

Chapter V

CHAPTER V**A. JANUS-FACED PERSONALITY UNMASKED : A COMPARISON OF THE
“BLACK” AND THE “NON-BLACK” PLAYS**

“Because of its (theatre’s) apparently natural tendency towards the unnatural, the theatre has perpetually to be recalled to nature, to ‘real life’, as it is called, which often in our time is taken to mean the sordid part of reality. Sordid reality easily turns to unreality when it is artificially separated from non-sordid reality and nothing is more unreal than much of our realism”.

Eric Bentley : “What is theatre? Incorporating
the dramatic event and other reviews 1944-1967”

p. XV.

I

“Black” and “Non-Black” elements : Points of difference.

Much ink has been spilt over adumbrating the lines of contrast between the early (plays written before 1960) and the late (plays written after 1960) plays of Tennessee Williams. The “Black” stints that abound in the early plays are no less viable in the late plays, though, the playwright promised to make a dent on the “quieter elements of existence”.¹ In fact, the inherent inclination of the playwright towards pessimism foundered

his brilliant idea of painting all post-sixty plays “white”.

It is already known that, neither the early plays are totally “Black”, nor, the late plays are free from “Black” tinge. As the playwright, of course, had undergone a lot of changes after 1960, the plays written after sixty are different from the early plays, but, they seem not to be of a different playwright altogether. The plays of pre-sixty and post-sixty era share some characteristics and differ sharply from one another in some significant points. However, all the plays irrespective of their belonging to the early and the late era of Williams’s writing tenure, bear the stamp of the dramatist’s psyche.

In the early plays, which brought for the dramatist wide acclaim, the dramatist’s perturbed psyche intruded and cast influence on the characters. Williams had been candid in his avowal that Alma Winemiller of Summer and Smoke (1948), Blanche Du Bois of A Street Car Named Desire (1947) were none but Tennessee Williams himself. “Women have always been my deepest emotional root, anyone who’s read my writing knows that”² such was Williams’s opinion on women.

As he felt women’s anguish deeply, he breathed life into the feminine characters, and, thus experienced their pain vicariously. In the late plays, too, Williams’s characters were none but portraits borne of playwright’s mind. “Williams’s recent plays have become exercises in which he uses the actors as projections of his own mental anguish, with his personal psychosis serving as his thematic basis.”³

While pondering over the question of “optimistic view of life,” “humanitarian outlook”, and, “comeback attitude to life”, Tennessee Williams of the early and the late plays stand on the same pedestal. However, the quest for realization of ultimate reality persists in him unabated. Any discussion on Williams’s “optimism” remains incomplete without reference to his self-revelation : “I was broken as much by repeated failures in the theatre as by Frank’s death. Everything went wrong. My life - private and professional - and ultimately my mind broke. But it’s come back - I trust its

partly back. I still have periods of hysterical behaviour, but then I always have had. I'm in my right mind now. I feel no pain anymore.”⁴ The promptness with which he could come back to the bosom of real-world actualities and accepted it, finds reflections in his plays too. In The Two Character Play (1967), Kingdom of Earth (1968), A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur (1978), Period of Adjustment (1960), Williams drives home the message of “acceptance of reality.”

Of course, Williams was never taciturn on this point in his early plays, despite the fact that the characters were not pliant enough to accept the reality. They either revolted meekly against the usual course of the universe, and, allowed themselves to lead wanton lives, [The Rose Tattoo, Summer and Smoke] or, felt at their wits' end when they had to encounter the cross-current (The Glass Menagerie, A Street Car Named Desire). In spite of all intractable problems, undergoing all oppressions, the protagonists never had yielded to O'Neillian death-wish or Millerian self-ruinous proclivity. Laura, even at the teeth of utter desperation accepted the irretrievable dejection and tried to brace herself against all odds she might have to face in future. Towards the close of the play The Glass Menagerie, even after learning that the gentleman caller, Jim O'Connor, had actually been the paramour of another girl, Betty, - Laura pretended to pull herself together and offered Jim a souvenir - the unicorn with broken horn and went to wind up the victrola. Williams kept his eyes on the peephole of grave reality - “There is a look of almost infinite desolation.” Amanda tried to comfort Laura saying, “You don't know things anywhere! You live in a dream. You manufacture illusions”. Laura seemed to imbibe invigorating warmth from the caring words of Amanda. Amanda's meek protest against Tom's fatuous action of inviting Jim O'Connor - a man, engaged already to another girl, - could hardly heal the shock, Laura received. But the presence of “Non-Black” appraisal of life could not evade the analytical sight of a critic.

Pointing to the “comic” face of Williams, A.D. Chaudhuri had argued quite cogently : “Menagerie uses the humour of situation in a double way. Sometimes, humour

is a simple device to make situations more plausible and homely, but, humour often verges on the ridiculous or the pathetic, and the ironic... And at least, once (Scene VI) Williams's sense of the comic transports a situation to a higher level, Jim is moving Laura about the room in a clumsy waltz and gives her one of the finest moments in her life. This funny dance makes the mediocre and well-meaning Jim fully credible, and it also demonstrates the playwright's sense of pity for Laura. Out of the mist of Tom's musings, the comic scenes suddenly appear to establish, as it were, the substantiality of a dream picture."⁵ Another critic, Charles Brooks went a step further to probe into the early play of Williams to pick out the germs of comicality. Thus, he observed : ... "But his greatest power and appeal derive from a comic vision which he seems unwilling to trust fully. The comic vision was first and most completely manifested in The Rose Tattoo (1951)".⁶ Even, Williams's comic vision hardly spared certain obsessions America had about marriage, as voiced in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955). A family feud over an inheritance of property might not be novel, but Williams's treatment of "child-worship" seemed to be "fresh and vigorous". Brooks even dared pull Williams and O'Casey on the same plane and remarked : "Williams's mixture of comedy and tragedy is not the same as O'Casey's. O'Casey is successfully ambivalent at every moment seeing both the comic and serious aspects of characters and action. Williams shifts from comic exposure to sympathy, with the result that his plays tend to fall apart."⁷ Denis Michael Calandra, badly cooked out some observations on Williams's comic satire especially in connection with the late plays : "Williams's late plays (The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, Kingdom of Earth) also depend largely on comedy, but emerge as inferior plays Williams's comic satire is directed at two distinct character types. One, the vulgar representative of a crass American society and the other the eccentric, but harmless 'outcast' from society. The laughter at the first type is a form of bitter condemnation, while at the second type is a genial appreciation of the peculiarities of human nature."⁸

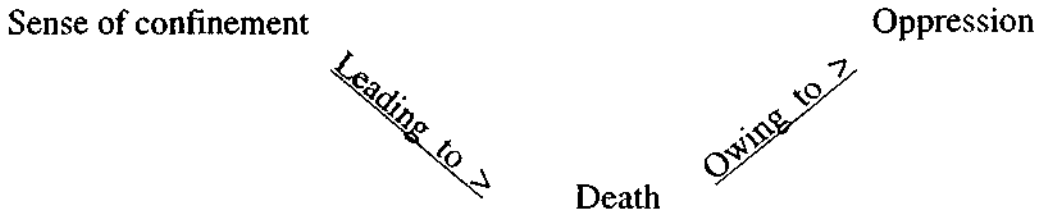
Change in the Setting is a remarkable point of difference in between the

early and the late plays of Williams. "Whereas the plays of the fifties and early sixties take place in society, these of the late sixties and seventies are set in a highly ambiguous environment."⁹

In the early plays like The Glass Menagerie, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Sweet Bird of Youth, the setting is a sliver of the society, brought to life on stage. As for example, in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, the anti-realistic touch is a much-felt phenomenon. In "Notes for the Designer", Williams writes : "The set should be far less realistic than I have so far implied in this description of it. I think the walls below the ceiling should dissolve mysteriously into air, the set should be roofed by the sky, stars and moon suggested by traces of milky pallor, if they were observed through a telescope less out of focus". He reasoned for creating such dim-dream ambience as... "this piece of furniture(?), this monument, is a very complete and compact little shrine to virtually all the comforts and illusions behind which we hide from such things as the characters in the play are faced with" In the late plays, the characters are few, the settings too need not have any refuge to anti-realism. But, the characters never appear to draw the "society" on stage. They are more of "oppressed individuals" than representatives of "repressed society". For example, while talking about the elaborate stage-setting of The Two Character Play Williams shreds off "expressionism" -philia and advises: "It must not only suggest the disordered images of a mind approaching collapse, but also, correspondingly, the phantasmagoria of the nightmarish world that all of us live in at present, not just the subjective but the true world with all its dismaying shapes and shadows". In I Can't Imagine Tomorrow, Williams is quite brief and direct : "ONE and TWO are respectively, a woman and a man approaching middle age : each is the only friend of the other. There are no walls to the set, which contains only such pieces of furniture that are required by the action of the play". Thus, the difference is being distinct, well-marked.

"Oppressor - oppressed syndrome", "sense of the claustrophobia", "confinement" i.e. the "Black" elements that were present in "Black" plays and sometimes

in “Non-Black” plays had their origin in Dante’s Inferno. “In Dante as well as the modern artists, one important sense pervades the variations of a personal inferno, it is the sense of confinement and of the ineluctable repetitiousness of torture. The sense grows out of a metaphysical speculation about “Death” - be it spiritual, emotional or physical namely a fear of absolute stasis”.¹⁰ Thus, the “Black” and the “Non-Black” plays cannot repudiate the vicious chain :



“A state of incompleteness is the condition of the oppressed people who inhabit Williams’s world, and, their struggle to overcome their condition is the action which his art describes. The unique part of his vision is that it is infused with a compassion for the plight of his character which reaches to the deepest part of our understanding, it gives his early work a brooding often melancholic texture which no other American playwright possesses.”¹¹ Usually, the menfolk play the role of the “torturer” and the womenfolk are “tortured”. But, they lack the courage to take the gauntlet thrown at them mercilessly, and, wobble when they face male - aggression . They have hardly any voice of protest.

Henry Taylor too opines that Williams mirrors his unhappy youth in portraying “the endless and cannibalistic assault of the *insensitively powerful upon the*

pathetic and defenseless".¹² (italics mine)

The women of the early plays and the late plays of Williams are set apart from each other by the dividing criterion - voice of protest. The women of early plays, like, Laura Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie, Blanche du Bois in A Street Car Named Desire, Alma Winemiller in Summer and Smoke, Lady Torrance in Orpheus Descending, Boss Finley's daughter Heavenly Finley in Sweet Bird of Youth had no voice to raise in protest.

Laura, in The Glass Menagerie, could not fight against the ignominious, deceptive attitude of Jim O'Connor, the only gentleman-caller she had had in her life. The conversation between Laura and Jim, a pal Tom had in his working-place and whom he invited to dinner, on his mother's fervid appeal - had ended in smoke. Jim tried to boost Laura's flagging spirits saying, "Yep-that, what I judge to be your principal trouble, lack of confidence in yourself as a person. You don't have the proper amount of faith in yourself." (The Glass Menagerie). His tart remark was "Knowledge zzzzp ! Money - Zzzzp! Power! That's the cycle democracy is built on" (The Glass Menagerie). For the first time, Laura had to budge an inch from the dim-dream world of her "glass menagerie", and she could not put up with the concept of Faustian ambition, the mystique of the American dream that Jim preached. Even after admiring her, kissing her long, expressing his deep concern for her, he hardly had been in dithers to say, "Being in love has made a new man of me." He loved Betty and as she left for visiting her ailing aunt he could accept Tom's invitation to dinner. The holy candles in the altar of Laura's face have been snuffed out. There is a look of almost infinite desolation". (The Glass Menagerie). Here, Laura in a depressed abandon, sought solace in her mother's lap she could not raise her voice in protest against the cruelty of menfolk, against the ways of the world.

Blanche du Bois of A Street Car Named Desire, had hardly any peremptory voice in her sister's menage. She had been affronted by her brother-in-law Stanley

Kowalski, but, she could not raise her voice to a shrewish pitch and protest against it, though lastly, she had to pay heavily for it. She was manhandled, treated shabbily, driven to madness and, in the concluding scene, we are moved by the aggrieved voice of the “oppressed” woman clung to the arms of the Doctor, “Whoever you are, I’ve always depended upon the kindness of strangers.” But she did not protest against the mean plotting of her brother-in-law, she followed the Doctor to the infirmary, mutely. Only for a moment, she cried out, that too, in panic, when Stanley assured her to send anything she forgot to the hospital, “I don’t know you, I don’t know you, I want to be left alone - please !” (Scene XI, A Street Car Named Desire). But that was uttered when she reached the deadlock.

Alma Winemiller in Summer and Smoke, was too timid to denounce any wrong behaviour of John Buchanan - her paramour. She could construe that, John was undergoing a drastic change but in a Miriam - like (Lawrentian character) fatuity she turned her back to it. When life demanded her to face the stern reality, she lost her psychic balance, that verged on insanity. She, on her own, preferred corporeal enjoyment with a travelling salesman to a dishonoured bondage with an honourable young doctor. A girl, once too puritan, gradually slipped down the slithery path of cheap mundane pleasures. She too was found echoing Blanche (A Street Car) in the closing scene, when she got the salesman to pity on her condition, as she was in the doldrums. She said, “Life is full of little *mercies* like that, not being *mercies*, but comfortable little *mercies*. And so we are able to keep on going”. (Scene XII, Summer and Smoke) (*italics mine*). So, the word “mercies” was pronounced thrice. Alma’s voice of protest trailed off to silence. She yielded meekly to the wanton life that beckoned her. At last, she was heard mumbling, “Yes I feel like a water-lily on a Chinese lagoon” (Scene XII, Summer and Smoke).

Even in Orpheus Descending (1957), Lady Torrance, could not protest against her cruel husband’s meaningless wrath. She had a life throbbing in her womb, the seed sown by Val Xavier (the salesman in her shop-counter). Lady Torrance cried her

heart out, being jubilant over her success in conceiving a zygote in her uterus, "I've won, I've won, Mr. Death, I'm going to bear" (Act III, Scene III, Orpheus Descending). Jabe Torrance got flung to fury and shot her dead. As she raised her voice to the level of feeble protest against Torrance's oppression, Torrance put an end to her life, ruthlessly and deliberately. At last, the Lady bit the dust being shot by Jabe. Even then, she appeared to be magnanimous counting her last moments, "she turns to face him (Jabe Torrance) still covering VAL with her body, her face with all the passion and secrets of life and death, in it now, her fierce eyes blazing, knowing, defying and accepting." (Act II, Scene III, Orpheus Descending).

In Sweet Bird of Youth Princess Alexander Del Lago, built rapport with Chance Wayne for dependence and love. She was torn to pieces, and her heart had undergone fatal blows and she felt the pangs of loneliness. Chance Wayne came as a saviour to her. Princess entreated him to be a good lover to her. She wanted to forget her sorrowful past through "love". She uttered frenziedly, "That's the only dependable distraction, so when I say now, because, I need that distraction, it has to be now, not later." She needed Chance for love, for affection, above all, for the sake of security. But, gradually, Chance Wayne moved further and further from Princess. Chance made a frantic effort to be intimate with Heavenly Finley, the daughter of the colluding, mean, political bigwig Boss Finley, whom he had loved with all his heart. But, Boss Finley did not allow him to meet his daughter, suspected him of having harboured germs of an incurable sexual disease. Chance Wayne receded further from Princess who needed him most. Perhaps, he sensed "Time" clasp him in its fatal grip. He screamed: "To change is to live, Miss Lucy, to live is to change, and not to change, is to die". (Act II, Scene II, Sweet Bird of Youth).

On the one hand, Alexandra Del Lago, the Princess, who provided Chance Wayne with shelter, needed him to stay by her side. Again, despite losing her capability to give birth to a child, and knowing well that Chance had been attacked by an intractable

disease, Heavenly Finley wished to start her life with him. But, Boss Finley's commanding tone passed the final verdict, nipping both Chance's and Heavenly's wishes in the bud. The instances are not far to seek.

When Heavenly's pitch gained in a protesting baritone, Heavenly could not put up with her father's illicit relationship with an "other" woman. Here, she is remarkably similar in attitude to Biff of Death of a Salesman :

"Heavenly (shouting) : Yes, I am Papa, I am. You married for love , but you wouldn't let me do it, and even though you'd done it, you broke Mama's heart. Miss Lucy had been your mistress

Boss : Who is Miss Lucy ?

Heavenly : Oh Papa, she was your mistress long before Mama died. And Mama, was just a front for you. Can I go in now, Papa ?"

(Act II, Scene I, Sweet Bird of Youth).

But Boss Finley hushed her fulminating voice peremptorily, "I have power, which is not an illusion". (Act II, Scene I, Sweet Bird of Youth).

The other instance can be drawn from Princess Kosmonopolis's or Alexandra Del Lago's statements. She found a male gigolo in Chance Wayne, just to quench her thirst for the warmth of youth. However, she promised to help her get the girl he loved in St. Cloud, But, when the gigolo rode roughshod over her jaded nerves she never faltered to dissent. She could not forget the harsh treatment she received from Chance, when she desperately needed his assistance :

"Chance . Here, Here, get her back on this phone.

Princess : Do what ?

Chance : Talk about me and talk about Heavenly to her (Sally, Alexandra's

friend, Hollywood columnist),

Princess : Talk about a beach boy I picked up for

pleasure, distraction from panic ? You've just been ^{using}*using me. Using me.*

When I needed you downstairs you shouted "Get her a wheel chair !" Well, I didn't need a wheel chair, I came up alone, as always. (italics mine).

(Act III, scene III, Sweet Bird of Youth).

In the late plays, the voice of protest is far more incisive. The women here, are aware of their needs and demands. When they stake their claims to the object rightly demanded, they hardly loosen their grip. They can stand against all odds in time. They are up in arms against all tortures inflicted upon them. They are determined enough to win their rights. Mrs. Kane and Mrs. Lane of The Demolition Downtown (1971), Tye in Vieux Carre (1978), Zelda Fitzgerald in Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980) had courage to remonstrate against all kinds of injustice inflicted upon them.

In almost all the late plays both the men and women transcended worldly sorrows and sufferings, and, chivvied themselves to accept life, as it had been. Their propensity to "come back" to life toplisted their priorities. Mrs. Lane and Mrs. Kane were found gainsaying their husbands' intolerable cowardice on the one hand and obdurate dominating tendencies, on the other. In their own sphere, they knew the art of asserting their points of view. Bomb-shelling, dynamite-blasts, sniping continued unabated. While the Kane and the Lane family sat confined in an upper-middle-class living room at the outskirts of a capital city. When Mr. Kane and Mr. Lane decided to fly off to the mountains to avoid the imminent peril, the ladies took decision to meet the army generals and stop the devastating operation, by placating them. It seemed, as it were, a sort of unsavoured adventure. In fact, they did so. The conversation testifies the contrast between men and women sharply :

"Mr. Lane : What about the mountains ?

Mr. Kane : We would go to the mountains ! Why don't we go to the mountains ?

Mr. Lane : You girls are too nervous.

Mrs. Kane : You boys are nervous too.

Mr. Kane : We've got the responsibility of decision.

Mrs. Kane : Your wives don't have that responsibility too ?

Mr. Lane : Men make decisions.”

(The Demolition Downtown).

For an instant, the women remain mute. They display their pluck and wit, at last, when they decide to go downtown and surrender to the general, instead of absconding to the mountain like their consorts. Their decision seems to be courageous as well as blood-curdling.

Their action finds support in an interview of Williams where he expressed: “Williams : Women are closer to life really, they're more naked, more like naked life.

Interviewer : You mean they are not afraid as men are ?

Williams : They are closer to life, it seems to me. I may be mistaken, it seems to me that men busy themselves in business and moneymaking competition and that sort of thing, *women seem to me organically closer to love which is where life is. Where it began, where it is.*”¹³

(italics mine)

Zelda Fitzgerald, in Clothes for a Summer Hotel bore acrimony towards her husband, F. Scott, Fitzgerald, who won wide acclaim as a writer. Zelda, too, had a bent for writing. But, she restrained herself from writing as it might put hindrance to F.

Scott Fitzgerald's literary career. As the "ghost play" opened, the novelist was seen standing in front of an asylum where Zelda passed her days in utter internment. Scott was solicitous to meet her, but, she was reluctant to see him, though, she loved him long ago. The novelist's selfish attitude was evident in his conversation with Gerald Murphy, a warden of the asylum:

"Murphy : Scott, we feel she was driven to it, because....

Scott : I had to discourage her attempt to compete with my success as a writer: precocious. I face that now, have to bleed for it now. Have you seen Zelda's writing ?

Murphy : Yes. That was her talent. I hear you made her promise not to publish Save me the Waltz till your Tender is the Night had come out .

Scott : Without apology, yes, I did."

(Act I, Scene I, Clothes for a Summer Hotel)

Zelda , though sent to an asylum and a confirmed "lunatic", had not lost gumption to give vent to her umbrage, she bore against Scott Fitzgerald. Twice we hear her whimper:

"Zelda (striking out) : *What was important to you was to absorb and devour!* (italics mine)

Scott : I didn't expect to find you in this-agitated mood. Zelda, I brought you a little gift. A new wedding band to replace the one you lost.

Zelda : I didn't lose it, Scott, I threw it away."

(Act I, Scene I, Clothes for a Summer Hotel)

Zelda Fitzgerald seemed to chime in with Nora of The Doll's House of Henrik Ibsen :

“Zelda : I want an answer to my first question, “What about my work ?”

Scott : You are the wife of a highly respected and successful writer who works night and day to maintain you in

Zelda (overlapping) I still say, What about mine , meaning my work?
Answer ? None ?

Scott (Throwing the bottle away) : Your work is the work that all young Southern ladies dream of performing someday. *Living well with a devoted husband and a beautiful child.*”

(italics mine).

Ibsen’s Nora at last spoke through Zelda :

Zelda : Excuse my interruption. I’ll not prolong it. I’ll not do it again, I’ll find my own way somehow. (Act I Scene II Clothes for a Summer Hotel)

In another late play, Vieux Carre’ (1978), the couple Jane and Tye were faithful to each other, loved and missed each other, but, Jane still got inclined to Writer who inhabited a cubicle in the same tenement they stayed in. Jane sought for a company in Writer, Jane wanted attention and care which Tye was too fatigued to provide her. In part Two, Scene Twelve of the play the dialogue between Jane and Tye revealed Jane, somewhat rebellious, conceited :

“ Jane : I watched you dress, I didn’t exist for you. Nothing existed for you but your image in the mirror. Understandably so.

[With her last strength she draws herself up]

Tye : What’s understandable, Jane ? ... You got a fever ?

[He rises too, and stretches out a hand to touch her forehead, she knocks it away]

Jane : What's understandable is that your present convenience is about to become an encumbrance The person you loved assuming that you did love when she was still useful - is now, is now absorbed in preparing herself for oblivion as you were absorbed in your ... *your image in the mirror*."(Part II, Scene Twelve, Vieux Carre) (italics mine)

The voice of protest, a touch of vehemence are all that Jane possesses, and thus she can claim to be a "New" woman, seeking liberation, setting "oppression" especially male-oppression, at naught.

If Williams of the forties be labelled as Whitman's "child" from the Adamic garden he made a comeback in the sixties to discover himself as the symbol of "fallen humanity". In the early plays, Williams used to dramatize what he had seen, heard and felt; he successfully fused experience into an art-form. In the late plays he encumbered this experience with bizarre forms and complex symbols, and at times portrayed a situation that dispersed in several directions. Plays like Gnadiges Fraulein, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and Out Cry portray even greater tortured states of mind and a dogged determination to continue in the face of despair. Williams had to create a maze of illusion to ensconce "Reality" with e/clat. For that reason, he had recourse to "lies" in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, "magic" and "fabricated truth" in A Street Car Named Desire, "illusory dream of love" in The Rose Tattoo, "unflinching devotion to soul hoodwinking lust for body" in Summer and Smoke. But in late plays, he had to bid adieu to the world of illusion in a huff and descend to the last step REALITY.

Sense of Loss, or Passage of Time is an "element" which leads the early and the late plays to share the same platform. Loss, decline, betrayal ... the distortion of a delicate sensibility in the direction of a lurid and gothic self-destructiveness, are remarkable motifs of Southern writing. But, it must be admitted that the frightening distortion of Williams's sister's mental plight gave him a model for his many portraits of the individual pressed beyond the point of rational control. The sense of "Time" fleeting

by, perturbed Chance Wayne, and Alexandra Del Lago of Sweet Bird of Youth (1959). Chance Wayne implored : “I don’t ask for your pity, but just for your understanding ... not even that, - no. Just for your recognition of me in you and the enemy time in us all”. (Act III). On the contrary , Alexandra Del Lago in Act II, Scene II heaved a sigh in pain, “All day I’ve kept hearing a sort of lament that drifts through the air of this place. It says, “Lost, but, never to be found again” (Act II Scene II). As “sense of the past” is hand-in-glove with sense of flux of time, Mr. Charlie in the Last of my Solid Gold Watches (1947) reminisced : “In and out from the time I arrived till the time I left, the men of the road who knew me, to whom I stood for things commanding respect ! Poker-continuous ! Shouting, laughing, hilarity! Where have they all gone to?” In another, short early play, Talk to me like the rain and let me listen (1946), the woman went on muttering : “I won’t have any idea of what’s going on in the world. I will not be conscious of time passing at all”, as if, she feels assailed by the “passage of time”.

Both the wives, Miriam in In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and Zelda in Clothes for a Summer Hotel experience a romantic horror over time passing and death approaching, a fear of the decaying process shared by the Princess in Sweet Bird of Youth and Sissy Goforth in The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore (1968). Zelda felt restive and asked - ‘A flame burning nothing? Not even casting a shadow’?¹⁴

In O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey into the Night too, the protagonists shuddered at the sense of the past which was nothing but an instant derivative of sense of time fleeting by :

“ Tyrone : Mary ! For God’s sake, forget the past.

Mary : Why ? How can I ? The past is the present, isn’t it ? It’s the future: this we all try to lie out of that but life won’t let us.”

(Long Day’s Journey into the Night)

Perhaps, Mary foreshadowed Big Mama’s (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof) feelings:

“Big Mama : Time goes by so fast. Nothing can outrun it. Death commences too early - almost before you’re half acquainted with life - you meet with the other”.
(ActIII)

As time fleets by, an anticipation of death creeps in, in both early and late plays. Big Daddy in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Woman Downtown and King Del Rey in Red Devil Battery Sign, the characters in The Mutilated encounter death, through their experiences.

Use of symbols in early plays was much more than the late ones. In an early play, The Rose Tattoo, rose tattooed on Serafina’s husband’s breast had been the symbol of ushering in a baby in the family, the piece of silk that Estelle brought to Serafina for making a shirt for a man she was in love with, stood for snapping of human bondage; “the urn” symbolised Serafina’s unflinching love and faith to her husband, Rosario delle Rose, which ultimately was crashed to pieces when Serafina came to know of her husband’s clandestine affair with Estelle Hohengarten.

In a late play, use of symbols was fewer in number. As for example, Kingdom of Earth, a late play of Williams was in dearth of symbols. “The wind that blew as sharp as knife”, “the knife with which Chicken had been carving something on to the table” are all images of “destruction”, foreboding omen. “The flood crest” that intimidated Lot, Chicken and Myrtle was the symbol of “restoring order to the crazy world”.

Williams had followed “plastic theatre”, technique in early plays. The Glass Menagerie, A Street Car Named Desire, Summer and Smoke, Camino Real, Orpheus Descending made use of expressionistic device. Hence, the profusion of symbols. The expressionists stressed the symbols to a greater degree. “Never in the plays by Ibsen and Chekhov does the symbol interfere with the illusion of fidelity to tangible reality, as it often does in expressionist plays. Distortion of objective reality may easily result from the expressionist’s attempts to reveal a character’s emotional response to a

situation".¹⁵ Thus, prologue and last scene set in the park "near the angel of the fountain", at about dusk in Summer and Smoke and the "snakeskin jacket", which in the concluding scene of Orpheus Descending was "held up" by the CONJURE MAN with a "toothless mumble of excitement" (Orpheus Desc. Act III, Scene III) objectified the fugitive tendency of an oppressed individual.

Tennessee Williams was indebted to Wagner for his "concept of synthesis and the ideas of symbolist followers whose goal was to create a new syntax of poetic conventions that transcended ordinary language."¹⁶ Williams's theatrical goal was "transformation through sensual evocation by synthesizing all artistic components."¹⁷ Actually, the aesthetic crisis in theatre can be resolved by our knowledge of "combining the resources of realistic and theatricalistic artistry."¹⁸ A Street car Named Desire is a brilliant example of such a medley.

"As music released the mood of a scene, projecting the deepest emotional meaning of an event as well as its apparent action, so the fluctuating intensities of light could transfigure an object and clothe it with all its emotional implications."¹⁹ Hence, the chiaroscuro of light and darkness is in Williams's plays. Expressionists followed the theories of stage-lighting promulgated by Adolphe Appia. So, Laura and Amanda are left in a pool of light as Jim O'Connor leaves, which again shifts and concentrates upon Laura, who seeks comfort in Amanda's lap, the altar candle projects its faded light on Virgin Mary, or the dim paper-lantern turns on to Blanche's face to give her a magical appearance as she is fond of "magic" (A Street Car Named Desire). Varsouviana in A Street Car Named Desire, circus music in The Glass Menagerie, the tune played on Val's guitar in Orpheus Descending add special dimensions to the respective plays.

Williams commingled prosaic literalness and poetic yearning, half pathos and half-genuine vision. Early plays are embellished with poetic aura, the late ones trail off to pathos and mannered sentimentality. The allusiveness of language in The Glass Menagerie, A Street Car Named Desire, Summer and Smoke, reclines to hollow rhetoric

and drab prosaic mutterings in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore and Kingdom of Earth. "In the early plays sexuality has a dangerous and even subversive quality, it threatens to destabilise the arrogant assertion of those who command the public world. Later, in a play like Small Craft Warnings, it is tainted with sentimentality and a deeply suspect desire to appeal to what was a contemporary fad for prurience. In much of his later works, originality defers to parody."²⁰

II

"BLACK" PLAYS, "NON-BLACK" PLAYS - COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

While comparing the early and the late plays, we obviously bring the "Black" and the "Non-Black" elements into focus. But as we may be biased with their hackneyed mention in the above chapters the early "Black" and "Non-Black" plays may be compared and contrasted from the point of "theatricalism", "character-delineation", "stage-design", "use of music", "colour", and "language".

The Red Devil Battery sign (1975) can draw comparison with Sweet Bird of Youth (1951) on the points of political skulduggery. Sweet Bird of Yough, of course, had a political setting, with a local colour while in The Red Devil Battery Sign, the political stigmata shifted from local background to a more expansive arena, Red Devil Battery being a right-wing group which plotted in toppling off the government and catapult

to the helm of affairs. The characters, in both the plays, share some points of similarities. The husband of Woman Downtown, “the big business mogul”, leader of Red Devil Battery group had taken to “violence”, “cruelty” and hesitated in the least, to slither down the tortuous lane of corruption.

Boss Finley, who bragged of “power” hardly stayed back in wielding his command in the blind alleys of corruption. He compelled her daughter, Heavenly, to stay immured and forced Chance Wayne to get castrated. In The Red Devil Battery Sign (1975) the Woman Downtown had been kept a prisoner in the Yellow Rose Hotel, as her husband suspected her to broach all his heinous motives to a Congressional Committee. Forced confinement had turned to be their lot.

Heavenly Finley had been severely tortured by Boss Finley; Woman Downtown had to bear her husband’s oppression. The only difference between Heavenly Finley and Woman Downtown was that, the latter could ignore her husband’s tight vigil and went off to stand beside King Del Rey, when he needed her beside him. A phone call from King shook Woman Downtown deeply, she could smell peril in his voice :

“Woman Downtown : I can hear you breathing.

King : Yeh, still breathing. I started to come downtown, but only got to the drugstore on the corner.

Woman Downtown (controlled) : That’s all right, I’ll come there in a cab. Barman call me a cab quick. See I’ve called a cab. Now give me the address. *I will come and get you. (italics mine)*

(The Red Devil Battery Sign Act III, Scene III)

On the contrary, in Sweet Bird of Youth, Heavenly Finley dared not flout the command of Boss Finley. She was not allowed to meet Chance Wayne. Once she was angry and protested, but, all her ire lost its edge when Boss Finley whimpered her to

silence. She could not go to meet Chance Wayne. She dared not defy her father's order.

Woman Downtown, sometimes seemed to echo the psychological nuances as seen in Alexandra Del Lago, alias Princess Kosmonopolis of Sweet Bird of Youth. Alexandra wanted to bask in the warmth of youth with the aid of Chance Wayne. "He represents the seamy side of the American dream. He means to take whatever he can snatch, he is the perpetual adolescent steeped in *gaudy illusions* of success and grandeur."²¹ (*italics mine*).

Chance Wayne had come to alleviate the chill of "loneliness" that made Heavenly shiver. Chance Wayne had no attraction for Lady at all. Alexandra del Lago too accepted the reality after uttering a few words, "Is Heavenly why we stopped here?... So I'm being used, why not?... Even a dead race horse is used to make a glue". (Sweet Bird of Youth, Act I, Scene II) But "sick envy" irked her, and made her sling one more comment on Heavenly, "Is she pretty?" On the contrary, Woman Downtown, in The Red Devil Battery Sign was madly in love with King Del Rey despite his family - wife Perla, daughter Nina. Surprisingly enough, King responded to her love and had been faithful to her. Neither of them could dream of exploiting the other, just for the sake of using the other to serve one's need. Woman Downtown declared brazenfacedly:

"Woman Downtown : Do you remember the night I first saw you ? My life began that night and going to *end* this one. Can you hear me, King? All I hear is your breath We have to go but, we have to go *together*."

(Act III, Scene II) (*italics mine*)

Both Chance Wayne (Sweet Bird of Youth) and King Del Rey (The Red Devil Battery Sign) were nursing ailment in them. The former had germs of venereal disease and the latter toted a brain tumour that might cause end to his life, at any moment. But the difference in their solicitousness for the women they cared, had been quite remarkable. In Sweet Bird of Youth Princess Kosmonopolis was anxious to see Chance

Wayne, after his departure to meet Heavenly Finley. Alexandra rushed to see Chance Wayne and proffered help in distress, though her “love” was not equally reciprocated. In Act II, Scene II, the dialogue between Princess and Chance Wayne brought to focus the indifference of Chance towards Princess :

“ Princess : There’s no one but me to hold you back from destruction in this place.

Chance : I don’t want to be held

Princess : *Don’t leave me*. If you do, I’ll turn into the monster again - I’ll be the first lady of the Beanstalk country.

Chance : Go back to the room.

Princess : I’m going nowhere *alone*. I can’t”(italics mine)

(Sweet Bird of Youth, Act II, Scene II)

But even after such fervid entreaties, Chance called a “wheel chair” for her and forced her to hold the “anonymous arms,” of the “Bellboy” and exist.

In The Red Devil Battery Sign, Woman Downtown hurriedly came to King’s help when he was in dire need of it, and King too saved Woman Downtown from the clutch of a stymied situation, even at the cost of his life. The Drummer, a hired assassin whom the Red Devil Battery Wing appointed, was paid handsomely for killing Woman Downtown. He followed her but lastly his efforts proved fruitless, as King rushed to her rescue. When the Drummer’s satanic attitude was revealed, King Del Rey could not help but kill him. When Woman Downtown accused the Drummer of tiptoeing close behind and molesting her, King Del Rey aimed his revolver at the Drummer and did not hesitate to kill him. Both of them responded to each other’s love.

The cry of “loneliness”, “search for togetherness”, “getting love and its

true reciprocation” seemed to be the need of the hour for both *Woman Downtown* and *Alexandra del Lago*. Sometimes we hear the voice of *Blanche du Bois* of *A Street Car Named Desire*, being echoed by *Woman downtown* of *The Red Devil Battery Sign* as unhinged by King’s death, she moaned over “King’s dead body”. While Wolf tiptoed and lifted her to her feet “she offered no resistance”. Moreover, in his supporting hold, she recognised or sensed something rightly appointed as her final fate. She frantically entreated : “Yes, you take me Away”(Act III, Scene III). A stoical abandon betokened tragic close of the play, The audience was miffed to draw a hazy conclusion to the whole affair.

Again, the concluding part of *The Red Devil Battery Sign* reminds us of *Suddenly Last Summer*. The furious gang of the urchins and their hilarious bustle and maddening action in the former play have resemblance to the description of the cannibals in *Suddenly Last Summer*.

In both the plays, *The Red Devil Battery Sign* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, the paucity of the use of light, music and other novel stage-designs leave them impeccable, so far as the question of theatricality is concerned. So far as dramatic language is considered, *Sweet Bird of Youth* is much richer in complete sentences, poetical exuberance than *The Red Devil Battery Sign*. In the former part of Williams’s career the poetic lyricism reigned supreme, while the latter half is predominated by prosaic taciturnity.

The Glass Menagerie (1945) can be compared and contrasted with *The Two Character Play* (1975) a late play. Both Tom and Laura of *The Glass Menagerie* and Felice and Clare of *The Two Character Play* are victims of execrable loneliness. Felice and Clare are moral and emotional supports of each other, and like Tom and Laura, they have no Amanda to share their feelings, cry for their failings. “Their present imprisonment in the darkened theatre echoes their reclusive childhood, when they were entombed in a dark house, surrounded by sunflowers.”²² They have a “solitary, confined existence”.

their “bohemian” father shot their “strait-laced” mother, and then committed suicide. Thereafter, they stayed “trapped in a house”. Laura, Tom and Amanda were as solitary as Felice and Clare remained estranged from the world outside. Laura was thrown in dumps by Jim’s evening visit. Felice and Clare were driven to the edge of “neurosis” by the absence of their parents. They felt dejected, lonely. Jim O’Connor, the gentleman - caller left bidding adieu to Laura while shattering Amanda’s hopes. Laura tried to find solace in the lap of her mother. Perhaps, Laura’s neurosis took a sharp bend towards “neurotic need for love” as opined Dr. Karen Horney in her Neurotic Personality of our Time. (New York, 1935). Towards the end of the play, The Glass Menagerie, “we see as through sound-proof glass, that Amanda appears to be making a comforting speech to Laura, who is huddled upon the sofa.”

But, in The Two Character Play, inextricable web of loneliness and pangs of alienation drive Felice and Clare berserk and their neural failure tends to drive them to death. But a “come back penchant to life” and “inordinate desire to live the life” help them cling to each other, like Beckett’s Hamm and Clov in Endgame. The end of the play is full of theatrical stunts and wonders, though embedded in realism. Their conversation here seems to be starting and, imbued with “optimistic view of existence” at the same time:

“ (She quickly relieves the revolver from beneath the sofa cushion, and resolutely aims it at Felice, holding the revolver at arm’s length. There is a pause).

Felice (harshly) : Do it while you still can!

Clare (crying out) : I can’t!

(She turns convulsively away from him, dropping the revolver as if it had scorched her hand. As it crashes to the floor, Felice turns from the window,

his motion as convulsive as hers. Their figures are now almost entirely lost in dark but light touches their face).

”
 “Can you ?” (The Two Character Play, Act II)

Of course, they failed to succumb to the clasp of the last resort “Death”. Thus, the “hindrance towards living life” is nothing but the “centrifugal force” component which is automatically nullified by the equal and opposite “centripetal force” component, i.e. a “come-back attitude to life.” Amidst “confusion of existence”, “despair” “lack of faith”, “a search for hope” is noticed in Amanda’s words to Tom - “I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent, why then, you’ll be free to go wherever you please.” (The Glass Menagerie)

But, the pain of loneliness grips everyone of Williams’s The Glass Menagerie and The Two Character Play.

Williams’s The Glass Menagerie is a play about a family of three people who are trapped in a room. The play is set in St. Louis, Missouri, in the early 1940s. The characters are Amanda, Tom, and Laura. Amanda is a former socialite who is now a housewife. Tom is a young man who is bored with his job and wants to escape. Laura is a young woman who is physically disabled and is very shy. The play is a tragedy that ends with the death of Laura and Tom’s departure.

In The Glass Menagerie, an early play, the language is quite poetic, the playwright is here an artist in words. As we see, Amanda reminiscing her brilliant days of youth or Tom aspiring after a journey to the lunar realm, we are carried away by the rhetoric.

But the language of The Two Character Play is disjointed, monosyllabic, insipid and conversation among the characters is mostly edging towards silence (non-sequitur). We detect the same in a dialogue of Felice and Clare :

“Felice : Was that a sign of clearance ?

Clare : It was a sign of ability to go on with....

Felice : Customary habits.

Clare : An appearance of

(The Two Character Play Act II)

Williams might have followed “Nietzsche’s attitude to language, which is intimately bound up with what philosophers call his ‘perspectivism’. Perspectivism means here that for Nietzsche all perception is relative, because it takes in only the surface of things, their appearance, their apparent meaning. This is not because he thought like Plato, that things were pale representatives or copies of remote ideal things, he is simply saying that what we see and understand is not all there is to see and to understand. But this way of seeing is by definition limited, and therefore we have to ‘recognize untruth as a condition of life.’²³ And this is one of the reasons why Nietzsche thinks that words are not to be trusted. They can only describe what little of the world we can understand”.²⁴

From the point of theatricalism, too, there is a remarkable similarity in technique. In The Glass Menagerie, the “signifier” is the glow of light that centres upon the depressed countenance of Laura. While in The Two Character Play, the light is focussed upon Felice’s and Clare’s faces, leaving their bodies amidst darkness. The “signified”, here, are the “black” elements - “Confusion of existence” and “solitariness”.

Vieux Carre^l (1978) and The Glass Menagerie (1945) are both memory plays. But the late play lacks in dramatic conflict, “sense of insecurity” dampens the spirit of Laura Wingfield, Amanda Wingfield, and this sense irks Tom to escape the limits of this worldly barrier. A “sense of security” puffs up the Writer in the form of a vision, a vision of his grandmother, the “angel” keeps on visiting the “Writer” in moments of crisis or despair, “and when he no longer sees her”.

Even Williams works up a sense of the characters' confinement, - their confinements within their room as well as their entrapment of each other-is emphatically conveyed. Even then, a proffer of help strengthen their ties, as we see in Vieux Carre:

“ Tye : Now, Babe.

Jane : If you approach the bed -

Tye : Just want to comfort you, honey. Can't we just rest together ? Can't we ? Rest and comfort each other ?”

(Vieux Carre Part Two, Scene Nine)

In The Two Character Play, the “sense of confinement” annoys Clare who pines to “go out” :

“ Clare : I want to go out! Out, out, human outcry, I want to go out !

Felice comes by her side, she feels assured of a company, “Not alone!” she declared.

In The Glass Menagerie, Tom is aware of Laura and is reminded of the future. And in Vieux Carre, Mrs. Wire points out : “Be careful of future. Its long ways for the young. Some makes it and others get lost”. Writer here is more confident with a pat reply - “I know” (Vieux Carre, Part II, Scene XII). The meaning of existence is not romanticized or hazed with illusion like Tom's, but, clear and realistic. The positive note is *white*, not *black* . (italics mine)

“The play (Vieux Carre) is a monument to his (Writer's) survival and, he seems to have avoided being haunted by his youthful opacity, unlike Tom in The Glass Menagerie whose pain we feel, understand and identify with Vieux Carre is not redemptive in its thrust, for it seems to fix human, as doomed creatures and belies the existence of compassion as an element of human nature.”²⁵ In style too, it foreshadows the ghost

technique of Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980).

The late play In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969-70) may find its counterpart in the early play Suddenly Last Summer. In both the plays “the art and the artists are totally destructive.”²⁶ Mark in In the Bar of A Tokyo Hotel has been so engrossed in his canvas and creation that he cannot wrench himself from it. Sebastian Venable in Suddenly Last Summer can hardly extricate himself from the realm of poems and concentrate upon the mundane matters. In both the plays, the women are shook from within after the protagonists’s unusual demise.

Miriam in In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel promised to disown Mark, who yielded to the canvas and his art. She professed independence. But after the decease of Mark, she got transformed altogether and whimpered at the end of the play, “I have no plans. I have nowhere to go”. Even “with abrupt violence, she wrenches the bracelets from her arms and flings them to her feet”. (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel). Catharine Holly, in Suddenly Last Summer, after narrating the story of her cousin-poet Sebastian’s mysterious death to Doctor Cuckrowitz and Sebastian’s mother Mrs. Venable, had become maniac depressive. She was the sole witness to the brutal end to Sebastian’s life, but, she could not relate the fact to anyone. The traumatic experience as she expressed was : -

“When we got back to where my cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little black sparrows, he - he was lying naked as they had been naked against a white wall, and this you won’t believe, nobody has believed it, nobody could believe it, nobody, nobody on earth could possibly believe it, and I don’t blame them! *The had devoured parts of him*” (Suddenly Last Summer, Scene IV). (italics mine)

George Niesen brilliantly indicates the watershed : “It is the victory of art over man, however, that separates the play In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel from the early ones and tends to align it with the late plays. Art for Mark becomes a virtual impossibility, and while Sebastian’s death is a rather *clear statement*, Mark’s death

results from his *inability to make a statement*.²⁴ (italics mine)

In The Bar of a Tokyo Hotel can also invite comparison with another early one-act play, "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix" (1941). Both are dramatic renditions of Williams's view on "a continuing preoccupation with the relationship and interdependence of life and art".²⁵ In I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix, the artist Lawrence while facing the close of his life in the Alpes Maritimes, had both Frieda his wife and Bertha (his spiritual companion) beside him. He drew sustenance from both "Bertha's cool understanding and Frieda's physical fire". (I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix) "In the end", he cried out, "there is going to be light - *Light, Light! Great light! - Great, blinding, universal light!* And I - I'm the *prophet* of it!" (I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix) (italics mine) Later, he toddled to the window, clutched his mouth and died.

In the late play, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel, Williams presented another portrait of a dying artist. Fatigued by his unstinting effort to achieve a breakthrough in his style of painting and being sure that his wife had broken with him, "Mark Conley gave up the struggle and died in the artificial light of an Americanized Cocktail bar in a still exotic land." (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel) Lawrence tried to captivate the world by his *art*, Mark did actually hold on to the *art-object* itself. He entered the bar with his clothes blotched with paint, and his wife, Miriam discovered him once "Crawling naked over a huge nailed-down canvas". His art failed to reflect life any more, it served as a mere substitute for it :

"I've understood the intimacy that should, that has to exist between the painter and the - I ! It! Now it turned to me or I *I turned to it, no division between us* at all any more! The oneness.. the...!"

In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel) (italics mine)

The reactions of the artists' wives to the demise of their husbands are

remarkable. In I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix, Frieda, at least, rushed to the breathless body of Lawrence solicitously. But Miriam being a woman of a late play, does not bother to cast a glance at the corpse of Mark. The words they utter at their husbands' death show remarkable difference between the wife of the early play (Frieda Lawrence) and that of the late one (Miriam Conley).

In I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix, Frieda at least, felt alarmed, when Lawrence was about to breathe his last :-

" Frieda : Lawrence.

Bertha (terrified) : What is it ?

Frieda : The bleeding." (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel).

Frieda allowed Lawrence to pass away peacefully and desisted Bertha from going near him. She kept Lawrence's last appeal :

" Lawrence : Don't Touch me, you woman. *I want to do it alone (italics mine)* - Don't move till it's finished [Gradually as though forced down to the earth by invisible arms, he begins to collapse - his hands clutch onto the curtains - his knees collapse].

Bertha (struggling fiercely with Frieda) : Let me go, let me go, I want to go to him !

Frieda : Not yet, not yet - one moment! [His fingers let go. He slides to the floor. *He is lifeless*] (italics mine)

Frieda : (releasing the other woman) : Now - go to him

It's finished." (Last scene, I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix)

Mark seems to echo Lawrence of the early play while approaching "Death".

When Leonard touches his weak shoulder, he squeaks : “Don’t *touch* me - I can’t stand to be *touched*”. (*italics mine*) (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel)

But, Miriam of the late play (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel) had not been compassionate to her husband, Miriam’s behaviour might uphold a brilliant contrast to Frieda’s. Mark was eloquent over his last achievement and shouted at the top of his voice, “*I think I’ve done a painting ! I never did more than think I’d done so, you see Nobody even gave me a magnum or a quart or a baby’s bottle of confidence*” (*italics mine*).

He staggered and fell and collapsed. When the barman dragged the lifeless body of Mark, we are taken aback to hear Miriam saying :

“Miriam : Released ?

Leonard : Yes, he’s released from

Miriam : *I meant that I’m released* (*italics mine*).”

(In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel)

Histrionic marvels are almost absent in all the three plays mentioned above - Suddenly Last Summer, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix. The language of late plays is rationally disjointed, incomplete, sometimes drab. Backettian stints add to the de’cor of the dialogue of the late play like In the Bar of a TokoyoHotel, the incomplete sentences sometimes affect the continuity of the play. It appears to screech to a halt and, accelerate again. The dialogue between Mark and Miriam here, is an apropos :

“Mark (Slowly) : I’ve always approached my work, with a feeling of frightened timidity because the possibilities are -

Miriam : You are making an effort to explain a mystery that I.

Mark : The possibilities of a canvas that presents itself for.

Miriam : The assault of a madman. You're destroying.

Mark : I suppose I might say, it's.

Miriam : Crock

Mark : Adventure...

Mark : I'll

Miriam : You'll stay here with your work. (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel).

In the late plays, theatrical effects are conjured up more by acoustics than by lighting or any other histrionic devices e.g. gesticulations, laughter, buzz of wind etc. When Mark is about to breathe his last, the stage-direction runs : "His voice dies out, the wind chimes are heard." (In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel). Again when his corpse is carried out of the bar, the dramatist directs in parentheses : "They carry the body of Mark out of the bar, Miriam appears to see and feel nothing. Again, wind chimes are heard", to interrupt the conversation between Leonard and Miriam just after Mark Conley's demise. "Tinkling Chimes" too "are heard", while Leonard and Miriam are busy in conversing with each other.

In the early play, as in Suddenly Last Summer the use of lighting, music, colour is not profuse, not even sparse. In the opening scene, while giving an elaborate stage direction, Williams cannot lose sight of colour and sounds. "The colors of this jungle-garden are violent, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature"....(Suddenly Last Summer)

The jungle tumult continues a few moments after the curtain rises, then

subsides into relative quiet, which is occasionally broken by a new outburst. During the conversation between Doctor Cuckrowitz and Mrs Venable, “we hear faint music”, a stage-direction snippet being “The Encantadas music then fades in again, briefly at a lower level, a whisper.”(Suddenly Last Summer). Uses of “lyric music”, “jungle music”, “birds’ warble”, “cymbals’ percussion” are in abundance. Ingenuous use of light adds a dimension to the play, when Catharine Holly tends to narrate the incident of Sebastian’s brutal murder, to Doctor Cuckrowitz :

“ Doctor : Yes, and what did you do there ? (He still stands beside Mrs. Venable and the light gradually changes as the girl gets deeper into her story : the light concentrates on Catharine, the other figures sink into shadow).

Did anything happen there that disturbed you about it ? ”

(Suddenly Last Summer, Scene Four)

Language, too, is not disjointed, sentences are rarely incomplete and quite comprehensible.

An early play A Street Car Named Desire and a late play Kingdom of Earth are now in focus to see both the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Perhaps, this idea is supported by a comment. Much of the criticism - theatrical as well as textual has labelled Kingdom of Earth as a parody of Williams’s earlier work, especially A Street Car Named Desire. For Judith J. Thompson Kingdom of Earth is a “comic revision of A Street Car’s predominant tragic mode.”²⁴ The lines of comparison and contrast between these two plays have already been inculcated by Judith J. Thompson, as she says, “The play’s three characters - the vulgar, phallic Chicken, the disillusioned but resilient Myrtle (who prides herself on having always “kept my haid above water.”³⁰) and Lot the weak aspirant to Kingdom of Heaven are clearly the comic versions of A Street Car’s Stanley, Stella and Blanche respectively. Unlike Blanche, Lot is an essentially unsympathetic character-selfish, sexless and fully as depraved in his own way as Chicken Dressed in his mother’s gaudy white dress and a picture hat ... trimmed

with faded flowers, the transvestite Lot parodies Blanche du Bois. To Chicken, as to Stanley, ‘There’s nothing in the world, in the whole kingdom of earth, that can compare with one thing and that one thing is what’s able to happen between a man and a woman’ Finally, Myrtle, like Stella, descends to corruption in order to survive, a descent which is at the same time a literal ascent (really a symbolic ascent) to life.’³¹

The points where these observations can be refuted are : Chicken is a cruel folly of Stanley Kowalski, though he is more diplomatic than Stanley. Stanley rapes Blanche, shatters all hopes of her wedlock with Mitch, and lastly accusing her of insanity, dumps her into a lunatic asylum. But, Chicken nullifies all traces of Lot’s existence, sanches Myrtle from his possession, the last straw Lot can catch hold of and swindles him. He broaches a natty solution to the problem of flood-rise to Myrtle. Myrtle being the counterpart of Stella, is a bit fool-hardy to reach the solution of getting along with Chicken even at the expense of Lot’s life. Stella, can not support Stanley wholeheartedly as her sister Blanche is being oppressed and cornered. Again, she has no other way but to stay with Stanley as it has been a year-long association, which no woman dares break off. She is a rung higher than Myrtle, where her feeble voice of alarm has rent the air :

“ Stella: Oh my god, Eunice help me : Don’t let them do that to her don’t let them hurt her ! Oh God, Oh please God, don’t hurt her! What are they doing to her ? What are they doing”?

(Scene Eleven, A Street Car Named Desire).

But the pitch of her voice is much drowned under the dire need for “security” when Myrtle is heard mumbling after Lot’s decease :-

“What I’m doin’, I don’t know, what I’m doin’ I” (Kingdom of Earth) Was it a matter of feeble protest or qualms of conscience ? Again, she quips in “Lot is?” Chicken’s pat reply is : “Isn’t”. Myrtle lacks in the courage to finish her sentence - “God

have mercy on my ...” (Kingdom of Earth).

In consideration of the theatrical techniques, and poetic language A Street Car named Desire (1947) ranks higher than Kingdom of Earth (1968). The use of music, other sounds and colour in A Street Car is a whopping triumph over the late play. As the play opens, “The Blue Piano” lilts and expresses the spirit of the life which went on there. The “rhumba music”, “honky-tonk music”, “paper-doll”, “Polka music”, “Varsouviana” have significance of their own, and when played in appropriate places they add extra meaning to the play itself. The riot of colours in different scenes being apt to the demand of the situation, elevates the play to a higher plane. Of course, the colours have unusual association with Stanley Kowalski. “Red” has a queer purport in the play. In Scene Two, Blanche comes out of the bathroom in a “red” satin robe and talks to Stanley gaily.

In Scene Three Mitch to whom Blanche is inclined puts on a red-and-white chequered shirt. But this red-colour, so far has proved to be the emblem of “love” and “harmony”. Tragic radiance in this play turns lurid, when Stanley pounces upon Blanche and rapes her in brilliant hued silk pyjamas. The light works wonder in the rape-scene (Scene X), when Stanley approaches the bedroom, and “Blanche got blanchéd in fear.” (A Street Car Named Desire) The stage direction given here is : “Lurid reflections appear on the walls around Blanche. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form”. Again, as she trudges to the phone and asks the operator to help her contact Shep Huntleigh, a man she waits for, the lighting makes audience veer their attention to “the shadows and lurid reflections” moving “sinuously as flames along the wall spaces”. “Blue Piano”, the bass and treble of the music are, no doubt, suggestive. Cries and noises of the jungle are symbolic. “Use of light” impresses the connoisseur when Blanche enters Stella’s ménage walking close at her heels. There stage-design as mentioned goes : “She gets up and opens the downstairs door. A light goes on behind the blind, turning it light-blue. Blanche slowly follows her into the downstairs flat. The surrounding areas dim out as

the interior is lighted.” (A Street Car Named Desire) Even Blanche talks in a high-flown poetic language in Scene Four where she talks to Stella about her husband, Stanley :

“ Blanche : Yes, something apelike about him, like one of the pictures I’ve seen in - anthropological studies ! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is - Stanley Kowalski - survivor of the stone age ! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle ! And you - you here waiting for him !” (Scene Four, A Street Car Named Desire).

But Kingdom of Earth runs short of innovative use of light, colour, music, etc. Even the language smacks of hackneyed vocabulary, with no touch of poeticity. Chicken, Myrtle, Lot all have down-to-earth attitude towards life. Even when Lot reminisces on her mother’s memories, he hardly sounds poetic :

“ Lot : The Chandelier is crystal, but, the pendants are dusty, they’ve got to be all taken down, one by one dipped in hot, soapy water. Then rinsed in a bowl of clear water, then dried off with soft tissue paper and hung back up.”
(Act I, Scene I, Kingdom of Earth)

Myrtle seems to have only one mission in life i.e. “to find security” and that goal leads her to put up with all odds. Even, after the demise of Lot, she feels secure with sinister Chicken. She says - “I pray for *protection* and right now I feel like that prayer is going to be answered”.
(Act II, Scene III, Kingdom of Earth)

The plays for reconsideration are Something Unspoken (1953) and A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur (1978). The relationship between two ladies in respective plays is our immediate concern. In Something Unspoken Grace Lancaster is a woman of forty or forty-five, nearly fifteen years younger than Miss Cornelia Scott, her employer. Grace carries out all her orders sincerely, though “there is between the two women a mysterious tension, an atmosphere of something unspoken.” (Something Unspoken) . In A Lovely

Sunday for Creve Coeur too, we get a pair of ladies sharing an apartment - Dorothea, a marginally youthful but attractive woman and, Miss Bodenheifer (Bodey) an early middle-aged woman. They have compassion and understanding for each other.

In the early play, Something Unspoken Miss Cornelia Scott is avid to know the result of the election-meeting of "Confederate Daughters" at Mrs. Horton Reid's residence. She prefers to remain aloof by being absent from the hustings. Her secretary, Miss Grace Lancaster, is receiving the phone-calls on her behalf, and Cornelia likes to talk to Miss Esmeralda Hawkins, who has gone to the election-meeting.

While Cornelia's nerves rack to the point of snapping, Miss Grace tries to comfort her, with a certain twitch in every word, she utters - Miss Cornelia too can smell rat in the election-meeting, she anticipates some sneaky movements going on against her, in the club. She tries to build forces to oppose it. "Grace retorts: 'Your forces?' and, her lips twitched slightly as if she had an hysterical impulse to smile." (Something Unspoken). Cornelia feels that a strain of jealousy or of inferiority complex syndrome builds walls between her and Grace Lancaster. Even when, Cornelia wants to share some intimate moments with her, her efforts fail her. Grace admits to her utter dismay, that, Cornelia's possession of wisdom wealth and fortune has placed her superior to herself. So, she prefers "silence" to communication. After a long wait, Mrs. Hornsby's name is announced as the elected "Regent" in lieu of Miss Scott. As Miss Scott decides to resign from the amoral association, the reaction of Grace is worth noticing :

"Grace leaves the table ... just at the edge of the lighted area, she turns to glance Cornelia's rigid shoulders and a slight, equivocal smile appears momentarily on her face, not quite malicious, but not really sympathetic. Then she crosses out of the light. A moment later her voice comes from the outer dark.

Grace : What lovely roses ! One for every year."

(Something Unspoken)

Grace seems to be grateful to the “beautiful roses”, for it stands as a symbol of shattered dreams of her proud mistress.

On the other hand, in A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur, the relationship between Miss Bodey and Miss Dorothea is laudable. Unlike Grace Lancaster, Miss Bodenheifer is less sentimental, quite adapted to the situation, and, she has no such temperamental tantrums which Grace(Something Unspoken) always had. When Bodey comes to know that Dorothea has a crush on T. Ralph Ellis, the lewd principal of Blewett School, she does not hesitate to warn Dotty (Dorothea). Moreover, she scissors off the newspaper clipping where Ellis’s wedding news is emblazoned. Thus, she proves to be a real friend to Dotty.

Even, Bodey does not force Dorothea to get along with her brother “Buddy” against her will. But, on a lovely Sunday when Buddy and she plan for a picnic, everything goes haywire on Helena’s coming with an overture to Dorothea for sharing another apartment with her :

“ Dorothea : Bodey, you know I’m sorry to disappoint your plans for Creve Coeur picnic, but you must realise..... I can’t allow this well-meant design of yours to get me involved with your brother to go any further.

Bodey : Well, I did fry up three chickens and I boiled a dozen eggs, but well that’s....

But I really was hoping....

expecting (Tears appear in Bodey’s large childlike eyes).”

(A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur Scene II)

However, when truth dawns upon Dorothea and she reads the “crumpled paper”, collecting it from the waste-basket, announcing the engagement of Mrs. Constance

Finley to Mr. T. Ralph Ellis, she shrugs off her conceit, turns down Helena's request to shift to Westmoreland apartment and decides to join Bodey and her brother Buddy, on picnic. The last scene of the play evinces a "come-back attitude to life," an "acceptance of reality". She picks up the phone and says,

"Dorothea : Creve Coeur car-line station ? Look , on the platform in a few minutes will be a plumpish little woman with a big artificial flower over one ear and a stoutish man with her, probably with a cigar. I have to get an important message to them. Tell them that Dotty called and has decided to go to Creve Coeur, with them after all so will they please wait. [..... she begins to sob as she hangs up the phone]"

(Scene Two, A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur)

Here unlike Cornelia of Something Unspoken, Dorothea herself prefers a pledge of "meaningful bondage" to Bodey without waiting for her turn to be compassionate to her. Of course, the underlying tension of envy and rancour that sours Cornelia - Grace relationship in Something Unspoken is totally absent in Dorothea - Bodey nexus. In both the plays, the language, stage design, use of music, light, colour are so usual and common that they need no special mention.

However, Judith J. Thompson brings forth a comparison between A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur and A Street Car Named Desire. "The ethereal Dorothea resembles another comic version or caricature of Blanche du Bois, while Bodey, like Stella, serves as her earthly antithesis. Accordingly, Blanche's romantic tragedy approaches parody as retold by Dorothea said to suffer from a "Southern Belle" complex. Dorothea like Blanche, insists that, 'without romance in my life, I could no more live than I could without breath'."²

Talk to me like the rain and let me listen is a short play written in 1946-1947, the setting being mid-town Manhattan. It bears some points of similarities and

dissimilarities with a late play Period of Adjustment (1961). The early play seems to be a piece of poem where a man goes out on work and gets time to talk to the woman on a Sunday. When asked by the man, "What have you been thinking in silence, while I've been passed around like a dirty postcard in this city? Tell me, talk to me! Talk to me like the rain and I will lie here and listen", the woman replies, "I want to go away". The man asks: "How?" "Alone!" woman retorts. (Talk to me like the rain and let me listen)

The woman feels pestered by the feeling of loneliness, wants to break all ties, all social bondages and have resort to a hotel where she'll turn a blind eye to the passage of time. At the same time, she'll watch her hair growing grey to hoary, her weight slumping down, and other changes time might cause to her. The man calls her but she being in a brown study goes on muttering - "I want to go away! I want to go away!" Lastly, her ire ends in responding to his call to bed. She seems to be Zelda Fitzgerald (Clothes for a Summer Hotel), Serafina (The Rose Tattoo), Frieda Lawrence (I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix) all rolled into one. She, of course, makes a positive and timely return from the horizon, she scaled so high.

In Period of Adjustment (1961) Isabel is left in Ralph Bates's apartment by her newly wedded husband George Haverstick. She waits for him to turn back. But Ralph had a squabble with her wife, Dorothea, who went off in a huff. Unlike "Woman" of the early play Talk to me like the Rain and let me listen, Dorothea fails to ease off her relation with her husband, until Isabel their friend intervenes. But, "Woman" has to shun her poetic dream of "going away" and "stay back" in the loving arms of her husband. Dorothea, too, comes back to Ralph bidding a farewell to her parents. Like "Woman" of the early play, Talk to me like the rain and let me listen, she in a refined tone says: "All right I sent them home, much against their (parents) objection. I just slammed the car-door on them". Just a few moments back, Isabel makes Ralph understand;

" Ralph : She came back for the fur coats.

Isabel : I think *she came back for you.*

Ralph : She *walked out on me* this morning, because I had liberated myself from a slave's situation ! and she took the kid with her.

Isabel : You're just going through a *period of adjustment*?.... (italics mine)

(Act III, Period of Adjustment)

Thus, strengthening the connubial bondage is the aim of both the plays. The early play is much poetic in thought and language, the late one consists of dialogue of day-to-day existence, somewhat jejune, lacking in charm, poetic touch or any high-flown aura.

This property is condemned (1947) is an early play, that can bring "mendacity" to be the measure for comparison with Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Maggie in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof announces herself "pregnant". But it is a whopping lie. No doubt, it is the demand of the time. This property is condemned, too, displays a lie that is innocent. When Alva, the only sister of Willie is about to breathe her last, she wants to get her lovers around her.

Alva lastly, dies of lung infection. Willie's Mama eloped with a brakeman. Her father took to drinking. The family dwindled to shambles. Alva's lovers left her, to quote Willie in verbatim ... "Like rats from a sinking ship! That's how she used to describe it. O, it - wasn't like death in the movies". (This Property is Condemned). But Willie had to boost her drooping spirits up by declaring their (lovers') presence. He says - "I used to *lie* to her". Tragically enough, she was beware of his "mendacity". No doubt, that is a healthy way to keep a dying person happy and alive. In Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, Willie Loman used to lie nonchalantly. But, that was not harmless, rather that inflicted harm upon his sons, and ruined himself altogether.

In gamut, the comparison of the early with the late plays is an attempt to bring the points where they coincide with each other or deflect from each other. "Come back attitude of life", "acceptance of reality", "voice of protest of women," "longing for togetherness" are non-black elements which dominate the late (Non-black) plays. These sterling qualities were not much pronounced in early (Black) plays. "Sex", "violence," "cannibalism", "mendacity" blur our vision. Anyway, Williams's The Interior of the Pocket is the poem in apropos, to draw in support of "Non-Black" plays :

"The very small animals nudge one another at night,

As though to whisper we're close!

There is still no danger."

It's a Williamsian oracle to keep us fearless in a peril - ridden society where we are prone to all "Black" snares. He stresses 'joie de vivre' in an otherwise hollow ambience. No doubt, "Janus-faced" Williams makes us acquainted with both the "Black" and the " Non-Black" faces of the world.

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