Though Manichaeic principle is dualistic and initially it disregards “any possibility of tracing the origins of good and evil to one and the same source”, the co-existence of “good” and “evil” in the “Man” if it is considered to be a source can hardly be denied. It might seek refuge to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus for support. He accounted for the fact of harnessing the pair of opposites together, and made them owe their origin to the same source :

“Rejecting a dualistic approach, he formulated the idea that any pair of opposites formed a unity, that the tension between warring contraries is, as it were, the main spring of the Universe and that wisdom is the understanding of this unity. He wrote, ‘that which is in opposition is in concert, and from things that differ comes the most beautiful harmony’.”³

“Non-Black” plays i.e. the plays which had been composed after 1960 bore the stamp of “self-abandonment”. But his early plays contained a sense of “self-absorption” where the artist limited himself to what he had experienced. Perhaps, that was at the same time a cause of his artistic decline as well as the reason for conducting his life to realize his self.

Now, what according to Williams are the “quieter elements of existence” or “Non-Black” traits ? Robert Frost in For Once Then Something, strives at a definition of “Non-Black”,

“I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,

Through the picture, a something,

White uncertain, something more of the depths -

And then I lost it....

..... What was that Whiteness ?

Truth ? A pebble of quartz?”⁴

The “Non-Black” elements as discerned from the plays of Williams are mainly -“joy”, “search for hope”, “optimistic outlook”, “mutual trust in human relationships”, “sincere expression for man’s reaching towards perfection”, “endurance”, “come back attitude to life” or “acceptance of life”, “redemption through love and compassion”. - almost all meaningful and positive aspects of life to be lived are identified

as “Non-Black” traits. Though the late plays of Williams hardly display special “positive” characteristic features on the very first reading, repeated reading and close analysis of the plays make us not to lose sight of the “Non-Black” values that underlie the veneer of “Black” stigmata, the seeming ambience of confusion, uncertainty, and, nonsensical void.

The birth of “paradox” in Williams finds its seed embedded in the emergence of the New South. “Both the old and the new culture abounded in sharp contrasts and logical paradoxes There were remnants of European culture framed in intolerant Americanism. There were romance, beauty, glamour, gaiety, comedy, gentleness and there were sordidness, ugliness, dullness, sorrow, tragedy, cruelty. There were wealth, culture, education, generosity, chivalry, manners, courage, nobility and there were poverty, crudeness, ignorance, narrowness, brutality, cowardice, depravity. The South was American and un-American, righteous and wicked, Christian and Barbaric. It was a South getting better, a South getting worse. It was strong and it was weak, it was white and it was black, it was rich and it was poor.”⁵ So it was nothing astounding that Williams felt an urge to deflect from “Black” to “Non-Black” plays. It was perfectly in accordance with the tune of the era.

The plays which have been included for analyses in this chapter are : Period of Adjustment(1960), The Night of the Iguana (1961), The Milk Train Doesn't stop Here Anymore (1963), Kingdom of Earth (1968), The Two Character Play (1975), A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur (1979), and some plays from Dragon Country (1970).

“Joy” is a streak which is more conspicuous in the “Non-Black” or late plays than the early plays. Some critics hold the view that Tennessee Williams’s late plays are melodramatic or blasted ; the “Non-Black” elements once traced in the late plays add to them the prestige of well-written plays. “These later plays are the most difficult that Williams has written, but they are also, in many ways, the most rewarding. For in these plays he has succeeded in plunging deep into his own existence so that he could display to us areas of common experience that are usually deeply hidden and

inaccessible”.⁶ Of course, from the point of theatricalism, it is true that the late plays of Williams have inclination towards the absurd drama, in modicum. “Joy” is a mental plight which is quite rare in everyday existence. The famous romantic poet John Keats expresses the elusiveness of “Joy” in his “Ode on Melancholy”:

“She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die,

And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips Bidding adieux”...⁷

The evanescence of “Joy” finds a full expression in Tennessee Williams’s plays. Even then, the playwright has striven to catch it by its forelock and has made it to linger, at least for sometime, in the late plays.

In Period of Adjustment, “mirth” has a significant role to play along with light comic touches, in different places in snatches. Especially when the dubiousness of the pair of couples is dispelled gradually, the joyousness of the play begins to assert in and pervade throughout the play. While both Ralph Bates and Isabel are seen cheering each other up, a new dimension of the play is brought to the fore. Both of them are waiting eagerly for their spouses - Ralph is looking for Dorothea’s arrival, who has left him in anger; Isabel waits for George who has gone away keeping her in Ralph’s house. A conversation between them presents two persons feeling for each other when they are in almost the same deplorable plight. Perhaps, that is the “joy of living” as manifested in the following extract :

“ Isabel : You are very kind, Mister Bates. I’m sure you were more understanding with your wife when you were going through this ...

Ralph : Period of adjustment? Yeah. That’s all it is, it’s just a little - period of adjustment....

Ralph : Little Bit, Little Bit - You had a sleepless night in that motel - why don’t

you put in a little sack time now. You need it, honey. Take Dotty's bed in there and think about nothing till morning.

Isabel : You mean you know, now, that George is not coming back ?

Ralph : No I mean that Dotty's not coming back.

Isabel : But, Mister Bates, if your wife does come back here I would'nt want her to find a stranger in your bed-room.

Ralph : Honey, finding a stranger in a bedroom is far from being the biggest surprise of a lifetime. So you go on in there and lock the door.

Isabel : Thank you, Mister Bates" (Act I, Period Adjustment).

As Period of Adjustment trundles on to the concluding part, the "real joy" makes the conversation among the characters - Ralph, George, Isabel and Dorothea appear lambent. The morass of misunderstanding dispels and they can enjoy living on this earth and can trust each other. Obviously, they find meaning of existence through love and compassion. Both the couple - Ralph and Dorothea, Isabel and George complement each other in the span of existence. They get things "ironed out between them" (Act III) because "they need each other".(Act III)

"'Adjustment' is different from any of my other plays. A little more upbeat, I'd say, and I didn't write it for 'big name' players. I hope that you will think there is considerable humor in it. But in any case, I'm happy to say that both married couples stay married at the end. I'm through with what have been called my 'Black' plays. *May be analysis has helped me to get them out of my system*"⁸

In The Night of the Iguana, the tinge of sadness has been superseded by the element "joy". Hannah Jelkes, who strives to add an iota of meaning to the life, otherwise sterile, becomes keen on befriending her grand father, Nonno, who is absolutely alone. She tries to comfort her grandfather. On the contrary, Maxine Faulk is vibrant with

malicious wit, mirth and is aware of the ways of making the best of life. The play does not remain confined to the superfluous traits like “joy”, “love of life” but reaches to a further extent, the “come back attitude to life” wherein lies the playwright’s success as a “Non-Black” dramatist. Reverend Shannon could not turn a blind eye towards life and he responded to the call of life. Man’s eternal quest for perfection too finds expression in Shannon and Grandpa Nonno (Hannah Jelkes’s grandfather). Besides, a “search for hope” and “longing for togetherness” are traits that sustain the play. “Although Shannon experiences a fall from an ironically elevated self-image, he neither withdraws into insanity because of it nor suffers violent retribution for his past crimes or inherent corruption. Instead he survives and is reformed if not transformed by the ministrations of Hannah, who also represents a new departure in Williams’s characterization for she is elevated to a heroic stature and remains undefiled - a model of limitless compassion, selfless devotion and stoical courage in the face of the world’s suffering and her own loneliness and despair.”⁹

“Acceptance of life” is a common element which all the characters in the play share. According to Robert Heilman, in The Ways of the World : Comedy and Society just such an attitude of “acceptance” constitutes hallmark of comic style: “the acceptance of world”. Heilman defines¹⁰ “acceptance” as “a perception of the world as a liveable middle ground that is not celestial but is not infernal either, it is an accommodation to actuality”. Thus, the protagonists of these plays (late plays) are neither emotionally transfixed by memories of the past nor violently destroyed by conflicting desires, instead they survive, by making the necessary adjustments to a life which cannot level the heights of their expectation. Their comic strength lies in “being unillusioned without becoming disillusioned.”¹⁰ It cannot be wholly in tune with the remark that “Williams has so altered the fundamental patterns in these plays that what is perceived as an irrevocable loss in the plays of his predominantly tragic mode is instead accepted in the comic spirit of compromise, albeit often a ‘dark’ comedy marked by the acceptance (or over-acceptance) of the minimal, the expedient, the corrupt or the ‘second best’. The comic spirit of survival

that remains a secondary motif or foil in the plays of Williams's predominantly tragic mode is fully developed in these plays as a viable alternative to *romantic despair* and *existential angst*."¹¹ (italics mine)

Reverend Shannon's ruptured trust in human beings and his surroundings is complemented by Hannah Jelkes's accentuation of "mutual trust". Hannah prescribes reaching out to people as the only solution to Shannon's problem of mistrust. The tête-à-tête between Hannah Jelkes and Reverend Shannon is a cogent example that can be put up in its favour -

“ Shannon : What is my problem, Miss. Jelkes ?

Hannah : The oldest one in the world - the need to believe in something or in someone - almost anyone, - almost anything something.

Shannon : Your voice sounds hopeless about it.

Hannah : No, I'm not hopeless about it. In fact, I've discovered something to believe in.

Shannon : Something like God ?

Hannah : No.

Shannon : What ?

Hannah : Broken gates between people so they can reach each other A little understanding exchanged between them, a wanting to help each other ?” (Act III The Night of the Iguana.)

Later, in this act, Hannah strives to add more importance to see God in the faces of “suffering humanity” as she is “unsure” about the presence of God. But it has been refuted by critics like Delma Eugene Presley, who says in her famous essay The Search for Hope in the plays of Tennessee Williams that, “Hannah's point is that the

problem of belief will more or less take care of itself if Shannon will try to live in community with someone. But Shannon's problem is not isolation, but belief or lack of it. Hannah insists that he deals with the question of disbelief with the answer of human isolation ... community. The logic is reminiscent of that used by Catharine in Suddenly Last Summer. She raises the question about Sebastian's daemonic vision of God and then answers it with a simplistic statement about the importance of caring for other people."¹²

In The Night of the Iguana, Williams puts forward a feeble solution to the fundamental problem of "death". All the characters are aware of the ultimate reality - "demise". But, the central characters round which the play pivots, keep taciturn about any solution, perhaps they cannot reach it. Hannah's old grandfather - poet Nonno holds up the mirror to the Truth - "Courage"; even when "death" tolls its parting knell :

" O Courage! Could you not as well

Select a second place to dwell

Not only in that golden tree

But in the frightened heart of me?" (Act III The Night of the Iguana)

In the same poem, that is the last poem, grandfather Nonno, puts too many irons in the fire - he cries against the clutch of despair, he lends his voice to the cause of combatting "corrupting love" :

"How calmly does the orange branch

Observe the sky begin to blanch

Without a cry, without a prayer

With no betrayal of despair."

(Act III The Night of the Iguana)

So, in The Night of the Iguana, the presence of the non-black elements

like “search for hope”, “mutual trust in human relationship” is frequently felt. As for Shannon, “going back to church” might be beating a retreat to the cold ecclesiastical routine negating the demands of “life”. It is Maxine who shoves him to the “normal” life which he desires :

“Maxine : Your socks are shot. Fred’s socks would
fit you too, Shannon. [she opens his
collar]. Aw-aw, *I see you got on
your gold cross. That’s a bad sign,
it means you’re thinkin’ again
about goin’ back to the Church.*”(italics mine)

(Act I The Night of the Iguana)

Shannon is annoyed with these words of Maxine and he refutes sharply with a Joycean urge of “never saying no to life”, in somewhat anti-Daedalian manner:-

“Shannon : This is my last tour, Maxine I wrote my old Bishop this morning, a complete confession and a complete capitulation.”

(Act I, The Night of the Iguana)

The long conversation between Hannah Jelkes and Reverend Shannon is wriggling for a better expression for defining “loneliness” and cogitating a solution to it. Man’s “reaching towards perfection” finds manifestation in Hannah’s pledge of assisting her grandfather for ever; in Shannon’s sharing of Hannah Jelkes’s solitary feeling.

When Hannah says, “We make a home for each other, my grandfather and I I don’t regard a home as a ... well, as a place, a building ... a house of wood, bricks, stone. 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,” (Act III The Night of

the Iguana) we seem to derive a definition of “search for togetherness” from it.

The “chill of loneliness” — the “black” element, “the need of someone to care for” the - “non-black” element all mingle and change their places, when Hannah at the end of the play, wants their nomadic life halt to a full stop, after the death of her soul-mate grandfather Nonno:

“Hannah : Oh God, can’t we stop now, finally please let us. It’s so quiet here now.

She starts to put the shawl about Nonno, but at the same moment his head drops to one side. With a soft intake of breath, she extends a hand before his mouth to see if he is still breathing. He isn’t. *In a panicky moment she looks right and left for someone to call to. There’s no one (italics mine)*. Then she bends her head to the crown of Nonno’s and the curtain starts to descend.”

(Act III The Night of the Iguana)

We get a “Non-black” play heading to “Black” end, where the playwright is reticent about any immediate solution, perhaps, groping for it in existential void.

Now the play for detailed analysis, is The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore. Here, “Non-Black” traits which enjoy being cynosure are ... “acceptance of life as well as death”, “search for reaching out to another heart”, “love for life”, “ a practical vision of life” (sense of realism). Here, the “comic mode” figures prominently. To account for Williams’s comicality, Von Szelski has veritable reason to offer : - “Perhaps when you push pessimism to its limit long enough it must come full circle and find its form in a kind of comic vision. Perhaps many new writers are defended in Schiller’s observation that comedy could have higher aims than tragedy, and make tragedy superfluous, its ultimate end being ‘to attribute more to chance than to destiny, and rather to laugh at inconsequence than to rage or weep at wickedness’”.¹³ Christopher Flanders,

the young visitor, an “itinerant poet priest” is here the harbinger of death. “Chris has assumed the mission of easing into death the wealthy, aged, infirm and hopeless”¹⁴. Life and death alike were not acceptable to Mrs. Goforth until Chris Flanders inspired her to ponder over both, in the same way. However, in Scene V, the sharing of views between the two characters makes the point clear :

“Chris (who has come down to her) : Mrs. Goforth are you still afraid of ...
(He hesitates)

Mrs. Goforth : Death | Never even think of it !

(She takes his arm and they move down to a bench and sit).

Chris : Death is one moment and life is so many of them.”

(Scene V , The Milk Train Doesn't stop Here Anymore)

“Love for life” is equally evinced in Mrs. Flora Goforth’s nostalgic delve into the past. While describing her husband’s death, she is eloquent about her “frightened heart”, about her “fear of death” and “love for life.” When death approaches, she sees “death in his eyes”, she gets out of the bed “as if escaping from quicksand.” In fact, she wants to “move away from death, terror.”(Scene IV,The Milk Train.....)

Reaching out to the other’s heart for escaping from the clasp of loneliness is a Williamsian forte. Naturally, being a “Non-Black play” how can “The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore” stand out the mainstream ? So, we see in Blackie, the attendant of Mrs. Goforth as well as Mrs. Goforth herself, a “longing for togetherness”, a desire to feel the warmth of a soul beside theirs. When, Blackie comes in rescue of Mrs. Goforth, while she trudges along the terrace, the response evoked from Flora Goforth is, no doubt, touching :

“Mrs. Goforth (she staggers to the edge of the forestage) :

Wind, cold wind, clean, clean! Release! Relief!. Escape from - [She reaches

the edges of the orchestra pit. A wave crashes loudly [below].

I'm lost, blind, dying, I don't know where I ...

Blackie (rushing out behind her) : Mrs. Goforth !

Don't move! You're at the edge of the Cliff !

Mrs. Goforth (Stopping, her hands over her eyes) :

Blackie ! (She sways ! Blackie rushes forward to catch her).

Blackie, don't leave me alone ! (italics mine).

(The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore Scene IV)

Towards the close of the play, when Mrs. Goforth slouches down the horizon of her existence, she screams :

“Mrs. Goforth : Don't leave me alone till...

Chris : I never leave till the end”.

Her valedictory words shake us from within.

“ Mrs. Goforth : Be here, when I wake up”.

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore(Scene VI)

Her life draws to its close. Even at the threshold of death, she shudders at the inkling of loneliness.

The “sense of realism”, “man's urge for attaining perfection”, “practical vision of life”, “endurance” are the other “Non-Black” stigmata, we come across in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. The “fright” that engulfs Mrs. Goforth's heart or Chris's bosom, is a universal feeling. Chris in Scene Five of The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore muses :

“Chris (standing above her) : Unreality! **L**ostness! Have you ever seen how two little animals sleep together, a pair of kittens or puppies ? All day they seem so secure in the house of their master, but at night, they curl up against each other, and, now and then, if you watch them, you notice they nudge each other a little with their heads or their paws, exchange little signals between them. The signals mean : we are not in danger - sleep! We’re close : its safe here ... we’re all of us living in a house we’re not used to ... too ... A house full of voices, noises, objects, **s**trange shadows, light that’s even stranger We can’t understand”.

The message it preaches is ... “mutual interdependence of man and man”. “Because Flora’s physical demise is accompanied by a sense of spiritual awakening, the play concludes in the comic mood of rebirth and resurrection rather than in a tragic mood of loss;it ends appropriately with the bugle sounds of “Reveille” not “Taps”¹⁵

Kingdom of Earth (1968) : “Williams’s 1968 comedy,”¹⁶ has little to show Non-Black characteristics though “the longing for togetherness”(Non-Black element) is complemented by “a sense of insecurity” and “oppressor-oppressed complex” (the “black traits”). Lot, a “tubercular transvestite”, Myrtle, “one time showgirl down on her luck”, Chicken, Lot’s half-brother, a man with sinister motive - all hanker after a safe, secure existence. “It is a droll, idiosyncratic, ornery comedy about the contest between half-brothers, Lot and Chicken, for the ownership of a farm. Myrtle is the pawn tossed between them, She is Lot’s new wife who ends up being Chicken’s whore”.¹⁷ However, Myrtle’s frantic quest for a secure existence is an optimistic quality though it boils to nothingness.

The comicality comes to the fore when diseased Lot is being disturbed, time and again, by his collusive half-brother, Chicken, and Myrtle running berserk over snatching the marriage-license off him.

“ Lot : What are you doing? What did you take from my coat ?

Myrtle : Our marriage license : Your half-brother wants to look at it as if to see if its real (she starts out again). Lot begins to laugh softly as she closes the door. She pushes it open again and says -

“... What are you laughing at?

Lot : *At life ! ... I think it's funny.*(italics mine) Myrtle closes the door rather softly, Chicken waits in the hall. She descends.”

Kingdom of Earth (Act II Scene I)

Just to satiate the longing of Chicken for wangling Lot's property and accruing “security” from it, Myrtle goes to such as inhuman extent. Just after Lot's demise, and, the advent of flood, Myrtle cries out ...

“Don't leave me alone here !” (Act II, Scene II)

Chicken, on the contrary declares “Chicken is King” He gets carried off his feet by the property he inherits. So, “security” is all they search for , and try to attain it by any means.

The Two Character Play employs the technique

“play-within - a play”, where the “existential world appears as a locked, abandoned, empty theatre from which there is no exit and the divided psyche (two actors: brother and sister) condemned to ‘solitary confinement’ inside their own subjective experience, i.e. a ‘two-character play’”¹⁸

Being a Non-Black play, The Two-Character Play, tries to add meaning to existence, intends to stress upon an optimistic view of existence :

“Felice : We must n't start counting things, that can't be counted on, Clare.

Clare : We must trust in things.

Felice : Continuing as they are,

Clare : Continued.”

(The Two Character Play, Act Two)

Felice and Clare are left alone in this cruel world by their parents who killed and committed suicide subsequently. They try to survive hugging each other, just as Hamm and Clov of Beckett's Endgame. At the concluding part of the play both of them take a decision to shoot each other. But, both of them fail and stick to the decision of carrying on “life” together. “A come-back attitude to life” elevates the play to a prestigious plane.

The later day critics like Rexford Stamper have kept the play aside vilifying it as “artist's greatest struggle ... within himself”.¹⁹ Even, Stamper is not confident about the search for “optimism” in the conclusion. His pen scribbles: “Felice and Clare begin searching for a conclusion to The Two Character Play. They skip rapidly through the work until they reach the dialogue concerning their father's murder-suicide and the location of his revolver. Both intuitively grasp that the logical conclusion of the imaginary work is that Clare should kill Felice and then herself. At this point the play ends for the final time.”²⁰ But, Stamper has perhaps, missed the point that both of them drop the revolver, as none can shoot the other. They, at last, surrender to the “Saga of Life”, they have to live - “together”. The search ends in “togetherness”, when Williams is eloquent about it.

“There is a pause. Felice raises his eyes to watch the light fade from the face of his sister as it is fading from his : in both their faces is a tender admission of defeat. They reach out their hands to one another, and the light lingers a moment on their hands lifting toward each other. As they slowly embrace, there is total dark...”
(Concluding part of The Two Character Play)

So, Felice and Clare seeks support in each other, deciding to lead “life”, bidding adieu to the pernicious thought of “Death.” Williams is triumphant at this point.

I can't Imagine Tomorrow, (1966) is a "Non-Black play" (according to the period during which it had been composed) included in Dragon Country, (a collection of some early and late plays of Tennessee Williams). But it manifests mostly the "black" components, like "sense of time fleeting by", "inescapable loneliness", "sense of frustration". One and Two are the only characters who speak of their stale existence. Two (a man) has none to visit but One (a woman). "Sense of loneliness" gnaws into the entrails of both One and Two. One opens the door ajar, everyday, to usher in Two, saying, " Oh it's you" and Two rejoinders, "Yes, it's me". They hardly converse, but they stay in proximity to see the other acting without words or "to sit and hear each other groan".²¹ He has nowhere to go, Two is a victim of "paralysing depression". One is no less, being in the grip of intolerable "frustration". One narrates a yarn of a small man who rams his head at the gate of Death, imploring to let him in. He wants to evade the mesh of everyday solitariness saying, "if you won't let me in for twenty years, I'll wait twenty years at the gate, I can't go back down the mountain. I have no place down there. I have no one to visit in the evenings, I have no one to talk to, no one to play cards with, I have no one, no one. Its a real imprecation to be alone, *all all alone, on earth.*" (italics mine) (The Two - character play)

"One" has lost interest in existence. To her, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow/Creeps in this petty pace from day to day./To the last syllable of recorded time."²²

She feels like the underdog facing discomfiture by the relentless flux of time. On a piece of paper, she writes for Two to read : -

"Two; if there wasn't a thing called Time.... we might be able to count on things staying the same, but Time lives in the world with us and has a big broom and is sweeping us out of the way, whether we face it or not". (The Two Character play)

Jerrold A. Phillips observes : "In I can't Imagine Tomorrow, it is not only the past that paralyses the central character, but the future as well. That which is to come will be as overwhelmingly disastrous as that which has already occurred. The

individual is now perched between two untenable existence At the end of the play the spectator is left with the central character still unable to commit herself to either life or death and there are no hints as to how the matter will be resolved.”²³ Thus, though “acceptance of life” or “come back attitude to life” has been the watchword to *One and Two* under duress, it is not spontaneous at all.

In *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* we can appreciate a positive view and healthier attitude towards life. Even in hours of dejection, Dorothea instead of yielding to depression, comes back to life. She had pinned her hopes on the Principal of Blewett School. She might have flung to fury or to utter despair while she learnt from Helena that he had already shed off his garb of bachelorhood to tie nuptial knot with some other woman. Dorothea, even after this unexpected betrayal, calmly accepts the reality and rings up Miss Bodenheifer, her room-partner, asking her to let her join the picnic that had long been fixed up. Sophie Gluck, a nubile girl, manifests the black stigma “loneliness”. Her parents have passed away and she seeks security in the affection of Dorothea and Miss Bodenheifer. In another play, *The Mutilated* (1967) of *Dragon Country*, “burying the hatchet” between Trinket and Celeste (the two fallen women), stresses the presence of “Non-Black” element in the play. “Search for togetherness”, “love for life” are the tenets which the play asserts. While Trinket Dugan calls Celeste to have wine with her, their enmity ends and mutual interdependence comes to ^{be} revealed. Though, it might be the harangue of a carousing woman, Trinket finds the breast - pain she had been troubled with, vanish like “a miracle : Beatific smile hovers on their lips” and the play ends on a positive note assuring “warmth of friendship” and “love for existence”. The presence of “singers” and “carollers” add an antique charm to this modern play. In an interview, while asked whether his plays had been optimistic or pessimistic, Williams replied - “I think its very necessary to discover those things in life one can believe in. I think life is meaningless unless we find something to which we can be faithful, believe in, consider valuable, hold to in ourselves. In that sense, I think I am mostly optimistic. I

believe very strongly in the *existence of good*... I don't think I'm as gloomy as a lot of people who write."²⁴(italics mine)

The other plays of Dragon Country, The Frosted Glass Coffin (1979), In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969), and the full-length plays like Small Craft Warnings (1978), Vieux Carre' (1978), The Red Devil Battery Sign (1979), Clothes for a summer Hotel (1980), in spite of being "Non-Black plays" verge on "Black" ones. Again, some of them display characteristics of the absurd drama. The language of these plays is disjointed, monosyllabic, insipid and the conversation between the characters mostly trails off to silence. Sometimes, they end up being non-sequiturs. Williams of the early plays, e.g. The Glass Menagerie, A Street Car Named Desire, even Sweet Bird of Youth had a poetic inclination. But, the late plays, are remarkable for the dramatist's experimentation with theatre language. Adler finds reasons and supports, - "At first glance, Williams's innovations in theatre language, particularly in the two failed plays, might remind one of similar techniques employed by Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter. Seeing Williams's practice against the background of these dramatists, however, makes it clear that the verbal techniques new to Williams are used to express a metaphysics very different from that of the absurdist playwrights. ... Beckett might have found 'there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express' but for Ionesco, there is something to communicate, but it is very nearly incommunicable: 'There are no words for the deepest experience' ... but with Killinger, 'there is a world where every individual is condemned to his own private hell and discovers that language is only a tossed yoyo, either coming back upon the speaker or dribbling out flatly and uselessly between him and the world he is trying to reach'."²⁵

Perhaps Williams, so eloquent, verbose and poetic in The Glass Menagerie turns to incomplete sentences and non-sequiturs just because of the sense of language becoming "tossed yoyo", the speaker seeming nonsensical, the listener quite inattentive.

WORKS CITED

1. Edwards, Paul : The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol.V , The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, New York, 1967, p.149.
2. Ibid. Loc Cit.
3. Parker, G.F. : A Short Account of Greek Philosophy from Thales to Epicurus. Edward Arnold Publications Ltd., Great Britain, 1967.
4. Edward, Connery ed. The Poetry of Robert Frost, Lathem, New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1967, p.225.
5. Odum, Howard L: An American Epoch, New York, p.33.
6. Phillips, Jerrold A. : "Tennessee Williams : A Revaluation", Tennessee Williams News letter, Fall 1980, p.53.
7. Briggs, H.E. : "Ode on Melancholy." The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats." The Modern Library, New York, p.294.
8. Wenning T.H. : "Unbeastly Williams", Newsweek, Vol. 55, No. 26 June 27, 1960. p.96.
9. Thompson, Judith, J :Tennessee Williams's Plays: Memory, Myth and Symbol, P.LANG, New York, 1987, p.151.
10. Ibid. p.184.
11. Ibid. p.185.
12. Presley, Delma Eugene : "The Search for Hope in the Plays of Tennessee Williams" Mississippi Quarterly XXV, 4, Winter '71-'72, p.34.
13. Szeliski, John Von : Tragedy and Fear : Why Modern Tragic Drama fails, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1971, p.25.

14. Williams, Tennessee : The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, Scene V.
15. Hirsch, Foster : A Portrait of the Artist: The Plays of Tennessee Williams, Kennikat Press, 1979, p.133.
16. Ibid., p.90.
17. Bigsby, C.W.E. : A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama, Vol.II, New York, p.72.
18. Tischler, Nancy, M : Tennessee Williams : New York,Citadel Press p.192.
19. Stamper, Rexford : "The Two Character Play : Psychic Individuation" from Jac Tharpe ed : Tennessee Williams : A Tribute, Jackson, University of Mississippi, 1971, p.357.
20. Ibid. , p.356.
21. Briggs, H.E. : "Ode to a Nightingale" The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats, The Modern Library, New York, p.291.
22. Shakespeare, Williams : Macbeth, Act V, Scene V.
23. Phillips, Jerrold, A : "Imagining 'I can't Imagine Tomorrow'", Tennessee Williams Review Spring/Fall 1982, p.27.
24. Ross, Don : "Williams in Art and Morals : An Anxious Foe of Untruth", New York Herald Tribune, March 3 , 1957, p.40.
25. Adler, Thomas P : "The Dialogue of incompletion: Language in Tennessee Williams's Later Plays", The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 61, (February, 1975) , pp. 48-58.