

Chapter I

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS : A JOURNEY

"I feel this chapter ought to begin with a serious comment on the meaning of life, because sooner or later, a person's obliged to face it " - Flora Goforth in The Milk Train doesn't Stop Here Anymore

Since the life of Tennessee Williams is a much - explored area, in this chapter my aim is to highlight three important areas of the playwright's development -

- (a) his life in connection with its influence on the plays.
- (b) the literary influences on the dramatist and
- (c) the South and its role in shaping his plays.

(a) LIFE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PLAYS

Williams's life of course, was much akin to great artists who could draw inspiration from the life they lived, the life which was not^a run-of-the-mill one. From the very beginning of his life, Williams saw a strained relation between his parents. His mother, Edwina Dakin Williams was a puritan, while his father Cornelius Coffin Williams was a cavalier to the core. But Tennessee Williams preferred to pose as a "rebellious puritan" to the contemporaries, as well as to the posterity. The traits of his character which were later reflected in various protagonists of his plays, found roots in the days which might have passed into oblivion, if they were not recovered from the sepia - coloured Memoirs.

His father, Cornelius Coffin Williams had worked for the Telephone Company in Memphis. There he met his mother, Edwina Dakin, a minister's daughter, who won reputation by singing for an amateur production of light opera. Though Williams

bore hatred towards his father, the latter served as an original for Tom's father, in The Glass Menagerie as well as modelled for Big Daddy of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and an incarnation of corruption and obstinacy in Boss Finley of Sweet Bird of Youth.

Williams had his aptitude for horror manifested quite early in his life. When his father abandoned his mother she had to move back to her own family, in Columbus rectory. Since then, the town of Columbus, Mississippi, played a significant role in Williams's life. He and his favourite sister, Rose, grew up there and in his later life, he recalled the memory of the township as a dark wide spacious land that one can breathe in. He himself was born there on 26th March, 1911.

Tennessee Williams in an interview confessed that he owed his "aggressive and violent" nature to paternal ancestry. According to the note recorded by Robert Rice, Williams's creative urge had its maiden appearance at a mountain resort, near Knoxville, Tennessee, where the family used to spend some time during each summer, "to escape the malaria country, during its hottest season."¹ The resort - dwellers used to assemble round the fire and enjoy a story-telling mood. Those were especially ghost - stories. Tom was then a boy of three years, and he wore an innocent look while the golden curl adorned his small, sweet face. One day, while he was abruptly asked to tell a story, Williams courageously took the gauntlet thrown down upon him and told a story - one of the most horrendous, the company had ever been familiar with.

As from the childhood, the mother played a very important part in Williams's life, Williams developed an unconscious rapport with the mother-image. While going down memory-lane he would reminisce the day he had been admitted to a Kindergarten, in the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, "I was enchanted, I loved, all the ABC blocks, and the modelling clay. Then all of a sudden, I looked up and my mother wasn't there. I lay on the floor and kicked and screamed."² Fortunately, Mrs. Williams had not gone too far, she hurriedly came upstairs and he felt relieved. Of course, that was the first and the last day to the Kindergarten. His attachment to the mother had its influence

on his works as seen in Laura (The Glass Menagerie) being tended by her mother Amanda. In A Street Car named Desire, the mother-image had a vicarious representation in Stella, and when Hadrian in You Touched Me “grope for a mother’s breast”, Williams’s own relation to his mother became far more pronounced. Actually, his sympathy for his heroines was an indirect outcome of his sweet and indissoluble bonds of love with his mother. He could not put up with the⁴⁶ masculine crudities and his world became increasingly feminine”³

But Williams had to start to attend school anyway. By that time, his family shifted to Clarksdale, the “Blue Mountains” of The Glass Menagerie. There was confluence of two rivers - the Mississippi and the Sunflower, and, here itself Williams had brilliant memories when he was about to step into the palmy days of his youth.

Keeping the beauty of Clarksdale in mind, he prepared the setting of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Summer and Smoke. For Williams, the Mississippi delta itself had a great influence on his plays, in Nancy M. Tischler’s words, it was “perhaps a symbol of the artist’s longing for the ‘sweet bird’ of his youth in a country touched with the merciful blur of remembrance.”⁴ Along with the growing years, Williams began to develop an analytical psyche. The filthy milieu fraught with industrial and urban squalor, stirred in him an acrimony towards the urban civilization itself. Rather, he fell in love with the areas like Mississippi delta on Clarksdale.

From the dazzling days of tender childhood, man generally draws sustenance in his later days. Though, “Years bring the philosophic mind”⁵, the mature mind of the mature age cannot deny its roots in the pranks of childhood. But in Williams’s case, childhood was a sorrowful part of the memory, that had gone a long way in causing his ill-health. Hence, in poems, as well as in his plays, this obsession with health was reflected.

Once he was down with incurable and frequent bouts of diphtheria. During the illness, he grew a habit of reading books which his grandfather amassed. He could

even see the events happening in front of his eyes, if he just shut his eyelids tight. Often in his plays, he represented “heart-beat” by ticking-clocks and watches. Owing to this illness, he could neither go out nor play with other children. In his own words, he became “delicate and sissified.”⁶

In his Memoirs too, he said that his whole nature had undergone a miraculous change after the disease. Just after the spell of illness, his imagination had a firm grip on his mind and he strove to keep himself engaged with “quiet,lonely games”⁷ Being bored with the common games of solitaire, he improvised one of his own. Ever since his early days, he started reading Iliad and “began fighting the Trojan War with cards, one side black and the other red.”⁸

As ill-health stood in his way of enjoying the life outside, he came more and more under the influence of his mother. Thus, his fragility had been successfully mirrored in the characters like Laura, Mark and a few others. As Tom was always confined in the four walls of the room, he became more and more fond of his sister Rose. In Clarkesdale, they used to frolic their time away, Rose was his first “centre of affection”. Rose of course was also a part of tragedy in his life, because she failed to cross from childhood to adolescence.

Tom, while convalescing used to visit one of the young parishioners named Laura Young, with his grandfather. Williams recalled, “She was something cool and green in a sulphurous landscape. But there was a shadow upon her ... she loved me. I adored her. She lived in a white house, near an orchard and in an arch between two rooms were hung some pendants of glass, that were a thousand colours, ‘This is a prism’ she said. She lifted me and told me to shake them. When I did they made a delicate music.”⁹ Perhaps Williams’s penchant for creating music along with verbal magic traced back to these childhood days.

However, during the First World War Williams had to shift to St.Louis,

Missouri, where his father was transferred, on promotion. As their new dwelling was in a tenement where only lower middle-class people used to inhabit and as his peace was incessantly being interrupted by the school-children, he developed a hostile attitude towards life.

It was a perfectly ill-lighted apartment, in a wilderness of identical brick and concrete structure, with no grass and no trees nearer, than the park. All these impressions had sufficient bearing on his famous plays like The Glass Menagerie and A Street Car named Desire. An abrupt change in the life of little Tom and Rose, i.e. shift from Clarkesdale to the hellish St. Louis left Williams "fairly lonely and miserable." (Tischler). Perhaps a rebellious self was being conceived under the veneer of an apparently serene one. St. Louis, was the place, where he could see his father from very close quarters. He was stunned to see Cornelius Williams's keen business acumen, his addiction to liquor, his fondness for Poker-playing. Though these won Cornelius immense popularity outside, he remained unpopular at home, rather unloved by all. No doubt, Cornelius Williams at this phase, imprinted a picture on young Williams's mind, which later on served to be a model for Stanley Kowalski (of A Street Car Named Desire) or Val Xavier (of Orpheus Descending).

Laura of The Glass Menagerie had been modelled on Rose Williams. Just like Laura, Rose too possessed a fine collection of glass animals. Williams remembered : "These little glass animals came to represent in my memory all the softest emotions that belong to recollections of things past. They stood for all the small and tender things that relieve the austere pattern of life and make it endurable to the sensitive."¹⁰ It was Laura Young; the parishioner, who imbued his tender soul with "love, music and glass" while Rose completed it with her "glass possessions".

In 1919, just after the birth of Walter Dakin Williams, Mrs. Williams was bedridden with postwar influenza epidemic, and Tom was sent to Clarkesdale to stay with his grandfather, for about a year. Instead of growing any friendship with other boys

of his age, he became absorbed in reading Shakespeare and other authors of his choice. Once he recalled : "I loved Shakespeare, I did not appreciate the beauty of the language but I loved *Violence*. (italics mine) I was mad about Titus Andronicus"¹¹ Perhaps this affinity had sown seeds of violence in the mind of Williams.

Who knew what unexpected jolt awaited him at St. Louis ?! Just after one year, when he came back to the hideous St. Louis, Rose bade adieu to the world of sanity and had recourse to a world where only "Schizophrenic" miasma held her taut. It was such a severe blow to Williams that, he also began to withdraw from the illusory sphere and began to take refuge in writing. At the tender age of twelve when "reality" seemed to sink its talons on him, he sought comfort in reading books after books. "Lady of Shalott" of Alfred Tennyson had a lasting influence on him. Later on, he admitted - "she was floating down a river in a state of trance, and did something to me"¹². As the lady's World of romance was shattered so was Williams's and, perhaps this little incident had its great bearing on the major as well as the minor plays of Williams. As Williams's life in all aspects ended in a fiasco, he was afraid of expanding the horizon of known faces. He found solace in the lap of literary exercise. He himself declared :

"I discovered *writing* as an escape from the *world of reality* in which I felt *acutely uncomfortable*. It immediately became my place of *retreat, my cave, my refuge*."¹³ (italics mine).

The man, who became a writer, had actually the reasons like loneliness, anxiety and fear that goaded him on to writing. Thus, the man shed off the strait-jacket of loneliness, and garbed himself in the much-comfortable apparel of a writer, who, from the very childhood, won advertising contests and kept on sustaining himself on meagre pittance. Smart set prize for answering to a contest question, "Can a wife be a good sport ?" or a ten dollar prize for the best review of the silent film Stella Dallas went to his credit.

While he clattered articles on the typewriter overnight, he seemed to take a sojourn in another world, where loneliness, anxiety or violence, could reach a higher plane of "sublimation". At this stage, he developed an insular attitude towards his surroundings. However, after his graduation he was admitted to the University of Missouri at Columbia and thus, his drab life was refreshed with a gush of air.

The change proved salubrious for the young man. Here, the College-associates were amused by the Southern accent that Williams had. Naturally, they nicknamed him as "Tennessee". Williams fell in love with the name attributed to him. Here, apart from the love he felt for gooch and smoke, he also had a romantic affinity towards a girl named Hazel Kramer.

This was not actually a newly-fangled relationship. They were acquainted with each other from the age of twelve. But owing to the cruel interference by Tom's father, the relationship was nipped in the bud. Williams's father had manipulated and compelled the girl to get admitted to University of Wisconsin and Tom's College career lost much of its charms. Later, Williams gave vent to his pent-up feelings in the two short stories "The Important Thing" and "A field of Blue Children".

Though Williams was disappointed in love, he liked the University where he enjoyed tranquillity of mind. But Williams was sad to find that the choice of journalism as the major subject was a blunder for him. Of course, he had literary endowments, but had only a restricted liking for news. The bitter choice made his belief confirmed, that he was not apt for journalism, rather fiction was the field where he could thrive.

However, Williams's later creations and his abnormal sexual tendencies were responsible for his relationship with Hazel Kramer. When Williams had himself enrolled in University of Missouri, Edwina accompanied him to Columbia to help him find a place to stay. That very night, in the hotel, he wrote a letter to Hazel at the University of Wisconsin, proposing marriage. A week later, she replied that they were too young to

think about anything like that.

Williams met Hazel again, but romance by then had died down. Miss Florence, i.e. Williams's landlady related the news of Hazel's marriage after some years. Tom could not believe his ears. Hazel was married to Terrence Mc Cabe, a funny, extrovert man. However, Hazel's marriage ended in a tragedy.

Tom never asked any other woman to marry him. Hazel broke up with Terrence Mc Cabe years later, and Miss Florence, out of terrible shock, committed suicide. Hazel, too, died mysteriously, on a trip to Mexico, of suspected botulism.

In the meanwhile, he was happy at the Fraternity, even served for a short while as a member of the wrestling team. While he was having a tie with an opponent, he found himself on the mat. He recollected, "I attacked my adversary with great fury. I used activity to conceal my skill. I lost the match."¹⁴ However, after that, the Fraternity named him as "Tiger" Williams.

When Williams lost his grades and faced failures in R.O.T.C. during his third year at Missouri, Cornelius Williams took umbrage. Cornelius Williams had inherited an indomitable pride from his ancestors. He himself had quit the University of Tennessee Law School after one year to accept a Commission as Second Lieutenant in the Spanish-American War. Cornelius Williams was taken aback to see the spinelessness in his son.

As Cornelius Williams had a great fascination for money, he took his prodigal son from the University and acquainted him with the practical world of business. St. Louis appeared solitary to him, but now he was in hell. Cornelius Williams financed for a concise course in stenography for Tom and got him a sixty-five dollar-a-month job at the shoe-factory as a clerk-typist. The three years he remained confined in the brick-walls of the shoe-factory was an irksome experience for him. Typing out the numericals in the order-forms was almost marring the thin remnant of literary talents he had. Being exhausted and fed up with this drab chores, Williams ejaculated: "The lives of most

people are insulated against monotony in their own soul - Alas for the poet, the dreamer who has been cast into the world without this indispensable solution.”¹⁵

However, his determination to be a successful dramatist led him to the University of Iowa, where he came in contact with veteran professors of playwriting like E.C.Mabie and E.P.Conkle. The latter in 1938 remarked, “I have only one really good student this year - he’s poor, and shy and very talented.”¹⁶ Williams thought he was a first-rate teacher.

Though the three years had been a kind of oppression for young Williams, it was in his words “an indescribable torment”(Tischler) to him as an individual but of immense value as a writer. It gave him first-hand knowledge of what it meant to be a “small wage-earner in a hopelessly routine job”(Tischler). This “contact with reality” provided the basis for The Glass Menagerie and the ideas for several completely unWilliamsian, simple characters who were to appear as the Gentleman caller(in The Glass Menagerie) Mitch(in A Street Car Named Desire) and some others. It also created the vision of the little man at the mercy of the machine, appearing as the tubercular protagonist in the stories “The Malediction” and “The Strangest kind of Romance”. This little man, symbolizing all little men similarly ensnared everywhere, spent his days at the factory and his night with his cat, which used to offer him love and security. As his hands and the machine could never achieve the same rhythm, he was constantly jamming the machine. The Glass Menagerie itself highlighted this hatred for routine work. Tom despised his job at the shoe-factory and Laura could not learn to operate a typewriter.

The Poker Night after repeated cancellations and alterations came to be captioned as A Street Car named Desire . At International Shoe Company, there was a dark, burly, amiable worker assigned to a job,close to Tom. He was attributed with numerous qualities which Tom was lacking. He was at ease in the concourse, with unknown persons and was overconfident of his abilities to impress the ladies. Tom made friendship with him. Soon after, he married and just after ten years, he passed away. His name was

Stanley Kowalski and his family survived in St. Louis for many years.

It is yet to be judged, how much of Stanley Kowalski is represented by the character with that name in A Street Car Named Desire, but Blanche Du Bois is a creation of his fecund imagination. There is no evidence of any homosexual attachment between Williams and Kowalski. But, Tom had a “powerful erotic and romantic attachment” (Tischler) to Kowalski. Whenever they were seen together they were to pose as a “over-struck hero-worshipper and the idol of his dreams”(Memoirs).

Spectators and readers of A Street Car Named Desire (a film directed by Elia Kazan in 1951) think that A Street Car Named Desire is a rendering of the eternal clash within everyone . Williams knew it most deeply in himself; his sister had been broken by conflict, he was on the point of being broken by it. In the play which many still consider as his masterpiece, he revealed not what all life is like but what some of life is likely and what all life is in constant danger of becoming - a willing ritual-sacrifice of humanity at its gentlest to the fierce demands of carnality. As an empty immolation, it leads only to death or insanity.

Eventually, Williams had several experiences of homosexuality. Pancho, Kip Kiernen, Bill Glavin, Frank Merlo-were his erotic mates who kept him in good humour from time to time.In 1948, his Chart of Melancholy publicized itself as Summer and Smoke. Acclamation followed acclamation. The Rose Tattoo (1951) brought him accolades. But Camino Real could not win any applause, he was so eager to receive. The production of Camino Real was so inauspicious that, on the one hand, it won no applause, on the other, it took his friendship with Elia Kazan to a delicate edge. Kazan respected Tennessee Williams but once he commented upon their inner differences : “I realized there was a difference between the way he and I approached life. I think he is closer to the feeling of death moving in on him. Somebody once said that you could not do good work in dramatic form until you had included the possibility of your own death. He lived with this, he lived with death all the time, he was brought upto it.”¹⁷ At the premiere,

Kazan brought along with him ^{?)} (her) wife Molly and John Steinbeck's family. The play was a failure, and, Tennessee took offence to Kazan's misdemeanour.

By New Year's day (1955), Audrey Wood of Liebling-Wood Agency, had signed the terms with the Playwright's Company to produce Williams's next Broadway play, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. The play was structured as a series of confrontations between members of the Pollitt family : Brick, a former athletic star and recent alcoholic; his wife, Maggie, the "Cat", who was sexually frustrated because of Brick's peculiar distance from her just after the suicide of his friend Skipper; Big Daddy, Brick's father whose imminent demise meant the transfer of a vast estate; his loyal, long-suffering wife, Big Mama, and ; Brick's venal brother and sister-in-law.

Specifically, Kazan believed that the character of Big Daddy was too important to vanish after Act II, he also thought that as a result of confrontation between him and Brick some change should be evident in the son, and finally he felt that Maggie should be a more sympathetic person at the end. Williams in some way acceded to all these counsels.

On March 21, 1957, Orpheus Descending (developed on Battle of Angels) - with an epitaph from Hart Crane - opened at the Martin Beck Theatre, where once Maureen Stapleton had won laurels for a Williams play. But not even her energy and talent were enough to please critics and audiences. The play closed, after 68 performances, on May 18, 1957.

Practically, at this time, Williams began to speak openly about his fear of failure. "In an interview with New York Herald Tribune, he confessed - 'With Orpheus Descending, I felt I was no longer acceptable to the theatre-public. May be I thought, they'd had too much of a certain dish, and may be they don't want to eat any more.' The 'dish', of course, was violence, derailed sexuality, and the submission of mythology - in this case, Orphic mythology - to his own dramatic purpose."¹⁸

Suddenly Last Summer, again an autobiographical play of Williams was written just when he was undergoing a series of intense psychotherapy under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Kubie. Just at the same time, he was visiting Rose so often, that, it astonished everybody around him. Perhaps, Catharine's lobotomy and Mrs. Venable's restlessness were the immediate cathartic outcome.

Williams's mother could not be satisfied with Mrs. Venable's suggestion of "cutting the horrible story out of her (Catharine's) brain", which reminded her of Rose's lobotomy - operation in 1937. She said to Williams - "Why don't you write a lovely, long play again Tom ? ... Like you did before, a lovely, lovely long play?"¹⁹ (Perhaps, she unconsciously referred to The Glass Menagerie).

Sweet Bird of Youth (1959), Period of Adjustment (1960), The Night of the Iguana (1961) - all these followed one after another. But Williams seemed to lose faith upon his creative power. Perhaps, that's why, he thought of retiring from a playwright's favourite haunts of sex and violence and thought of having recourse to a world where "serenity" might serve as a staple to feed on.

After 1960, we find a different Williams, who knows, it might be the result of his snapping of relationship with Kazan or any other reason that gnawed deep into his entrails or simply his desire to bid adieu to a world ridden with sex, violence, exuberance of unsought-for passion and take refuge to a world where soft emotions wield, where laughter and comic quips are the sole companions ?!

The late plays of Williams like Small Craft Warnings (1973), Kingdom of Earth (1968), A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur (1979) The Red Devil Battery Sign (1979) no doubt, displayed remnants of the talent of a great genius. But even then, they have also some messages to convey to the theatrical audience, to the reading public, in general.

Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980) was perhaps his last attempt in the

tradition of I rise in flame, Cried the Phoenix (1951). In the latter, Lawrence-Frieda had been remembered, while in Clothes for a Summer Hotel, Zelda and Fitzgerald had figured . Spoto had nicely described the night Williams was destined to meet his demise : “On the evening of February 24, 1983, he withdrew quietly to his bedroom with a bottle of wine. On his bedside table was the traditional array of prescriptions, capsules, tablets, eyedrops and nosedrops and all the paraphernalia associated with decades of hypochondria and chemical dependence. In the morning, friends entered the room. One of Tennessee Williams’s hands was resting gently, palm upward. At last, there was stillness.”²⁰

b) Literary Influences on the Dramatist

A man cannot deny the influences that shape his view towards life. The bitter altercations that broke Williams’s heart, and, the sweet connubial bliss that his grandparents used to enjoy, soothed his mind. All these contributed to the shaping of his life-view. Again, the influences of great poets and dramatists of the time could not be ignored altogether. A triumvirate of Hart Crane, Anton Chekhov, August Strindberg - had cast major influences on Williams’s works.

Williams, in the “Frivolous Version” of his “Preface to my poems” (1944) had declared candidly : “It was Clark (Clark Mills Mc Burney a poet-friend in St. Louis in 1933) who warned me of the existence of people like Hart Crane, and Rimbaud and Rilke, and my deep and sustained admiration for Clark’s writing, gently but firmly removed my attention from the more obvious to the purer voices in poetry. About this time, I acquired my copy of Hart Crane’s collected poems, which I began to read with gradual comprehension.”²¹

In fact, Williams had stolen the copy of Hart Crane’s poems from the library of Washington University in St. Louis, because it did not get the proper connoisseurs it deserved. Regarding Hart Crane he was more reverent, “I have it with me today, my

only library and all of it I am inclined to value Crane a little above Eliot or anyone else because of his organic purity and sheer breath-taking power. I feel that he stands with Keats and Shakespeare and Whitman.”²²

Crane was a living presence for Tennessee Williams. The bohemian dramatist could not even dream of missing the portrait of his favourite poet, which he procured from a book in the Jacksonville Public Library. Even while writing letters to Donald Windham, he made three allusions to the valuable portrait. In You Touched Me, the dramatization of D.H.Lawrence’s story, he wrote in collaboration with Donald Windham, he had made a passing reference to Hart Crane. When Hadrian was browsing through Matilda’s book of Verse, he mused a line that became his cynosure for a moment - “How like a caravan my heart - Across the desert moved towards yours”, and he screwed up his eyebrows^{asking} - “Towards whose? Who’s this H.C. its dedicated to?” Matilda coyly rejoindered, “Hart Crane, an American poet who died ten years ago”. Again, the lines that startled Hadrian had owed its origin to the fifth stanza of “To Brooklyn Bridge”,^(of Hart Crane) the piece which led all the poems of the collection.

In the Preface to A Street Car Named Desire (1947), Williams again turned to Hart Crane for the lines which the latter had penned down barely a month before his suicide in the Caribbean, near Florida, which later on was included in “The Broken Tower” (fifth Stanza) :

“And so it was I entered the broken world,
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind, (I know not whither hurled),
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.”²³

Of course, these four lines describe Blanche du Bois’s dramatic retreat into oblivion which started the very moment she stepped in VieuxCarre’. The resplendant past of Blanche Du Bois that had disillusioned her, formed one arc of the broken world while the world of “disheartening reality”, constituted the other arc - the one gone with the

wind, the other barely having .

Again, in 1946, the very title of the play Summer and Smoke bore the impression of Crane's "Emblems of Conduct". There, Crane had inserted between fragments, the following lines -

"By that time, summer and smoke were past
Dolphins still played, arching the horizon,
But only to build memories of spiritual gates."

Williams was not contented enough to borrow the title from Crane, a nice passage in the play too echoes the phrases of Hart Crane. Alma, somewhere late in the play, in Summer and Smoke told her "former puritan self" as "having died last 'summer', suffocated in 'smoke' from something on fire inside her."²⁴

In 1959, again, Williams was indebted to Crane for his motto of the play Sweet Bird of Youth. The lines had been extracted from "Legend" included in Hart

Crane's White Buildings collection :

"Relentless caper for all those who step,
The legend of their youth into the room".

Debusscher had beautifully examined the purport of this adaptation. "Like Crane's poem, his play relates an experience which instructs us about the nature of good and evil, and, from which rules can be deduced to govern the conduct of life. The dramatic itinerary of the characters, their "relentless caper" is presented as a warning; their 'legend', in both meanings, of 'Key' and 'exemplary life' is meant to convey a message of moral import. Chance's final speech about recognising 'the enemy, Time in us all', however clumsily tacked on, confirms the seemingly paradoxical ambition of Sweet Bird of Youth to be a modern morality play, as implicitly announced in the motto from Crane."²⁵

After three years, i.e. in 1962, Williams again alludes to Crane in The Night of the Iguana. In a conversation between Hannah Jelkes and Reverend Shannon Williams

turns to Hart Crane and that too a very sensitive aspect of Crane's physical attributes- his "closed eyes."

"Hannah : You're a very difficult subject. When the Mexican Painter Sequeiros did his portrait of the American poet Hart Crane he had to paint him with closed eyes because he couldn't paint his eyes open - there was too much suffering in them, and he couldn't paint it.

Shannon : Sorry, but I'm not going to close my eyes for you. I'm hypnotizing myself at least trying to - by looking at the light on the orange tree leaves.

Hannah : That's all right. I can paint your eyes open."

(Act II, The Night of the Iguana)

Here, an attempt seems to have been made to equate Shannon with Crane, but Hannah's quick rejoinder makes the difference much acute - the difference in between her subject and that of Sequeiros. The Glass Menagerie (1945) the piece-de'-resistance of Williams too echoes of Hart Crane. Tom in Scene VI, while conversing with Jim, portrays a future where he will be free from all his ties with his mother, sister, shoe-factory. Immediately afterwards, the image of "the sailing vessel with the Jolly Roger again", gets projected on a screen in the background. Tom thinks the rail of the fire-escape to be the rail of an imaginary ocean-liner and he leans on it. The stage-direction flashes: "He looks like a voyager". Obviously, Williams had been influenced by Crane's poems captioned "Voyages". Can't we see a vague shadow of "oppressed" Crane in Tom Wingfield ?

The title The Glass Menagerie itself owed its origin to the poem The Wine Menagerie from Crane's collection White Buildings. Perhaps, the first couple of lines of the poem might have served for making of scene six, where we get Tom heavily drunk:

“Invariably when the wine redeems the sight
Narrowing the mustard scansions
Of the eyes”²⁶

The poem The Wine Menagerie harps upon the primary emotion “Loss”. Loss is the main concept of Williams’s vision, a feeling that no human being can ever transcend. “The monosyllable of the clock is ‘Loss’, ‘Loss’, ‘Loss’, unless you devote your heart to its opposition”, he has said. No doubt, the mood of melancholy and nostalgia that pervades The Glass Menagerie owes much to Hart Crane. Finally, in order to achieve sublimity, Crane establishes a number of “mythic parallels” for its central incident, such as, a confrontation between a man and a woman in a bar, the violent meetings of Judith and Holofernes, Salome and John the Baptist, the Petrushka and his “valentine”. All the figurines are heading towards the central figure i.e. the accident, the breaking of the Unicorn. Perhaps, we may relate this incident of accident to the pre-frontal lobotomy-surgery of Rose, (i.e Williams’s sister) which supplies a subdued tone to the play, as a whole.

In Suddenly Last Summer (1958), Hart Crane’s influence is felt again, rather vividly. Here, Violet Venable is Grace Hart Crane, and Sebastian Venable is only a protracted shadow of Hart Crane himself. In Steps must be gentle, Grace Hart Crane is determined to preserve her son’s posthumous reputation. Violet Venable in Suddenly Last Summer, too, is keen enough on preserving her son’s fame. Grace’s words, in every case, might fit in Violet’s lips too — “I have made it my dedication, my vocation to protect your name , your legend, against the filthy scandals that you’d seemed determined to demolish them with. Despite my age, my illness”²⁷—

Debusscher quite appropriately brings parallels between Crane’s life and Suddenly last summer, “the real life traits of Hart Crane appear splintered, divided up among three characters, first, the dead Sebastian, the homosexual author of a limited, practically unknown body of work reserved for a coterie, who travels restlessly in pursuit

of 'Vision', second, the 'glacially brilliant' Dr. Cuckrowitz with his 'icy charm' in whom both Mrs. Venable and Catharine recognize a number of Sebastian's features, and who represents an aspect of Crane seen in Steps must be gentle, where Grace reproaches her son for his 'icy language' and frigid attitude; finally, Catharine, whose uncompromising insistence on the truth threatens the Sebastian myth and who embodies the self-destructive tendencies that led to Crane's suicide"²⁷.

Hart Crane and Williams even shared a similar life full of turmoils, squabbles between parents, feverish existence and a sad end. In an interview with Cecil Brown, Williams had admitted that he had a lot of parallels between his life and that of Hart Crane. Williams then blabbed out, "Yes, I have a codicil in my will that when I die, I am to be pushed off a ship, where Crane went down."²⁸

Another major influence on Williams was Anton Chekhov. In several interviews, Williams had admitted that, Chekhov's influence on him surpassed even that of D.H. Lawrence. The Glass Menagerie, which won international rewards owed its oeuvre much to Chekhov's The Sea Gull. Even Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard had provided Williams with clues to develop A Street Car Named Desire.

Konstantin Treplev of The Sea Gull can be taken as an exact prototype of Tom Wingfield of The Glass Menagerie. Both struggle to establish themselves though their hopes are being ruthlessly belied. A remark, the doctor makes about Konstantin may as well be applied to Tom: "There is something in him: He thinks in images; his stories are vivid, full of colour and they affect (one) strongly. The only pity is that he hasn't got definite aims. He produces an impression and that's all, but you can't get far with nothing but an impression."²⁹ Both the aspirants feel pinned down, by their background and their ambience and both are meekly rebellious. Neither of them has finished his formal education, Konstantin left the University in his third year, while Tom graduated from high school to take up a job at a shoe warehouse. They have to struggle with intractable problems to get relieved of their adversities. Konstantin manages to publish

short stories, though ultimately he is ruined. Without trying to overcome his circumstances, he commits suicide after a single unsuccessful attempt. In joining the merchant marine, Tom escapes the family responsibilities giving up all but the memory of his mother and sister. Yet he is comparatively successful at least in finding out the meaning of his life.

There are even striking similarities between the literary forms with which Tom and Konstantin experiment. Tom of The Glass Menagerie says: "I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion" and elsewhere he admits that he has himself made up a historic realm we have stepped into. Konstantin wants to introduce a new kind of drama to the theatrical arena. In order to do away with the ramshackle limits of realism, of "tradition and conventionality", he emphasises, "we need new forms of expression" (The Sea Gull). "Moon" serves as a dominant symbol in both Chekhov's and Williams's plays. Regarding the music effect too, Williams is indebted to Chekhov's Cherry Orchard and The Sea Gull. "Ominous cracking sound in the sky" (The Glass Menagerie) is a witty adoption from The Cherry Orchard. Thus, Williams is grateful to Chekhov, especially in bringing out the inner experience and reaction of his characters, in developing a mood, or an atmosphere characterized by the ebb and flow of feeling and developing a feeling of tolerance and understanding for the sensitive misfits of this world.

A great influence on Tennessee Williams is August Strindberg, the Swedish dramatist. The play You Touched Me! which is fed on a story by D.H. Lawrence and which Williams has composed in collaboration with Donald Windham, echoes of Strindberg's famous play, The Father. It narrates the story of Matilda, fragile, poetic and repressed by her Aunt Emmie, who at last sets domination at nought and elopes with the soldier Hadrian, her brother in adoption. Captain Cornelius Buckley, Matilda's father is an interesting character. Emmie mocks him by calling Hadrian "your sniveling little charity boy", who has been adopted in the family by Captain himself, in compassion. The Captain recalls Captain Shotover of Shaw's Heart break House on the one hand, and receives an old Strindbergian treatment in the hands of Williams, on the other. When the Reverend

Guildford Melton calls for a likely suitor for Matilda's hand, Emmie explains that the Captain is a scholar and at the moment intensely absorbed in preparing an article for the Royal Geographical Society. Later, Emmie warns the Captain that if he still keeps on drinking like a fish, she will "call and get the male nurse to bring the strait jacket", and it is clearly in her plan to see that the Captain is sequestered in what Reverend Melton euphemistically calls "Some Christian retreat". Emmie is almost a Strindbergian character. Emmie represents "aggressive sterility" instead of "predatory maternity". She aims, as the Captain remarks, at "reducing the net amount of masculinity on the place." But, unlike Strindberg's Emmie, Laura loses. Williams takes a more sure and certain view of male-survival.

Miss Julie is supposed to cast a shadow on Williams's A Street Car Named Desire. If we probe deeper to explore the truth, we at a first glance, find in both the plays - a hysterical girl, the product of degenerate aristocracy, descends to a devastating sexual encounter that results in her complete undoing. In one case, we get, consignment to an insane asylum (A Street Car), in the other, suicide (Miss Julie).

Miss Julie is more of a woman than of a weak insect. She is neurotic, but not alcoholic. Unlike Blanche, she has not taken refuge to a world of absurd hypocrisy and deceit. In her earlier love affair, she displays sadism by deliberately training her fiancé with a horsewhip. Blanche's ruthlessness consists of unveiling her young husband's true sexual nature, forcing his suicide; Miss Julie, quite obviously, is more vibrant and positive. But the two are alike in that both are by heritage weak and that is the one and only reason, why they can create sympathy in an audience. The men, on the contrary, are remarkably different. Strindberg's Jean is a climber and an aspirant. He is discontented with his position and cultivates the ways of his superiors, their taste in wines, and so on. In his instability, he fluctuates between obsequious servility and highly assertive brashness. Stanley Kowalski, on the other hand, is complacent and entirely in accord with himself. His pleasures suit him, bowling and drinking and fringing; he is enraged that anybody

could reflect on his origin and position by calling him a “Polack”, he is happy to be one, or rather, to be a good American of Polish extraction. He aspires professionally, and his wife Stella assures us, if we needed the assurance, that he is going to get somewhere. He is hard and ruthless but never shy or fawning or mean.

The inevitable difference between the plays is one of mood. Decadence in Williams is steeped by the steam from Blanche’s eternal baths, the fumes of alcohol, the shimmer of heat from the pavement, the Latin rhythms of the street, the ritual of Poker, until the hot-house atmosphere prevails. In Strindberg, the crisis is more rhythmic and seasonal, the festivity of midsummer, Julie’s monthly indisposition, the magic of dusk and flowers. In Strindberg, the sexual meeting takes place to the tune of warm fiddles and summer folly, in Williams, to shattering glass and tawdry make-believes. But the plays predict an almost similar future.³ Vitality belongs to the materialists and opportunists.

Camino Real again seems very much Strindbergian. Williams, here, makes use of the dream-method. Of course, it appears that the action is dreamed by Don Quixote, for Gutman says as the play begins, “And now I must go downstairs to announce the beginning of that old Wanderer’s dream... Certainly the play observes the logic of dream, where in Strindberg’s words, ‘anything can happen, everything is possible and probable’ time and space do not exist; on a slight groundwork of reality imagination spins and weaves a new pattern made up of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations. While Williams’s characters do not ‘split, double and multiply’ as do Strindberg’s, they are rather static resuscitations - the atmosphere of dream prevails, the shock, the illogical, the illusion.”³⁰

Yet, the real affinity of Camino Real lies with Strindberg’s pilgrimage plays. In it both search and flight are present, and its very title suggests comparison with Strindberg’s last play, The Great Highway. The action of Camino Real proceeds through sixteen so-called “blocks”; The Great Highway is subtitled “a drama of wandering, with seven stations”. Strindberg’s Hunter, once a soldier and now a traveller in a foreign land,

begins his pilgrimage in the Alps, and advances through a landscape of windmills, a satiric episode in Donkeyville, an arcade in Tophet, a crematorium, a Dantesque dark forest to seek once again the Alpine heights where he will “await the liberation”. Kilroy (Camino Real) has some such vision: “I don’t see nothing but nothing - and then more nothing. And then I see some mountains. But the mountains are covered with snow.” However, in Williams’s play there is neither physical progress nor spiritual elevation. There is no real “camino” but a dead end, from which a few escape by an unscheduled flight on the plane “Fugitivo” to an unspecified destination. Still there is a similarity of tone. One could remark of Camino Real as Martin Lamm has of The Great Highway: “This ulcered, ragged play is one of (his) most repellent but also one of his most gripping”(Richard B. Vowles).

Somewhat more striking are the similarities to two earlier pilgrimage plays, Lucky Peter’s Journey and Keys of Heaven. Kilroy is a brasher, more posturing version of Lucky Peter- Strindberg’s peripatetic hero, a character in turn modelled after Ibsen’s Peer Gynt. In Keys of Heaven Strindberg introduces Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, who assume substantial and amusing roles, a gallery of literary lovers, Hamlet and Ophelia, Romeo and Juliet, Othello and Desdemona. The plot has little in common with Camino Real, but the tone is as dark and satiric, if not quite so febrile.

However, Williams in a 1955 interview, has defied the Strindbergian influence upon him. Again, when the lawyer of Strindberg’s A Dream Play observes, “It is misery to be human”, it is this sense of pessimism which suggest that Strindberg and Williams are fellow spirits. In portraying the sexual conflict, Strindberg is a felt presence. The clashes of The Cat on a Hot Tin Roof recall the words of Strindberg in his preface to Miss Julie, “I myself find the joy of life, in its strong and cruel struggle”.

Lastly, Williams’s theatricality is very much of Strindberg’s tradition. Williams, in the Afterword to Camino Real, perhaps echoes Strindberg: “The colour, the grace and levitation, the structural pattern in motion, the quick interplay of live beings,

suspended like fitful lightning in a cloud, these things are the play..."

Ibsen, too, influenced Williams in shaping his view of life. Actually Williams was "particularly enchanted by all the very violent plays." Ibsen's Ghosts in particular excited him. He said "it was so fabulous, so terrifyingly exciting that I couldn't stay in my seat! I suddenly jumped up and began pacing the corridor of the peanut gallery, trying to hear what was being said on the stage, but at the same time I wouldn't stand to watch it anymore. It was the scene in which Mrs Alving realises that her son, Oswald, you know, is afflicted with syphilis, and that it has gone to his brain."³¹

D.H. Lawrence had a deep influence upon Williams. The resemblance of Orpheus Descending to Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's lover, is undeniable. Of course, Williams had the novel of Lawrence (Lady Chatterley's Lover) in mind, when he first harped upon the idea of the play ("that hideous book" referred to in The Glass Menagerie). In both the novel and the drama, a woman (Lady Chatterley, Lady Myra), a victim of an unfortunate marriage to an invalid husband [Clifford, Jabe] is awakened to the joy of life by a dark lower class lover [Mellors, Val] who has been connected in the past with a neurotically possessive woman (Bertha, The Woman from Waco).

Lady Myra is shot to death by her husband with the zygote in her womb. A blowtorch lighted by a man of the hysterical mob discovers Val, who is thought to have committed the murder. Lawrence's novel, on the contrary, concludes on a more positive note; the lovers are to be wedded, the child is to be born, and there is some hope in the face of the "bad time coming ... for these industrial masses" (Lady Chatterley's Lover) which Mellors envisions for a future life continuous with their present happiness.

The Glass Menagerie of Williams again, reminds us of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. Both the works pivot round a domineering mother, a weak father, an artistically inclined son, and an abortive relationship between a virginal girl and the virile young man she loves.

Amanda Wingfield corresponds with Gertrude Morel as in the words of Lawrence “ a woman of character and refinement who goes into the lower class and (who) has no satisfaction in her own life”. Both women after being wooed by quite a good number of men socially and intellectually their equals had suddenly fallen in love with a social inferior whom they both liked at a glance. However, the results in each case were incessant misery of mutual incomprehension.

Both Tom Wingfield and Paul Morel are deeply engrossed in neurotic relationships(of course, of different nature) involving their mothers and a delicate young girl. Both have artistic ambitions which are benumbed by compulsion of their contributing to the family welfare through the enervating tedium of factory work. An alternative counterpart to Paul Morel in the play is Jim, the Gentleman Caller, who resembles the former as the delicate Young girl’s suitor. Finally, the fragile delicacy of Laura Wingfield and Miriam Leivers corresponds rather closely : “A fragile, unearthly prettiness - Laura - is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, gives a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting”. (The Glass Menagerie). “Miriam’s beauty - that of a shy, wild, quivering sensitive thing”..... “Miriam was exceedingly sensitive ... The slightest grossness made her recoil almost in anguish” (Sons and Lovers).

Both find it difficult to adjust to normal social relationships - each more at home in a less threatening, non-human world : Laura’s favourite collection of little glass animals; Miriam’s fixation with the flowers surrounding her woodland home. Both sense the incompleteness of their fragmented natures and would gladly be aroused to sensual consciousness, if they were only emotionally capable of it. Demands of the flesh are too much for them. When the male suitors share the joy of these girls’s private world - a possibility of spiritual communion has been felt. But Jim and Paul -who attempt to awaken them to sensual consciousness meet with sad rebuff only. When Tom is scolded by his mother Amanda for reading “ the hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence”, Lawrence’s influence on Williams is more and more exposed.

Williams has coined A Street Car Named Desire, “a play of incomprehension”. Williams has tried to interweave the brutality and the compassionate elements in his male protagonist. The dark Pole Stanley is, of course, the Lawrentian fox, limited in intellect and sophistication, but equally, alive in the flesh.

The play can be compared with Lawrence’s short story “The Princess”. In both works, a fragile heroine runs away to a strange world of naked elemental forces to meet her destruction, in a violent sexual encounter, with a flesh-loving brute. Blanche had the experience of a dissipated life before she entered the Kowalski household, but, the Princess can boast of pure virginity unless she has to yield forcibly to Romero in the aloof forest-cabin. Blanche’s sexuality has somewhat masochistic overtone. She, out of sheer qualms of conscience, (as she accused her of being responsible for her husband’s death) embraced a lifestyle, she hated from the core of her heart.

Similarly, Summer and Smoke took after Lawrence’s The Virgin and the Gypsy. Suddenly Last Summer had its embryo in Lawrence’s The Woman who rode away and in various aspects, William’s various works (both early and late) echoed D.H. Lawrence’s. However, “Williams’s works represent an abnormal psychology rather than a comprehensive philosophy of life. Like the novelist, the playwright depicts vividly the fragmentation of flesh and spirit within neurotic human beings ; but he always fails in his works to envision that state of organic wholeness - individual, natural, cosmic - which Lawrence approaches in his major fiction.”³²

Again, Eugene O’Neill could not also be ignored as influencing Williams. Williams came into the limelight at a time when O’Neill was in his roaring heyday. O’Neill too, was keenly interested in the tragedy of lost souls and gave sensitive expression to their tragic plight. Williams’s treatment of the theme of desire in A Street Car invited a fruitful comparison with O’Neill’s treatment of the same theme in his tragic masterpiece Desire under the Elms. Of course, the path foreshadowed by O’Neill served as a viaduct to Williams.

(c) Shadows of the South

The Southern Culture had a powerful influence upon the playwright. The Old South had a decadent phase and at last it had to pass into oblivion as New South emerged out of its ashes. Since the days of Clarkesdale, the Old South had an appeal to the deepest soul of Williams. So, his characters were the disturbed people of the South, the anxious individuals of the Old South, the men and women who might be taken as the remembrances of the old Southern Culture.

While facing an interview, Williams candidly remarked : “I write out of love for the South. But I can’t expect Southerners to realize that my writing about them is an expression of love. It is out of a regret for a South that no longer exists that I write of the forces that have destroyed it.”³³

He himself, in the same interview, had admitted that, “I don’t write about the North, because I feel nothing for it but eagerness to get out of it : I don’t write about the North because so far as I know - they never had anything to lose *culturally*.”³⁴(italics mine) Tennessee Williams’s mind could share the sorrow of the destitutes, the pain of the have-nots, the penury of the culturally-ruined masses. So, the Southern infertility which, of course, was a result of deliberate manipulations, could shake him to the heart of his hearts. He went on : “But the South once had a way of life that I am just old enough to remember - a culture, that had grace, elegance - an inbred culture - not a society based on money as in the North. I write out of regret for that.”³⁵

Perhaps, the South which had lagged far behind the rat-race of fulfilling the American Dream, made him cry in pain. So, his pen gave words to the sufferings of the Southerners only. Though an accusation of biasness could be flung at Williams, he had every right to defend himself against it, by drawing the sweet experiences he gathered during his childhood in the lap of the decaying Old South.

Williams, again, was very much aware of the clash between the materialistic and the idealistic aspects of the society. He opposed to this clash, and, so in an interview with Louis Davis which was later published in "The Tennessean Magazine" (3rd March, 1957), he expressed, "what I am writing about is human nature. I write about the South because I think the war between romanticism and the hostility to it is very sharp there."³⁶

We are avid to know what "romanticism" is according to Tennessee Williams. He had clarified this point too. Romanticism for him, stands in direct contrast to materialism. "It is a reverence for all that is idealistic, and beautiful, I wish that the people of the South could realize that I am about its romanticism ... I love the accent, the beautiful speech. Southerners express things in a way that is humorous, colourful, graphic."³⁷

Tennessee Williams is the more prominent among the Southern playwrights who in every way - literary, dramatic, commercial or national - has etched an identification with the South in his writings. Barring Camino Real (1953) almost all of the major plays of Tennessee Williams (of course, the plays before sixties) had their settings in the South. They are The Glass Menagerie (1945), A Street Car Named Desire (Pulitzer Prize, 1947), Summer and Smoke (1948), The Rose Tattoo (1950), Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (Pulitzer Prize, 1954), Orpheus Descending (1957), Garden District (1958), and Sweet Bird of Youth (1959). Surprisingly enough, all these plays could win him applause though the over-exuberance of violence in these plays drove him to face calumnies and hence, detractors.

Williams's allegory is applicable not only to the Southern world but to all mankind, so it transcends the limits of time, and is elevated to the sublime heights of timelessness. Let us first consider his autobiographical play The Glass Menagerie. In the South, we have come across a paradoxical co-existence of culture and power. Tom and Amanda in The Glass Menagerie have shown a strange combination of both. They have affinity to culture (Tom is a poet) and the potential for power, but these potentialities are lying in waste in them, as both of them are estranged from the cultural past and are

unable to accept the cultural present.

Amanda is very much a relic of the past and she likes to cling to the bygone days and culture only. Of course, she tries to fit herself in the present reality. But Tom is hopeless in that respect too. If Tom could cut a niche for himself in some “future”, setting both the past and the present at naught, we could find no reason to call him “misfit”. But Tom feels pricks of conscience to shake off the responsibilities he has to his family, that has already been deserted by his father, who had “fallen in love with long distance”. (“May we say, then, that Williams felt the South could not find itself by becoming something other than the South?” Jacob Adler : Tennessee’s South). “Crippled mentally and physically Laura has neither the culture nor the power. Both lie latent in her, but they can be awakened only by a Stranger (Tom and Amanda, the inheritors of the bygone days, are helpless) who recognizes the beauty and potential underneath the grotesqueness of deformity”³⁸.

Again, the Southern dilemma and the contrast between culture and power find their truest manifestation in A Street Car Named Desire. Story is of prime importance, and the people, the culture-power bifurcation comes to secondary importance and tertiary significance is gained by Blanche or a sensitive individual lost in the complex modern world of Williams’s plays.

In order to clarify the culture-power conflict in A Street Car, Blanche may be considered as the representative of the cultural and the ideal, as well as the representative of power. Being a descendant of the Old South, Blanche dissipates her power instead of recognizing her cultural past, she gets firmly bound to it, “Thus Blanche represents one way the South could take, unable to face the contrast between the romantic past and the realistic present, Blanche violently betrays her code while desperately pretending to maintain it. That way inevitably lies the Cemeteries.”³⁹

Stella belongs to the Old South too. But, unlike Blanche, she is not

particularly Southern in outward manifestations at all. She is married to a man who is the embodiment of brutal violence (i.e. rape), not to speak of power. So, the match can give birth to an eclectic culture.

Overlooking all his flaws, Adler goes to a certain extent to say, "Stanley is by no means all bad, his strength is not all directionless, his love for Stella is pathetically real."⁴⁰ Again, an affinity towards the past displays weakness in Southern male. Williams has thrust maximum stress upon the naivete of Harold Mitchell and Blanche's husband. Perhaps, a less complete man can be drawn to the "past" that Blanche embodies. Yet Blanche, despite her promiscuities, possesses streaks of "genuine culture and beauty" that Stella lacks in and Stanley pretends to overlook.

Again, in Summer and Smoke (1948), the Southern dilemma comes to the fore. If we consider Summer and Smoke as an allegory of body and soul, we need not strive to trace the right track any more. Of course, the South, according to Williams, is trying to settle the question of disharmony, between the body and the soul.

In Summer and Smoke, Williams had to present the South which was neither the postwar South, nor the Civil-war South, not even the Reconstruction South, but, the South of the "turn of the century"(Adler). Williams was keen enough to make use of ample of devices to universalize the past. The sets were adequate enough to conform to the reality - Gothic (the houses), classical (the statue), and scientific (the anatomy chart), thus including the Western cultural history, in gamut.

"The Gothic, and the classical are, it is true, not suitable to the South's historical and architectural past, but they also suggest further reaches of time."⁴¹

So, the "use of the past helps Williams in various ways : it assists beliefs, it helps strip away the details useful to realism but detrimental to allegory, both Southern and Universal."⁴²

Thus, in its use of the past and its characteristics, Summer and Smoke reduces

realism to the minimum, for the sake of allegory. But universal allegory is present only in general terms : souls are crippled without bodies and, bodies are violent without souls. The details of the play will not fit into the universal allegory, but, fit very well into an allegory of the South. That allegory therefore requires further scrutiny.

Alma has been represented as the Soul of the South. Alma Winemiller, in relation to her mother, in relation to Nellie, the daughter of the town-prostitute is more a soul stunted with streaks of so-called culture that has its roots in the romantic past. Alma is a daughter of a neurotic mother. Alma runs every choice of being an exact replica of her mother who is hopeless and futureless. Thus, while exploring the feminine soul, Williams is prone to unravel the "Southern" soul, which is slightly grotesque, pleasant on the surface (Alma), but very ugly underneath (Mrs. Winemiller).

In the male protagonist, John Buchanan, Williams has tried to impinge the germs of violence, though the excess of his power has not yet found a channel. For the central violence of the play, i.e., the slaughter of John's father everything should be considered responsible. The violence is committed by an outsider, but it ensues only because the South is still ignorant of itself. Alma is unaware of physical violence and of the evil that "cuddle in the depths of the soul." The responsibility for violence in the South lies everywhere - not only in the "outsider", but also in the divided South itself. Cultural past and the present reality are poles apart, no connection being there to hold them in proximity.

Like Summer and Smoke, almost all of Williams's plays to some extent, juxtapose the physical and violent with the cultural and the ideal. The Rose Tattoo presents a cluster of individuals not firmly tied to the Old South, but, a group of Sicilian immigrants on the Gulf Coast. If The Rose Tattoo has any connections with the South it must be the inevitable reason that perchance the characters are in the South. Yet, here is another Southern race susceptible to both culture and violence. Serafina, shares Southern characteristics, a list of demands - religious, superstitious, honour, courage, resplendence

of rank, sky-scraping standards - all for her child, and even moves towards an extreme tendency of being violent on switching over to a psychotic withdrawal. She has tremendous weakness for "rose" symbol and has potentials for fecundity, no doubt a pointer towards "real future" which many of Williams's plays having Southern background seem to lack in.

Serafina cannot be a proper idol of the South as like Rosa she cannot be overwhelmingly sexual and sensual. Rosa, here, is neither Southerner nor Sicilian but an American to the core. She, like Stella of A Street Car is at heart an American. The over-emphasis and repeated utterance of "Rose" has made the symbol quite fitting to the underlying purport of the play.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof differs from the earlier plays in that its major characters belong to no labelled category - "neither aristocratic, nor middle-class nor foreign. Big Daddy, Big Mama and their two children lack in the sophistication of culture as well as power. Fertility, in this play, is not an emblem of "power" otherwise, Gooper could top the list of "revered" individuals with a long troop of offsprings he might have boasted of. Brick of course, can ascend the ladder of "culture" through the acquisition of money. But, fear and disillusionment have debilitated him to aspire for either culture or power. Maggie, a purely Southern girl, of cultured background wants to contest for power. As compared to the previous Southern plays, the action occurs in a highly stylized presentation bordering on the expressionistic.

Big Daddy can be taken as the central embodiment of power. But his power demands to be channelled through a worthless son and a badly confused son, i.e., ultimate waste of power is indicated. He himself yields slowly to the deadly clutch of cancer. Maggie, too, is left with a chance of gaining power by force only, if she gains at all. All the characters feel famished owing to dearth of love in the world they reside. Love could easily wash away all the flaws, waste of power or inadequate culture display. In Act II, the conversation of the father with the son, certifies lack of love and lack of communication.

Maggie seems to crave more for sex than for love, more for power than for culture. In Williams's next three plays, all laid in the South, the pattern as well as the quality go awry.

Suddenly Last Summer has an over-bearing Gothic structure, which cannot appeal to audience's sympathy. It only preaches the gospel of science, of money and denounces love, and upholds "neurotic courage of desperation" as a laudable quality. Not only in the South, but everywhere people are either tyrants or oppressed, either butchers or the slaughtered. No inkling of grand future is there. Culture verges upon nonsensical babbling, and, power is either an indicator of insanity or that kind of scientific aim which turns human beings into mere specimens for a study under the microscope.

In one respect, Sweet Bird of Youth does indeed concern the South. Williams tries to point out that Southern culture and power alike have fallen victim to the Boss Finleys, "the corrupt, pseudo-saviour, rabble-rousing politicians." If so, the future is submerged in stygian backwaters.

In Summer and Smoke, Williams explored the Southern dilemma to the hilt, in A Street Car most poignantly, and in both with a degree of hope. That hope dwindles into the coldness of Suddenly Last Summer, the emptiness of Sweet Bird of Youth. Faith, as dead as the ministers variously portrayed, bursts forth again in The Night of the Iguana, and a minister is apparently saved. But after The Night of the Iguana, darkness comes to rule the roost.

Thus, we have made an excursion into the soul of a renowned dramatist. The making of an artist, of course, counts much upon the artist's understanding of man, the ambience, the connection of man's miseries and misfortune with the vast world in general. No doubt, Williams's imbibing the staple of his plays from the South and from the much-precious nooks of other literateur's works and ideals has enriched the plays's qualities. But it has also made men aware of their febrile existence. Not only

the men and women of the South are groping for a meaning of existence, but men who have lost themselves in the alleys of “confusion of living”, strive to find a meaning of this enigmatic existence.

The novelist writes and tries to give life to the characters, for a dramatist the characters either whisper or shout in his ears imploring their lives to be brought to the theatrical arena. Tennessee Williams, the dramatist, with his message and through exquisite creations establishes himself as one of the key figures in the history of American drama.

WORKS CITED

1. Tischler, Nancy, M : Tennessee Williams :Rebellious Puritan, New York, The Citadel Press, 1961,p.18.
2. Ibid p.19.
3. Loc Cit
4. Ibid p. 20.
5. Wordsworth, Williams : Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood Palgrave’s Golden Treasury OUP 1979, p.313.
6. Tischler, Nancy M : Tennessee Williams : Rebellious Puritan, 1961, p.22.
7. Williams, Tennessee : Memoirs, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York, 1975, p.11.
8. Dakin Walter and Shepherd Mead: Tennessee Williams,^{ARBOR,} New York,1983, p. 17.
9. Donahue Francis : The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams, Frederick Ungar

Publishing Co. New York, 1964, pp. 3-4.

10. Tischler, Nancy M: Tennessee Williams: *Rebellious Puritan* New York, The Citadel Press, 1961, p.28.
11. Donahue Francis: The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York, 1964, p. 3.
12. Tischler, Nancy M: Tennessee Williams: *Rebellious Puritan*. New York, The Citadel Press, 1961, p.29.
13. Donahue, Francis: The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York 1964, p.6.
14. Tischler, Nancy M: Tennessee Williams: *Rebellious Puritan* New York, The Citadel Press, 1961, p.37.
15. Ibid., p.38.
16. Williams Dakin and Shepherd Mead: Tennessee Williams: *An Intimate Biography*, **AREOR**, New York 1983, p.71.
17. Ibid., p. 147.
18. Spoto, Donald: The Kindness of Strangers: *Life of Tennessee Williams*, Little Brown & Co. Boston, Toronto, 1985, p.213.
19. Ibid., p. 220.
20. Ibid., p. 365.
21. Williams, Tennessee : "Where I live": *Selected Essays*, Christine. R Day and Bob Woods, New Directions Book, New York 1978 , pp. 2-3.
22. Ibid., p. 6.
23. Ellmann Richard, ed. The New Oxford Book of American Verse OUP, New

York 1976, p. 672.

24. The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Vol.II (New York, 1971). p. 243.
25. Debusscher, Gilbert: "Tennessee Williams and Hart Crane", Modern Drama, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, December 1983, p. 458.
26. Ellman Richard, ed. The New Oxford Book of American Verse, OUP, New York, 1976, p. 672.
27. Debusscher, Gilbert: "Tennessee Williams and Hart Crane", Modern Drama, vol. XXVI, No.4,December 1983, p. 408.
28. Brown, Cecil: "Interview with Tennessee Williams", Partisan Review XLV, No, 2, 1978, p. 290.
29. Gannett, Constance: Trans. The Plays of Anton Tchekhov, The Sea Gull, New York, 1930, p. 52.
30. Vowles, Richard B: "Tennessee Williams and Strindberg", Modern Drama Vol I No.3, December 1958, p-169.
31. Williams, Dakin and Shepherd Mead: Tennessee Williams: An Intimate Biography, ARBOR, New York, 1983. p.45
32. Fedder, Norman J: Influence of Lawrence on Williams, The Hague, Moulton, 1966, p. 124.
33. Davis, Louis: "That Baby Doll Man: Part I" Tennessean Magazine, March 3, 1957, p. 43.
34. Op.Cit
35. Op. Cit.
36. Ibid., p. 45.

37. Op.Cit.
38. Rubin JR, Louis D & Robert D. Jacobs: “South”: Modern Southern Literature in its Cultural setting, Doubleday & Co. 1961, p. 361.
39. Ibid., p. 363.
40. Op.Cit.
41. Ibid., p. 354.
42. Op.Cit.