

Chapter II

CHAPTER - II

ANGEL IN ARMOUR : A STUDY OF THE "BLACK PLAYS"

"Nobody ever gets to know nobody ↓
 We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside
 our skins, for life ↓ ... We're under a life-long
 sentence to solitary confinement inside
 our own lonely skins for as long as
 we live on this earth.

- Val Xavier

in

Orpheus Descending

"Black Plays" of Tennessee Williams are the early plays, i.e. the plays written before 1960. As he himself has confessed that these plays are embodiments of "destructive impulses", this chapter is intended to pinpoint the elements as "black" ones or "destructive impulses".

The "destructive impulses" are the stints which goad the characters to thwart the harmony of existence, to drive themselves into the clasp of peril and surrender to negative facets of existence. As harmony gets resumed at the end of the play, the dramatist tries to convey a message to the spectators and interested readers - some good hides beneath the veneer of evil. So, the sole presence of "destructive impulses" is an absurd notion. It is clear enough that "black" plays are not all black and the dramatist himself declares that the "non-black" plays won't be all white.

To be precise, the “black” elements are to be sorted out as - “fear of loneliness”, “absurd soaring imagination that hardly finds fulfilment”, “lunacy”, “alienation”, “endless waiting”, “frustration”, “love and escape penchant”, “death-syndrome”, “confined solitary existence”, “oppressor-oppressed complex”, “sodomasochistic tendency”, “sense of insecurity”, “sense of defeatism”, “painfulness”, “neurosis”, “violence”, “corruption”, “mendacity”. Along with these “black” elements some “white” too get intertwined. They are - “come-back attitude to life”, “search for hope”, “sincere expressions of man’s reaching for perfection”, “the disclosure of moral truth by unmasking a quality secret”, “emphasis on the world of inner consciousness”.

From the choreographic point of view, the dramatic language, use of symbols, music and lighting, the later plays claim a clear-cut deviation from the early ones.

Silhouetting the early plays against the backdrop of “black” stints, we can easily identify the darker elements lurking in the bosom of these plays. Harry Levin in The Power of Blackness upholds the “black” gaining the ascendancy over the “white”. Of course it is an offshoot of Manichaeic dichotomy. To quote him in verbatim “The resulting triptych to shift to a closer metaphor - may resemble a set of photographic negatives. But we stand in slight danger of forgetting that ‘black’ is merely one side - the less popular side of a famous polarity”.¹ However, the power of Blackness is a power which derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations in some shape or other, no deep-thinking mind is always and wholly free. From the point of view of Williams’s plays his declaration is quite apt “The union of opposites, after all, is the very basis of the American outlook, the old and new worlds, the past and present, the self and society, the supernatural and nature.”² So, the “black” elements which are to be sought out from the bosom of the early plays of Tennessee Williams bear full sanction of the scholarly cogitations.

To trace the “fear of loneliness”, i.e. a significant “black” stigma in the early

plays, one doesn't have to grope in dark. The "search for togetherness" is a strategy which ensures solace and comfort to life. All of Williams's people who are possessed of the artistic temperament are reaching out to others, who are often as incomplete as those who initiate the contact. Simply, if the world is an unfriendly and cold place to live in, there is warmth and comfort in deep, trusting companionship, the idea of togetherness, and even love. His fragile people seek each other out, whatever anguish they feel, they know that the pain of life can be alleviated in the presence of others who are similarly pained, as we hear in the concluding lines of the poem "The Interior of the Pocket":

"The way small animals nudge one another at night

As though to whisper

We're close! There is still no danger!"³

The scenes where lonely and hurt creatures reach out to each other are the most touching in Williams's work. Pitted against the strength, the cupidity and the vulgarity of the organized world they often have only their numbers with which to face the onslaught. They are the moths, the roses, the stars, the leaves, the earth which gather in order to ward off the enemy, the predators, the winds, the night which seek their destruction. They are usually fugitives against their will and the aged fighting to glimpse their youth for the last time.

W.L. Dusenbury in The Theme of Loneliness in American Drama affirms "loneliness" as a "black" element - "Laura's horn is the slight limp which she has magnified to make her seem to herself 'a freak' until she has become in a sense just that, knowing how alone she is and always will be, Tom, although he must run away to save himself is forever haunted by a feeling of guilt towards her and pleads that her candles may be extinguished in his memory. As the final curtain falls, Laura blows out the candles, and having then apparently been forgotten by Tom, is left in 'black' loneliness forever."⁴

Almost most of the early plays are ridden with this quality : In The Glass

Menagerie (1945) Tom Wingfield; his father “ who has fallen in love with the long distance” and has gone away thrusting all the responsibilities on his wife Amanda Wingfield’s shoulders; Amanda Wingfield herself, and, her only crippled daughter Laura Wingfield - are all cocooned in their own realms of solitude. That “solitude” is no “bliss”, but an imprecation that lacerates the already-wounded hearts of the characters. The Glass Menagerie is a piece-de-resistance of Williams where, he probes into the deepest recesses of the characters, and comes up with ladles replete with mire that blacken their souls, the malady, perhaps, is “loneliness”. Amanda Wingfield, in the solitary confinement of four brick walls in their tenement at the end of the lane where the “fire escapes commingle”, very often flies on the wings of imagination and to fight off the clutch of “loneliness”, refers to the “seventeen gentleman callers”, she had to treat in her heydays at Blue Mountain. Tom finds relief from the clasp of solitariness in composing poems and frequenting the movies. Laura’s loneliness can find consummation when W.L.Dusenbury in his The Theme of Loneliness in American Drama states - “It is no wonder that Laura suffers from a painful sense of loneliness, for from the first scene to the last, her mother makes her feel her lack of popularity with men and her inability to cope with any kind of social life. Laura’s closing line of the first scene, ‘Mother’s afraid that I’m going to be an old maid’ is complemented by the closing scene in which the gentleman-caller departs, never to return. In the intervening action Laura’s pitiful inner apartness from the life around her is made overt by other incidents. Amanda’s lack of sympathy of the girl’s nervous sickness at business school elicits only Laura’s reply of ‘I couldn’t face it, I couldn’t’. Any contact with people is almost more than Laura can face. Seemingly her only sense of attachment is to her little glass figures, but this feeling of closeness to them is so intense that when Tom throws his coat and accidentally knocks some off the shelf she cries out ‘as if wounded’ and covers her face with her hands. Her devotion to so fragile a material object as the glass menagerie represents the enervation of her spiritual connection to anything.”⁵ Tennessee Williams again says that the light that should encircle Laura in most scenes must not appear realistic, where she is only an onlooker, with a

peculiar pristine clarity such as light used in early religious portraits of female saints or madonnas. Laura's "separation" is thus symbolically, presented by both lighting and staging. Nathan calls her "a creature crippled deeply in inner spirit" and no doubt, her "physical disability" is little in parallel with her "psychological isolation". Tom Wingfield points to Jim O'Connor, the stranger who visits their family on his invitation, as "an emissary from the world that we were somehow set apart from" (The Glass Menagerie). Tom tries to fly off the unbearable clutch of isolation which he experiences at home by hurtling into the great world of reality. Although his concluding lines signify that he could not find a "sense of belonging in motion", he attempted to break the bond that tied him to his mother and made an advance towards it.

In A Street Car Named Desire (1947) (first performed at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, won Pulitzer prize for drama in 1948), Blanche du Bois is the most lonely woman, who has lost her job as school-mistress, whose social reputation is at stake, the meagre property which she possessed has also been sold out. Now she takes a street-car named Desire, and reaches her sister Stella's residence. Her husband Stanley Kowalski welcomes her but later on changes for the worse. However, the solitariness which grips Blanche come ringing through the following extract from Scene V:

"Stella : Blanche, do you want him ?

Blanche : I want to rest ! I want to breathe

quietly again ! Yes - I want Mitch very badly !

Just think ! If it happens ! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem ."

(A Street Car Named Desire)

Blanche wants a person, who can pierce the gossamer of solitariness that nestles round her. Even she implores the paper boy, quite unknown to her, to give

her company. The way she approaches the paper-boy may aver her coquettishness but actually, Blanche is desperate to get rid of her inordinate isolation, that eats her from within. At last, in the last scene (Scene XI), when she is robbed of her virginity by Stanley, and succumbs to the heinous politicking of Stanley and his friends who want to malign her as mentally disbalanced, she wails in despair (perhaps, “a search for hope”): (Holding tight to the Doctor’s arm): “Whoever you’re I’ve always depended upon the kindness of strangers”(A Streetcar Named Desire). She expected, even at the last moment, the arrival of Shep Huntleigh, her faithful friend, but she had to yield to the doctor.

The play Summer and Smoke (1948) begins with a couple of memorable lines quoted from Rilke : “Who if I were to cry out/Would hear me among the angelic orders”? Of course, this is the nub round which the principal characters - Alma Winemiller and John Buchanan revolve. Alma has an inherent holiness and John Buchanan is a man who craves for carnal love. For Alma, “love” is a holy emotion that can attain “perfection” only in the elevated sphere of spirituality. However, in the closing part of the play, she has to shower all her love, latent in her bosom, on a travelling salesman. In Alma, perhaps, we get a faint reflection of Miriam of D.H.Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers. Here, the solitariness of Miriam is less of any account than the “sense of insecurity”, she is engulfed in. Feeling sick, she meets John Buchanan, John blurts out,

”John : Breathe ! ... Out? Breathe ... out!

Alma : Ah

John : Um

Alma : What do you hear ?

John : Just a little voice saying -

“Miss Alma is lonesome”] (She rises and turns her back to him).”

(Summer and Smoke, Scene IV).

The Rose Tattoo (1950) has a different kind of interest. Serafina loses faith in her dead husband Rosario, whom she adored, loved, and hoped to cling to. A "sense of insecurity" caused her to be drawn to Alvaro Mangiacavallo, who could assure her of protection throughout life. The concluding part of the play asserts that Alvaro is the angel of a realm where Serafina might find a ray of hope to take refuge to. The dialogue in Act III Scene III suffices to explain Serafina's quest for security :

"Serafina :Just now, I felt on my breast the burning again of the rose. I know what it means. It means that I have conceived! (she lifts the glass to her lips for a moment and then returns it to Assunta). Two lives again in the body! Two, lives again, two!

Alvaro's voice (nearer now, and sweetly urgent) : Rondinella Felice!

[Alvaro is not visible on the embankment but Serafina begins to move slowly toward his voice]" (The Rose Tattoo)

In both Camino Real (1953), and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955). the terror of loneliness, the fear of insecurity are felt deeply. In Camino Real, the dramatist ~~are~~ relieves the realm of Terra Incognita where the characters are like the pageants on a colourful screen. They come and go, and open their hearts to us. In "Block Ten", perhaps, Jacques and Marguerite add meaning^{to} "loneliness" :

" Marguerite: We are together, breathing quietly together, leaning together, not frightened, now not alone, but completely quietly together."

(Camino Real)

Their interdependence, their proclivity to cling to each other, remind us of Lucky and Pozzo, and Hamm and Clov of Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Endgame simultaneously. In "Block Fourteen", again, "loneliness" becomes a watchword:

" (The Bum leans out his window, draws a deep breath and says) -

Bum : Lonely.

Marguerite (to herself) : Lonely.

Kilroy (on the steps) Lonely." (Camino Real)

A faint sibling of “despair” is heard too. As if, the hopes of life are all evaporated to nullity and life has only to pander the chill of solitariness and hopelessness to men. Cat on Hot Tin Roof (1955), Orpheus Descending (1957), Suddenly Last Summer (1958) and Sweet Bird of Youth (1959) all contain the stigmata - “fear of loneliness” and “insecurity” and a “quiescent reiteration of hopelessness” and “frustration”. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Big Daddy exhorts “Brick on boozing”:

“Life is important. There’s nothing else to hold on to. A man that drinks is throwing his life away. Don’t do it, *hold on to your life. There’s nothing else to hold on to.*” (italics mine)

It seems as if the audience lend their ears to a saga of “life”. Big Daddy clings to the last straw - “hope” against hope. Maggie sets the “fear of loneliness” and “insecurity” at naught, when she says in the concluding part of the play,

“Maggie : Oh you weak, beautiful people who give
up with such grace. What you need is
someone to take hold of you gently, with
love, and hand your life back to you, like
something gold you[^]let go of - and I can !”

(Cat on a Hot Tin Roof)

Again, the dramatist tells in the preface - “It is a lonely idea, a lonely condition, so terrifying to think of that”, as if the reiteration makes the meaning crystal-clear. Orpheus Descending (1957), of course, opens with the “black” chill. In the very

stage direction the playwright describes -

“A great dusty window upstage offers a view of disturbing emptiness that fades into late dusk”. When Val Xavier exudes painfulness, we really feel for him -

“We are all of us sentenced to imprisonment in our own skins for life.”

(Orpheus Descending)

In Suddenly Last Summer and Sweet Bird of Youth, the battered forces of existence are unveiled. Everyman alone, having estranged existence as an island, is again the cynosure of the two above-mentioned plays. Catharine, as well as Mrs. Venable after the death of Sebastian Venable retire in loneliness. The ambience smells of abnormal existence.

In Sweet Bird of Youth, “hopelessness” and “sense of insecurity” remain intermingled. Princess cannot stay without Chance Wayne as she fears to be alone. Again, the “Castration episode” is the darkest part of the play where the sordidness of existence is exposed.

“Lunacy” is another “non-white” streak that makes frequent appearance in Williams’s plays, especially the early ones. As “lunacy” itself cannot stand alone, it is closely associated with two other “black” elements - “neurosis” and “sense of insecurity”. These are the common characteristics of modern individuals who easily come under the vicious cycle of all these pigments, that remain perhaps rooted in their inherent nature. From “sense of insecurity,” “neurosis” may result, again “neurosis” may give rise to “lunacy.” Among Williams’s early plays the cycle comes full circle especially in A Street Car Named Desire, Suddenly Last Summer and in those plays where the streaks are present but not in such prevalent manner are The Glass Menagerie, Summer and Smoke, Orpheus Descending.

Why is “insanity” taken to be a derivative of “sense of insecurity”? “Sense of insecurity” is a destructive propensity which shoves an oppressed person to the verge

of precarious mental balance that very often bumps into “psychological disbalance”. “Security is mortal’s chiefest enemy”, says Hamlet, the Shakespearean protagonist. Even then, “Security” is much sought-after protective shield of each and every life. But Williams’s characters are so sensitive that they often draw an invisible deadline to salubrious thinking and yields place to imaginary, “undefined feelings”. To the reader’s utter dismay they observe that their troubles originate more often in faulty neurological mechanisms. Herein lies the cause for the “madness” that eats into the entrails of the characters Williams etches quite sincerely.

On inception, the characters have an inclination towards mental illness where a quirk often shakes their inner selves violently thrusting them into mental maladies. They either fear to encounter the world or beat a retreat from the world populated with individuals like their own or different from themselves. To be true, the early plays mostly deal with such kind of “hypersensitive characters”. The unaccountable intention to close their door upon the world outside, often gives rise to a “fugitive tendency”. They feel an urge to escape from the meaningless world they inhabit.

John Von Szeliski, directly deals with this matter in his Tragedy and Fear (pp. 44-45): “The Glass Menagerie and A Street Car named Desire are respectively lyric and violent dramatizations of sensitive women who lead lives of repressed desperation or neurotic dreaming because their senses are too thinly armored for dealing with the coarse world around them. In the former play, their sensual delicacy ensures their continual failure in a social atmosphere which has traded gentility for brutality and the idea also carries over to Tom, the central figure”.⁶ Laura like most of the characters of Williams is a sensitive, misunderstood exile, a recurrent character in Williams’s works, one of the “fugitive kind”, who are too fragile to live in the malignant world.

“As to the latter, Williams said that A Streetcar’s theme is that the ‘apes will inherit the earth’. This variation of Anderson’s expression of human destiny emphasizes a vision of man’s anthropological regression, with animalism and loveless sensuality

seem as throttling reason, compassion and morality. Williams's sensitive protagonists cannot make successful adjustment to this kind of life-problem without becoming animals themselves and, failing this, they are destroyed." Thus, this unusual freak in the individual's character gives rise to "insanity" that ruins them, at last. Hypersensitivity leads to mental disbalance as detected in Blanche du Bois or Amanda Wingfield.

Again, in Summer and Smoke as in Sophie Treadwell's Machinal the seed of destruction lies embedded in sexual maladjustment. Frigidity is not only a tragic weakness but it gives rise to psychic imbalance as we see in Alma's strange behaviour towards the last of the play, Summer and Smoke, where she buries her past "puritan" self, and has recourse to a new "abnormal" self where sexual repression is a vice, sexual promiscuity is a welcome relief. Towards the conclusion of the play, Summer and Smoke, Alma who bore pugnacity to any kind of sexual approach lastly yields to a mean offer of a travelling salesman. If reasons can be traced back, then perhaps, John Buchanan's infidelity towards her shoved her to such a tragic extremity. The conversation that drags the play on to its conclusion really astounds us:

"Alma : There's not much to do in this town after dark, but there are resorts on the lake that offer all kinds of after-dark entertainment. There's one called Moon Lake Casino. Its under new management now, but I don't suppose its character has changed.

The young Man : What was its characters....

Alma : Gay, very gay, Mr. Kramer

Young Man : Then what in hell are we sitting here for? Vamonos!

Alma : Como no, Senior !

Young Man : Ha-ha-ha! (She jumps up)

I'll call a taxi,(He goes off shouting 'Taxi')

(Summer and Smoke).

Should we point it out to be an effect of hypersensitivity yielding to profligacy that is, of course, a symptom of psychic failure !

So far as the “black” pigments in Williams’s plays are concerned, none can deny that one “black” element is interwoven with other disagreeable elements as broken arcs destined to form a full circle, “Human incapability to endure” often serves the cause of lunacy that ruins most of Williams’s characters. In both Suddenly Last Summer and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof we find the disaster of the protagonists rooted in this flaw. The misfits who cannot adjust with the ways of the world, the lost souls who expect a lot from this universe at last drift into mental imbalance or verge onto severe lunacy. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Brick like most of the Ibsenian characters, is at the tether’s end . Big Daddy loses all faith even upon the love of Big Mama that sustained him throughout his life. In Act II, he nonchalantly gives a clear expression to his misgivings :

“ Big Mama : Oh, Big Daddy, Oh, oh, oh, Big Daddy !

Big Daddy - What’s the matter with you?

Big Mama : In all these years you never believed that I loved you!

Big Daddy : Huh ?

Big Mama : And I did, I did so much I did love you! I even loved your hate and your hardness Big Daddy.

(she sobs and rushes awkwardly out on to the gallery).

Big Daddy : (to himself) Wouldn’t it be funny if that was true...”

(Cat on a Hot Tin Roof).

Thus, “lunacy” is partially analogous to the “expectation” and its “betrayal”, as Maggie in the last scene wants to overcome her sense of futility by embracing the last stubble of expectation - begetting a child. She thus asserts a “comeback attitude” to the

otherwise hollow universe.

In Suddenly Last Summer, the memory of a dead lover haunts Catharine like a nightmare. The memoirs of the dead poet Sebastian Venable are demanded to be lobotomized off her brain by Mrs. Venable. But, the shock of the brutal hacking of Sebastian by the aboriginal, famished young band, can hardly be overcome. Both of them take a sad turn towards lunacy when the world casts a pall of dolour in front of their “will to live”, their interest to survive. Catharine cannot bear the onus of relating the sad memory to Mrs. Venable and at last she sobs off her sorrow on the arms of Dr. Cukrowitz who went on interrogating him. She gasps : “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 on earth could possibly believe it, and I don’t blame them ! -*They had devoured parts of him* (Mrs. Venable cries out softly).(*italics mine*) (Suddenly Last Summer, Scene IV)

Princess Kosmonopolis of Sweet Bird of Youth, Serafina Delle Rose of The Rose Tattoo, Lady Torrance of Orpheus Descending - all incline towards mental disbalance due to numerous reasons like “sense of insecurity”, “mutual distrust”, and “hurt feelings”.

Williams admits that from the time he was fourteen, he was a “dedicated writer” and that from the beginning his own fear and terror of losing what he most loved gave his writing “an atmosphere of hysteria and violence”(Signi Falk). His first story, “The Vengeance of Nitocris”, a violent piece written when he was sixteen, “Set the keynote for the most of his work that followed.”⁸

The next cluster of “black” elements, that abound in Williams’s early plays are mainly - “the high-soaring imagination of the characters that hardly finds fulfilment”, “endless waiting”, “frustration”, “despair”, “painfulness” and consequent “alienation”. Dissecting all the major early plays we come across each of these elements

that in one way or other contributes to the shaping of the play and justifying the epithet - "black" plays. These four elements mentioned above are correlated to each other and in a group leads on to the protagonist's or the central character's disaster and ultimate doom.

"It is that despair, this sickness in the self, is the sickness unto death. The despairing man is mortally ill. In an entirely different sense than can appropriately be said of any disease, we may say that the sickness has attacked the noblest part; and yet the man cannot die This is the situation in despair. And however, thoroughly it eludes the attention of the despairer, and however thoroughly the despairer may succeed (as in the case of that kind of despair which is characterized by unawareness of being in despair) in losing himself entirely, and losing himself in such a way that it is not noticed in the least."⁹

In The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee Williams's major theatrical success, a me'lange of all of the "black" elements seem to be present in adequate proportions. R.B. Stein in his article "The Glass Menagerie Revisited : Catastrophe without violence" states that: "The Glass Menagerie" projects not a series of violent confrontations leading to catastrophe but a vision of lonely human beings who fail to make contact, who are isolated from each other and from society, and who seem ultimately abandoned in the universe."¹⁰

Even in that deplorable plight, Tom aspires to "go to the moon", Amanda Wingfield remembers the halcyon days of blue mountain and vicariously revives the charm while she dresses up Laura to entertain the gentleman caller Jim O'Connor. Amanda has high hopes about her daughter getting forever attached to the gentleman caller. Laura is quite happy to remain in her self-made universe, where she feels comfortable, cosy.

But, all their high ambitions, fall on the thorns of despair and get pricked to a sorry state. Tom, who has deep fascination for poetry, feels entrapped in his routine job at the factory, a job which hinders the smooth way of his towering imagination, ^{crushes} his

sensitive spirit, a job which acts as a blockade in the way of fulfilment of his ^{soaring hopes} and dreams, though it is retained, owing to a sense of responsibility to his mother and sister. "I'm leading double life", he tells his mother, "a simple honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic Czar of the underworld", (The Glass Menagerie). "Either Tom stays inside, working for the Continental Shoemakers to pay the rent of the apartment, or he runs away to the merchant marines, gets free to write his play"¹¹ .

In case of Laura, who has her dreams hovering over Jim of her childhood days, also, has to alight abruptly from the empyrean heights. Her favourite collection of glass animals received the first jolt when Tom rushed for the door threatening to explode all their illusions. The gentleman caller Jim O'Connor is also seemingly the embodiment of all the desires of Amanda and Laura. The gentleman caller is the long-delayed but always-expected something that we live for ! While joining Jim in dance on his entreaties, a horn of the unicorn (an extinct animal) falls on the floor and breaks. But, Laura this time does not shriek in pain but says "It is no tragedy, Freckles". Her hopes and wishes are yet to get a jolt, in the maximum, when Jim departs never to return. In the words of Scheye again, "In the final scene, Laura stops her pursuit and takes her place in the past. A conjuring trick, the gentleman caller, has shown Laura, what Tom could never tell her; that her life is on the other side of the scrim which divides illusion and reality, in the dark."¹² Thus, the bubble of "soaring imagination" gets pricked and at last evaporates in the air itself.

In The Glass Menagerie, the unfulfilment of the high hopes did not give birth to lunacy, rather the whole family had been doomed to frustration. Rather a violent clash of illusion and reality leads on to a resultant despair. Jim O'Connor is a most sought-for man whom Laura requires in her life as her consort to come out of the cocoon of insecurity and "lonesome" plight. The angel of hope preaches gospels of confidence and places Laura amidst a group of "disappointed persons". He says- "But just look around and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are. For instance, I hoped when I

“I was going to high school that I would be further along at this time six years later, than I am now”.

(The Glass Menagerie)

Surprisingly enough, while trying to convince Laura that she must not suffer from a negative feeling of inferiority, he soon betrays his own fear and insecurity. Six years have passed and he still is “planning to get in on the ground floor”. Tom, himself is at last in the clasp of endless hopelessness. He says in the closing scene, “I left St. Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for the last time and followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps”.(The Glass Menagerie) But his heart still pines for Laura, his only sister. “Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes” - “oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be.” (The Glass Menagerie)

Francis Donahue in The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams makes it vivid. The hopelessness of Amanda’s existence is framed by the humble tenement-environment to which she and her family are now reduced. They are far from the highly cultivated soil of the South, having been transplanted to a Northern Urban area.”¹³

Amanda whose aim is to find a suitable groom for Laura, helps her daughter secure a business education. As it later develops, Laura gets enrolled in a business school but being unable to face the realities of life, becomes violent. When she takes her first examination, she leaves school and never comes to join again. But she never reveals the truth to her mother. Every day, while her mother thinks she is at school, Laura walks in the park, visits the botanical gardens, and sometimes even goes without lunch in order to use her allowance to go to the movies. ‘But even like Azzaro, the spoilt child of Ben Okri’s Booker Prize - winning Novel (1991), The Famished Road, Laura and Amanda Wingfield have to face the reality. They decide to go on living on earth.

In A Street Car Named Desire the central character Blanche du Bois, had

high hopes regarding her property at Belle Reve, and also of her conjugal life with Allan Grey. But all her skyrocketing ambitions are frustrated and she accepts a lascivious life, to which she can neither conform nor can come out easily. Allan, in spite of his over-refinement, had a blemish on his character which was enough to shatter Blanche's dreams. Arthur Ganz, in his well-written article, "The Desperate Morality of the plays of Tennessee Williams", has pointed out, "For Blanche, who has lost the plantation of Belle Reve, the beautiful dream of a life of gracious gentility, is an exile like the homosexual (her husband)".¹⁴

This belying of hopes attains the climax when her brother-in-law sexually torments her. Thereafter, deep frustration sets in. She loses faith in both people and life itself. Later on, while Stanley Kowalski, to veil his own guilt maligns her as "lunatic" and compels her to go to a lunatic asylum, her nerves are almost at the point of snapping. In Scene XI, she comes to know about the "plotting" against her, and it comes to her as a blow. In Ibsen's Ghosts when Mrs. Alving came to know that the search for "Sun" is Oswald's ultimate earthly quest, she screamed and cried bitterly. Oswald urged: "And let us live together as long as we can. Thank you, mother." But here Blanche does not get the warmth of feeling even from her sister.

It is clear from the following dialogues:

" [The sound of this new voice shocks Blanche, she makes a shocked gesture
Stella nods and looks quickly away]

Blanche : What's going on here ?

[She turns from Stella to Eunice and back to Stella...]

Blanche (continuing) What's happened here?

Stella (agonizingly): Hush ! Hush !

Eunice : Hush ! Hush !

Blanche : Why are you looking at me like that ?

Is something wrong with me ?

Eunice : You look wonderful, Blanche.

Don't she look wonderful ?

Stella : Yes?⁷

(A Street car Named Desire)

Blanche smells collusion in the air. She declares at last : "I'm anxious to get out of here - the place is a trap!"

Even her own sister unwittingly joins the hostile camp. At last, when instead of Shep Huntleigh, whom she had been expecting within a few days, she is handed over to a Doctor and Matron of lunatic asylum, she cannot believe her senses. She, on flimsy excuses goes inside. But, she cannot escape the sinister snares she had been in. In Scene XI :

“ Stanley : She says that she forgot something.

[The echo sounds in threatening whispers]

Matron : That's all right.

Stanley : What did you forget, Blanche ?

Blanche : I - I

Matron : It don't matter, we can pick it up later.

Stanley : Sure, we can send it along with the trunk.

Blanche (retreating in panic) : *I don't know you - don't know you. I want to be left alone , please !(italics mine)*

Matron : Now, Blanche !⁷⁷

(A Street Car Named Desire)

At last, Blanche is driven away having none to feel for her, only her sister Stella lamenting ! “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? (She tries to break from Eunice’s arms). But the tragedy of Blanche leads her from utter frustration to complete alienation - within a few moments, she gets adjusted to her plight and implores the Doctor for a little compassion.

In Summer and Smoke, The Rose Tattoo, Cat on a Tin Roof, the “Black” elements like “soaring imagination receiving an abrupt jolt”, “frustration” and consequent “alienation” are not altogether absent.

In Summer and Smoke, John Buchanan the young doctor and Alma Winemiller are individuals having different attitudes towards love and sex. Alma was too puritan while John was driven by natural instinct. He was flirtatious, lusty and had a deep sexual longing too. However, in the long last, Alma is driven to promiscuity like Blanche in A Street Car, after losing faith in love-bondage, she shared with John Buchanan. Williams is deeply interested in Alma. He has said repeatedly that Alma is his most favourite character : “I think, the character I like most is Miss Alma. She really had the greatest struggle. You see, Alma went through the same thing I went through - from *puritanical shackles* to, well, *complete profligacy*- Freedom, Liberation from taboos.”¹⁵ (italics mine)

In Scene VII, a conversation in between Alma and John makes it clear why Alma turns to a different life. She adds a new meaning to alienation, rather she escapes her insanity through a nonsensical relationship.

Alma : So that is your high conception of human desires. What you have here is not the anatomy of a beast, but a man. And I-I reject your opinion of where love is

and the kind of truth you believe the brain to be seeking ! There is something not shown on the Chart.

“ John : You mean the part that Alma is Spanish^{for,} do you ?

Alma : Yes, that’s not shown on the anatomy chart! But it’s there, just the same, yes there! Somewhere not seen but there. But its ‘that’ that I loved you, with that! Not what you mention ! - Yes, did love you with - John, did nearly die of when you hurt me!

(John turns slowly to her and speaks gently)

John : *I wouldn’t have made love to you. (italics mine)*

Alma (Uncomprehendingly) What ?” (Summer and Smoke)

Thus, her frustration sets in, and she responds to the call of the young salesman. However, Williams has maintained that Alma’s passion is healthy, “What is frustrated about loving with such white-hot intensity that it alters the whole direction of your life, and removes you from the parlor of an Episcopal rectory to a secret room above Moon Lake Casino!”¹⁶ Thus both in A Street Car and Summer and Smoke a conflict between “puritan” and “cavalier” has been hinted at.

The Rose Tattoo is a play regarding infidelity in husband-wife relationship. Here “high-soaring imagination” of the wife Serafina Delle Rose centres round deep respect and devotion to her husband. But lastly after her husband’s death *duêto anâccident*, she comes to know that her husband was not faithful to her. Williams depicts Serafina as a woman with a “woman’s heart passionately in love” idealizing her marriage with Rosario. After his death, too, she goes on idealizing their relationship. For that reason only, she sequesters herself from the real world. She has his “heart in the marble urn with the ashes”, she lives in the past, reveres the memory and talks to the ashes.

Later on, when she comes to know that Rosario has “defiled their marriage

bed", she gives up adoring past memories. When reality dawns upon her, Serafina speaks out - "A man, when he burns, leaves only a handful of ashes, no woman can hold him. The wind must blow him away". (The Rose Tattoo). But here alienation finds a deviation, Serafina gets mentally aligned with Alvaro, while past memories are lost to her for ever.

In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof "high hopes receiving sad rebuffs", "frustration" "alienation" are not the major "black" elements to be found. Rather, "mendacity", and "perversity of longing" (i.e. homosexuality) are brought to the fore. Foster Hirsch remarks: "It is ironic that Williams is obsessed here with the theme of mendacity. He rates his characters according to their ability to speak the truth. Big Daddy, especially hates lies and liars, and unlike Brick, he can accept the truth about himself, he demands the truth about his illness just as Brick avoids the truth about his sexual feelings."¹⁷ "Homosexuality" is also a "black" streak for which Maggie accuses Brick, having homosexual relationship with Skipper.

In the last four remaining plays, Camino Real, Orpheus Descending, Suddenly Last Summer, Sweet Bird of Youth too the manifestation of the above mentioned group of "black elements" is quite prominent. Kilroy of Camino Real, Val Xavier of Orpheus Descending Sebastian Venable of Suddenly Last Summer, Princess Kosmonopolis and Chance Wayne of Sweet Bird of Youth all had their hopes smashed to pieces and the upshots are "deep frustration" and "alienation". A "sense of loss" pervades Sweet Bird of Youth. Chance Wayne, after loving Heavenly from the core of his heart receives a great blow. He opens his heart to Princess Kosmonopolis, in Act I Sc. II - "I gave people more than I took. Middle aged people I gave back a feeling of youth. Lovely girls? Understanding, appreciation! An absolutely convincing show of affection. Sad people, lost people? Something light and uplifting. Eccentrics? Tolerance, even odd things they long for".

But always just at the point when I might get something back that would solve my own need, which was great, to rise to their level, the memory of my girl would

pull me back home to her”.

(Sweet Bird of Youth)

But Chance's hopes are all marred when Heavenly went on saying “Chance go away! Chance you're a liar”, “My father's right about you”, so on and so forth. Her father had been a political nob who bore hatred against Chance Wayne and held his daughter back from forming any deep meaningful relationship with the swindler. A “sense of loss” gnaws Princess Kosmonopolis's heart too. In Act II, Scene II, she says - “All day I've kept hearing a sort of lament that drifts through the air of this place. It says, “*Lost, lost, never to be found again.*” (italics mine)(Sweet Bird of Youth) This sigh swishes on through the play, dragging it to the bottom of despair.

According to Arthur Ganz : “In Suddenly Last Summer, Williams has produced a work in which the homosexual - so often for him the symbol of the lonely, rejected, exile - becomes the rejector the sinner who must be punished.¹⁸ Thus, the central character “the exile homosexual”, has met a violent death before the play opens.

Orpheus Descending, Suddenly Last Summer, Camino Real, all these three plays contain the vision of “universal corruption”, a “black element” again. In a world where “cruelty” is the main key, the innocents are not only pulled down to destruction, but they too are corrupted along with “Time”. Kilroy (Camino Real), Val Xavier (Orpheus Descending), Sebastian Venable (Suddenly Last Summer) are all wandering innocents yielding to the sinister motive of the world. Williams has said flatly that the sinister fantasy world of Camino Real is nothing more nor less than his conception of the time and the world that he lives in.

“By now it should be clear that Tennessee Williams's real subject is the Painfulness (not the tragedy) of existence, and the fate of human dignity (not of the soul) in the face of suffering. It should also be clear that however neurotic Williams himself may be and however widely neurosis enters into and affects his work, there is little point in looking for the roots of his art and less in searching out, the meaning of any particular play, on one or another categorical. Freudian plot of ground, because to Williams ‘everything’ is painful-sexuality, touch, communication, time, the bruteness of fact, the necessity of lie, the loss of innocence. And finally, it should be clear that Williams has alternatively been elegist, soothsayer, mythmaker, exorcist or consoler-none of the

incarnations final and no one incarnation carried through to finality".¹⁹

Now , "confined solitary existence", "love and escape penchant", are to be pointed out as "Black" elements in the "early" or "black" plays of Tennessee Williams, "It is a dilemma that Williams never resolved, in play after play restaging this conflict between love and escape".²⁰

"Love and escape" is a theme, which is nothing new to either The Glass Menagerie or A Street Car named Desire, Jim O'Connor comes and toys with Laura's emotions and bids adieu to her. "Love" for Laura is a "bliss in solitude", while Jim makes an escape for ever.

In A Street Car, Blanche losing all hopes of life tries to find meaning of life in a bondage with Mitch, but lastly Mitch too eludes all her hopes. Love creeps in both Blanche's and Mitch's souls, when their conversation in Scene VI takes a remarkable turn -

" Blanche : You talked to your mother about me ?

Mitch : Yes.

Blanche : Why ?

Mitch : I told my mother, how nice you were and I liked you.

Blanche: Were you sincere about this ?

Mitch : You know I was.

And lastly,

Mitch (drawing her slowly into his arms) : *You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be you and me, Blanche ?*

(She stares at him *vacantly* for a moment).

Then with a soft cry huddles in his embrace.

Blanche : Sometimes - There's God - so - quickly." (italics mine)
(A Street Car Named Desire)

But, the love that soothes Blanche's heart, loses its pristine azureness and becomes dusky in appearance. Mitch, who sought for her hands later on gets vitiated by Stanley Kowalski's mean plans against Blanche. He sprinkles blemishes on her character and tells Mitch about it. In Scene IX, the illusion of love is evaporated -

" Blanche : What do you want ?

Mitch : (fumbling to embrace her) : What I been missing all summer.

Blanche: *Then marry me, Mitch !*

Mitch : *I don't think I want to marry you any more.*

Blanche : No ?" (italics mine) (A Street Car Named Desire)

She like Alma, is bruised mentally, all her tender feelings, emotions, sensibilities get numbed.

In Summer and Smoke, The Rose Tattoo, Suddenly Last Summer, and Sweet Bird of Youth love is depicted as an illusion - far from reality itself. In The Rose Tattoo, Rosario plays with the devotion and love of his wife, Serafina delle Rose, who at last comes out of the illusion. In Suddenly Last Summer and Sweet Bird of Youth, too, love is sure to bring the dazed persons to a disillusioned clarity.

"Ironically, the 'escape' of these characters becomes a prison, confining and degrading the prisoner and sometimes others with him. It is this basic inability to cope with reality, this deliberate and destructive evasion of the truth, that Williams seems to emphasize as a dominant trait of his problem characters. Much of the substance of

his plays follows the thematic process of uncovering such evaded and veiled reality - a revelation which inevitably resolves into crumbled illusions.”²¹

W.L.Dusenbury believes that, “the theme of escape is one of the most common in modern drama, because of the deterministic cynicism of the twentieth century, which has left no other solution.”²²

The last group of “black” elements to be taken into consideration is “oppressor-oppressed complex”, “mendacity”, “sado-masochistic tendency”, and finally “death” syndrome.

Elmer Rice in his play Street Scene wittily comments on “oppression” itself:-

“That’s all there is in life - nothing but pain. From before we’re born, until we die | Everywhere you look, oppression and cruelty! If it doesn’t come from Nature, it comes from humanity-Humanity trampling on itself and tearing at its own throat. The whole world is nothing but a blood stained arena, filled with misery and suffering. It’s too high a price to pay for life - life isn’t worth it!”

This is true to the core. The memorable utterance of Val Xavier (in Orpheus Descending) clearly forks menfolk and womenfolk into two sharp halves. “There’s just two kinds of people, the ones that are ‘bought’ and the ‘buyers’ - perhaps an early version of the ‘eaten’ and ‘eaters’, more appropriately of the ‘oppressed’ and the ‘oppressor’”. Again, most of Williams’s male characters like Stanley Kowalski (A Street Car), John Buchanan (Summer and Smoke), Tom’s father (The Glass Menagerie), Jim O’Connor (The Glass Menagerie), Rosario (The Rose Tattoo) are “sadists”, while Laura (The Glass Menagerie), Amanda (The Glass Menagerie), Blanche (A Street Car), Alma Winemiller (Summer and Smoke), Serafina (The Rose Tattoo) are “masochists”, feeble enough to oppose their male counterparts. Regarding “oppressed-oppressor” complex, Foster Hirsch (in The Portrait of the Artist) is definitely eloquent, “Stripped, Blanche goes mad and Stanley finally gets the dame who called him common. He wins; the brute stalks the

earth unchecked. Williams appreciates Blanche's culture and he certainly sympathizes with her as a born victim, but he chooses Stanley ; the materialist triumphs over the romantic. The outcome of the clash is presented however, as grim necessity rather than joyous victory, Williams makes it clear that he considers 'realism' a limited approach to life, but whether we like it or not, we must, finally accept it.²³

Jim proves himself to be a "sadist" oppressor by taking opportunity of Laura's weakness. Laura, on the other hand, tolerates everything with mute submission even when Jim says that he has some other girl Bettie waiting for him, Laura does not protest, but swallows the pain down, proving herself to be a "masochist".

In Summer and Smoke, Alma's "masochism" is pronounced when being snubbed by John Buchanan, again and again, she goes on loving him still lastly he blurts out that he'll be unable to marry her.

In Orpheus Descending too, we get a clear picture of "oppressed-oppressor" relationship. In Act II, as Lady accuses David Cutrere -

"Lady ... But I had your child in my body the summer you quit me, the summer they burned my father in his wine garden, and you you washed your hands clear of any connection with a Dago Bootlegger's daughter and
David : I didn't know

Lady : I wanted death after that, but death don't come when you want it, it comes when you don't want it. I wanted death, then, but I took the next best thing. You sold yourself. I sold myself. You was bought, I was bought. You made whores of us both."

(Orpheus Descending)

"Death-syndrome" is pronounced in almost all the early plays, especially Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Suddenly Last Summer, Sweet Bird of Youth, Orpheus Descending.

In Act II, in Orpheus Descending;

6 Lady says, "And I remember asking her one time, Zia Teresa, how does it feel to die ? Only a little girl would ask such a question, ha ha ! Oh, and I remember the answer she said - 'it's a lonely feeling'".?

"Black" plays are not wholly "black". Some "non black" elements are present in these plays as mentioned earlier.

"Search for hope amidst hopelessness" is a "non-black" element. Even if Jim O'Connor leaves never^{to} turn up, Laura and Amanda do not give up all hopes of living, they still live for something "long-delayed but always expected". In A Street Car, Blanche keeps hoping till end that her "messiah" Shep Huntleigh, must emerge from nowhere and save her from the stifling situation in Stanley's world. The airplane 'Fugitive' is the embodiment of all hopes in Camino Real. It is either death at the hands of the street-cleaners or escape via airplane for the traveller of the road of reality, Marguerite, in Black Nine says 'Fugitive' is the only "way to escape from this abominable place". In Suddenly Last Summer, Sweet Bird of Youth, The Rose Tattoo, Summer and Smoke - in all these plays, a reverting from all hopelessness to "life" is detected.

"The disclosure of moral truth by unveiling a guilty secret" is also a "non-black" streak. In The Rose Tattoo, Serafina's husband's infidelity to her, in Suddenly Last Summer, the truth regarding Sebastian Venable's death, being disclosed by Catherine are the examples of this element. This element has a panacea of "purgation" and "cure" in its bosom. "Mendacity" of course, is an abominable "black" streak.

Moving completely into her world of illusion, Blanche writes a letter to Shep Huntleigh - a letter full of lies. She pretends to be deeply involved in this company of rich friends. At this juncture one can sense a note of hysteria in her world of illusion. Later, on hearing the neighbours quarrel, she comes up with a strange fact that she is compiling a notebook full of quaint words and phrases that she has picked up while living

with them - a sarcasm uncalled-for, and quite spiteful. It is here that Stanley stuns her. He broaches that he has already formed a suspicion that she is not exactly the lady she pretends to be. He has garnered a lot of information about her.

Blanche tells Stella that she herself will leave before Stanley throws her out. This too is a "lie" - she has no intention of leaving for she has become interested in Mitch who seems to her to be the best among Stanley's friends. But Blanche cannot relate to Mitch either, on a realistic plane. Acting her role of Southern belle, she plays coy with him - yet she invites him in the absence of her hosts. She tells him not to switch on the lights and to pretend they were Bohemians in a Paris cafe'. She starts talking in French to him. Her behaviour puzzles Mitch. As Benjamin Nelson puts it:

"She is trapped in a terrifying contradiction. Her need to be special, to adhere to codes, and a tradition no longer valid creates an intense isolation. While simultaneously, her desire not to be alone, to be loved threatens to break through the isolation."²⁴

A Street Car is quite similar to Strindberg's play Miss Julie. Both heroines evade the reality about themselves. Lady Julie is irresistibly attracted to her servant Jean and Strindberg lets her "imagine that she loves him in a higher sense as a means of protecting and excusing herself" (Strindberg's Preface to Lady Julie) (August Strindberg; Preinferno play). It is upto Jean to brutally remind her with examples from her family that her rich fine world is lacking in morals. Like Stanley, he is of the earth, coarse and direct. Lady Julie, like Blanche is a dreamer - vulnerable, and self-deceptive and the end of both these women is equally tragic.

Williams admits that since he was fourteen he was a dedicated writer and that from the beginning his own fear and terror of losing what he most loved gave his writing an atmosphere of hysteria and violence. His first story "The Vengeance of Nitocris," a violent piece written when he was sixteen set the Keynote for most of his

work that followed. "I have a distinct moral attitude ... I think any of my plays examined closely will indicate what I regard as evil. I think I regard *hypocrisy* and *mendacity*, as almost the cardinal sins."²⁵ (italics mine)

By now it should be clear that Tennessee Williams's real subject is the painfulness (not the tragedy) of existence and the fate of human dignity (not of the soul) in the face of suffering. It should also be clear that however neurotic Williams himself may be and however widely neurosis enters into and affects his work, there is little point in looking for the roots of his art, and less in searching out the meaning of any particular play, on one or another categorical Freudian plot of ground.

"Sincere expressions of man's reaching for perfection" and "emphasis on the world of inner consciousness" are expressed through philosophical musings of different characters of the early plays in different contexts. For example, in Sweet Bird of Youth, Chance Wayne's understanding of transience of life and the eternity of "Time" are expressed in the following sayings :

"Chance : It goes tick tick, it's quieter than your heart-beat, but it's slow dynamite, a gradual explosion, blasting the world we lived into burnt-out pieces - Time - who could beat it who could defeat it ever ? May be some saints and heroes, but not Chance Wayne."

(Sweet Bird of Youth, Act III)

In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, "sincerest expression of Man's search for perfection" is heard from Big Mama in Act III . She says :

"Time goes by so fast. Nothin' can outrun if Death commences too early - almost before you're half-acquainted with life - you meet with the other. Oh, you know we just got to love each other, an'stay together all of us just as close we can, specially now that such a 'black' thing has come and moved into this place without invitation".

The idea of perfect freedom of man has been compared with that of a bird in Orpheus Descending by the Lady :

“If one of them (legless) birds ever dies and falls on the ground and you happen to find it, I wish you would show it to me because I think may be you just imagine there is a bird of that kind in existence. Because I don’t think nothing living has ever been that free not even nearly”.

(Orpheus Descending Act I Scene II)

Three questions that torment the Universal Man are stated by Kilroy in Camino Real in Block Three :

Kilroy : Man whenever you see those three brassballs on a street, you don’t have to look a long way for a gipsy. Now let me think. I am faced with three problems. One : I’m *hungry*. Two : I’m *lonely*. Three : I’m in a *place where I don’t know what it is* or how I got there! (italics mine) (Camino Real)

Writing on the necessity of dramatic dialogue Allardyce Nicoll says : “Action is to drama what his body is to man, in its language resides the drama’s soul. A playwright essentially is, or should be an artist in words”.²⁶ In the preface to Cat on a Hot Tin Roof Williams declared that, “a morbid shyness” prevented him from communicating to the people, at large. So while he had to reveal the “troubled conscience of his characters”, mere conversation proved futile. Hence, his dialogue was laden with oral suggestiveness.

In The Glass Menagerie, Amanda’s reverie in which she combined the past, present and future, in a meaningful unity marked, perhaps, the landmark of poetic dialogue, “Well, in the South we had so many servants, gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living, gone completely”. The dialogue of Blanche in A Street Car Named Desire approximated to this condition. After the rape-scene Blanche’s disillusionment was climactic :

“ Stella : Sit down and -

Blanche : I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I'm going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I'm going to die on the sea. You know what I shall be of ?” (A Street Car Named Desire)

Of course, it is the language of incantation cradled in the severity of poetic discipline. As Shaw's Candida is rich in poetic dialogue, Williams's too could stake a claim to that, especially for his early plays. In Camino Real, while Jacques and Marguerite talked of futility of love, the dialogue touched the zenith of poetry :

“ Jacques : Why does disappointment make people unkind to each other ?

Marguerite : Each of us is very much alone

Jacques : Only if we distrust each other

Marguerite : We have to distrust each other.

It is our only defence against betrayal.” (Camino Real, Block Ten)

Talking on the poetic dialogue of Williams's early plays, Bentley commented, “That Tennessee Williams stands head and shoulders above Haines, Miller - you would notice, I think if you dropped in on A Street Car Named Desire, at any time, during the evening for so much as five minutes. You should be struck by the far greater liveliness of the dialogue, a liveliness quite different from the machine-made slickness of the play doctors, a liveliness that the American Theatre has heard from only two or three playwrights. It is a dialogue caught from actual life and then submitted to only the gentlest treatment at the hands of the playwrights. In such a dialogue, as Odets showed us ten years ago - some approach to American life is possible. Life is no longer encased in wisecracks. Its subtle and changing contours are suggested by the melody and rhythm and passion of active speech.”²⁷

“Black” plays are not altogether “black” they have “white” streaks in them. The early plays reveal a Williams who thinks of man and is out to point out the cancerous corruption, that eats the world away, Tennessee Williams tries to give a solution to each “black” problem with a “non-black” antidote.

WORKS CITED

1. Levin, Harry : The Power of Blackness, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958, p. 15-16.
2. Ibid.
3. Skloot, Robert, “Submitting Self to Flame : The Artist’s quest in Tennessee Williams, 1935-1954”. Educational Theatre Journal Vol. 25, No.2, May 1973, p.202.
4. Dusenbury, Winifred, L : The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama, University of Florida, 1960, p.136.
5. Ibid.
6. Szeliski, John Von : Tragedy and Fear : Why Modern Tragic drama fails, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1971, p.44-45.
7. Ibid.
8. Falk, Signi : Tennessee Williams, Twayne Publishers, 1978, p.22.
9. Kierkegaard Søren : Translated by Walter Lowrie : Fear and Trembling and The Sickness, Unto Death, Princeton University Press, USA 1968, p.154.
10. Stein, R.B. : “The Glass Menagerie Rvisited : Catastrophe without Violence”, from Western Humanities Review XVIII (1964) , p.141.
11. Scheye, Thomas, E : “The Glass Menagerie : It’s no tragedy, Freckles”, Ed. by Jac Tharpe, Tennessee Williams : A Tribute, University Press of

Mississippi , 1977, p.208.

12. Ibid., p. 212.
13. Donahue, Francis : The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams : Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York, 1964.
14. Ganz, Arthur : "The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams," American Scholar, 1962, pp. 278-294.
15. Gaines, Jim : "A Talk about Life and Style with Tennessee Williams." The Saturday Review, April 29, 1972, p.27.
16. Hirsch, Foster : A Portrait of the Artist : The Plays of Tennessee Williams, Kennikat Press, 1979, p. 28.
17. Ibid., p.52.
18. Ganz, Arthur : The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams, American Scholar, Spring 1962, pp. 280-282.
19. Gassner, John ⁴:"Tennessee Williams, 1944-1966" in his Theatre at the Crossroads : Plays and Playwrights of the Mid century American Stage, New York ; Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1960, pp. 77-91.
20. Bigsby, C.W.E. : A Critical Introduction to American Drama, Vol. II, London, Cambridge 1984, p.30.
21. McBride Mary : "Prisoners of Illusion : Surrealistic Escape in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore" from Jac Tharpe ed: Tennessee Williams : A Tribute, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1977, p.341.
22. Dusenbury, Winifred L : The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama, University of Florida, 1960, p.136.

23. Hirsch, Foster : A Portrait... p.34.
24. Nelson, Benjamin : Tennessee Williams : The Man and His Work, New York, Ivan Obolensky, 1961, p.142.
25. Ross, Don : "Williams in Art and Morals : An Anxious Foe of Untruth", New York Herald Tribune, March 3, 1957, p.40.
26. Nicoll, Allardyce : Dramatic Dialogue, The Theatre and Dramatic Theory London 1962, p.144. *George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd*
27. Bentley, Eric : In Search of Theatre, New York ; Vintage Books of Random House, Inc., 1954, p.22.