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**Desire and Repression in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* (1973)**

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To the most wonderful mother in this world, this is for you, thank you for everything, your support, guidance and help. This achievement is just a small tribute for everything you have given to me.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the psychological dimensions of Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Milan Kundera's novel *Life is Elsewhere* (1973). Our purpose in this piece of research is to explore the complex representation of desire and repression and their constraints in both works and the ways into which they shape and limit the lives of the characters of each work. By analysing the protagonists in behavioral pattern and identities, this analysis reveals that repressed desires influence people's lives and lead them to make choices that transform their sense of self. Based on psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's theory on the '*Desire*' and '*Repression*' as a model, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Williams' and Kundera's representation of fundamental psychological conflicts in their literary works. The first chapter highlights the Freudian concept of desire in the context of human need focusing on identity and personal freedom in both works, while the second chapter examines some symbols of repression caused by external forces and societal expectations imposed on individuals.

**Key words:** Desire, Milan Kundera, Psychoanalysis, Repression, Sigmund Freud, Tennessee Williams.

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## **I. Introduction**

Human beings often struggle with various external pressures as well as internal conflicts, particularly those involving personal thoughts and desires. Due to societal constraints and external expectations, individuals are frequently unable to fully express themselves, leading to psychological tensions; an ongoing struggle between passion and repression, longing and limitation. This central theme has been widely explored across literature, philosophy and psychology, as it speaks to the universal human pursuit of identity and self understanding. This dissertation examines how the interplay between desire and repression is portrayed in two significant literary works, namely American playwright Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Czech novelist Milan Kundera's novel *Life is Elsewhere* (1973). Both works delve into social and psychological spheres in the human experience, providing an exploration of the consequences caused by desire when it is repressed.

This dissertation explores how and why Tennessee and Kundera with their own literary style and psychological insight and within the setting of the American and Czechoslovak postmodern cultures, they both focus on how the effects of repression and external forces shape people's identity and future.

### **a. Review of literature**

Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, have received significant scholarly and critical attention since their publication. Both works reflect the complexities of human experience, and critics, handled them from different perspectives.

To start with, M. Parvahdi Ranji and A. Annie Christy in their article entitled '*Acritical study on Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie*' published in 2020, argues that symbols enhance the value and the significance of the glass menagerie. The symbols for them play a

significant role in highlighting the isolation of characters in the play (Parvathi, Annie p.1). The author adds that life is a lonely concept and the glass menagerie shows the deep loneliness of individuals in a world devoid of beliefs. They add that the play calls attention to the theme of the individual in relation to the family, as it depicts a young man who criticizes particular aspects of his familial structure and experiences difficulty in reconciling with his cultural backgrounds, a conflict that ultimately engenders a profound sense of isolation from familial affairs (P :3). However, the protagonist can still hold a deep appreciation for certain societal values, when an individual reflects on his family and chooses to take away. He may become alienated from a culture that demands conformity, yet this alienation can provide a unique feeling, then see themselves neither sick, nor guilty, but rather seekers in personal journey (P :5). The authors argue that the play has a tragic dimension, the dramatist reveals that isolation is the condition of the modern man. The readers or audience feel the impact of isolation in the life of human beings. They feel that in society the trait of isolation is present in everybody (P.9). It is clear that the critics believe that the play shows isolation in modern life and Tennessee Williams illustrates how isolation affects each character in a shared society. Williams, for them encourage the readers to recognize and confront the inaction that exist within themselves and the world around them.

Another piece of criticism entitled *Tennessee Williams's dramatic Charade: Secrets and Lies in The Glass Menagerie* by Gilbert Debusscher who analyzes *The Glass Menagerie*. He focuses on the ways Tennessee Williams blends his own life experiences with fictional elements to create a work that is both personal and imaginative, he argues: "The Glass Menagerie is Tennessee Williams's most autobiographical play, accurate to the imaginative reality of his experience even when it departs from the facts in details". (Debusscher, p. 58)

Debusscher begins by acknowledging the general belief that *The Glass Menagerie* is one of the most autobiographical works of Tennessee Williams because he finds that there are

clear affinities between Williams' early life and the events depicted in the play. Gilbert Debusscher makes an important observation about Williams use of memory and imagination in his work, he argues that instead of showing the real family's problems exactly as they are, Williams adds fictional details to make the story more dramatic and to highlight themes like escape, illusion, and self deception. In his paper Debusscher also explores the idea of denial within the family. The Wingfield family denial of their situation is central to their disfunction and they refuse to confront the harsh reality of their life and instead they create illusion in order to protect themselves. Debusscher analyses particularly the character of Tom, he argues that his interactions and dialogue in *The Glass Menagerie* reveal deep aspects of his character. He suggests that Tom like Amanda has a secret he cannot share and that he cannot trust his mother with it. He states: "But of course the italics do insist on the impossibility for Amanda to be the recipient of that kind of confidence". (p. 64). At the end of his work, Debusscher mentioned that *The Glass Menagerie* is one the most important play of Tennessee, he compares this to a painting that when looked at it more closely it reveals deep details which shows the artist honesty and integrity since the play reflects Williams' life in details. Although the play is over eighty years old and has been performed many times, it still captivate audiences and readers.

Just like his American counterpart, Czech novelist Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* has also received critical scrutiny from different perspectives. To begin with, in this book entitled *Utopia and its Otherwise: Revolutionary youthfulness, lyricism, and alternative quest for the east in Kundera's Life is Elsewhere (1973)*. Man-Tat Terence Leung explores Milan Kundera's critic of the revolutionary spirit of the 1960's, particularly in the context of the Prague Spring 1968 and the French movement (p.23). Leung says that the 1968 protests are often seen as symbol of young people rebelling, being creative and against authority, but in Kundera's novel *Life is elsewhere (1973)* the critic shows a very different view. Kundera

thinks that the Prague Spring of 1968 and not the french protests, was the real revolutionary moment that challenged the cold war system (p.27). Leung points out also that life is elsewhere is forgotten because of *The unbearable lightness of being (1984)*, which is direct criticism of the romantic ideas about youth, poetry and revolution that were popular in europe (P.30). The same critic also argues in his book that in the novel *Life is Elsewhere*, Kundera breaks down these values by showing the life of Jaromil whose dreams get mixed with political and personal failures? Jaromil's ideas of romanticism and his researching for fame lead him to betray his friends (p37-38). Leung adds that, *Life is Elsewhere* connects the oppressive Stalinist regime to a possessive overbearing mother figure, suggesting that totalitarianism can be linked to the role of a controlling mother, he says that Jaromil struggles to escape the overpowering influence of his mother, who constantly manages his life, including his appearance and decisions (p39-40). In essence, the novel highlights how Jaromil struggles for independence from his mother mirrors at the same time his struggle with totalitarianism which similarly restricts personal freedom.

Another piece of criticism, is Sarah Mechraoui's article entitled *Conceptual Metaphors in Milan Kundera's novel Life is Elsewhere (2021)*. Mechraoui interprets Kundera's work from a linguistic stylistic perspective. Her study delves into Kundera's use of metaphors and how this shape the readers understanding of themes in *Life is Elsewhere*. She examines how the metaphor of life being elsewhere reflects the character's struggle with identity and societal expectation (p23). Mechraoui adds that metaphors in this novel serve not just as a linguistic device, but as an essential tool to express complex ideas and emotions (p24). The author argues that metaphors in the book allow the readers to engage with philosophical questions raised by Kundera, demonstrating how metaphors can influence readers perception of literature and its themes (p25). Her study aims to encourage exploration of metaphorical analysis in literary studies, especially in contemporary works that challenge

readers with profound existential questions. The critic in this article gives examples of how the metaphor is expressed in the novel by showing the basic meaning focusing on the literal aspects of life. 'alive' for example means the fact of living and not dead (p24). While the contextual meaning emphasizes emotional vibrancy and joy, it highlights the transformation from mere existence to lovely experience alive means full of energy and feeling happy and existed (P24). The critic shows to us that using the metaphor to look at the novel helps uncover important insight about the metaphor in Kundera's storytelling (p36).

### **b. Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the review of previous literature on both Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Milan Kundera's *Life Is Elsewhere*, we have noticed that both authors and works were criticised from different perspectives. However, to our best knowledge, we did not come across any previous piece of literature that handled both authors and works on equal grounds. Although the authors originate from different countries, cultural and historical context, their works present protagonists who share similar psychological complexities. Each character attempts to reconcile personal dreams with the boundaries of the reality, ultimately leading to emotional isolation and disillusionment. Through this analysis on *The Glass Menagerie (1944)* and *Life is Elsewhere (1973)*, our study aims to highlight how both Tennessee and Kundera use literature to expose the internal conflict that arise when personal desires clashes with external limitation. Our analysis draws on one major psychological framework: Sigmund Freud's concepts of '*Desire*' and '*Repression*' which posit that unacceptable desires are pushed into the unconscious as a defense mechanism, which suggests that there are symbols that shape individual's development. In both works the character's choices and identities are profoundly illustrate by their inner dynamics, often without their awareness.

This dissertation explores how and why Tennessee and Kundera with their own literary style and psychological insight and within the setting of the American and Czechoslovak postmodern cultures, they both focus on how the effects of repression and external forces shape people's identity and future.

### **c. Methodological outline**

In the pursuit of the above objectives, we plan to conduct this piece of research under the guidelines of the IMRAD method. Our work starts with an introduction, which states our issue, our working hypothesis, and the different review of literature done on the two writers. In the Methods section, we will deal with Sigmund Freud's theory on desire and repression. In the material section, we will explore Tennessee Williams' and Milan Kundera's biographies, then, the synopses of the two works *The Glass Menagerie* and *Life is Elsewhere*. In the results part, we will provide the finding of our research. The Discussion Section is divided into two chapters, in the first one we will examine deeply the issue of desire represented by Amanda and her daughter Laura and Jaromil with his mother relying on some concepts of the Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The second chapter will tackle the issue of repression and analyzing it on the two repressed characters Laura, Jaromil, Tom and the mothers as agents of repression.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1- Methods

This section of our dissertation seeks to explore and clarify psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's universal concepts of '*Desire*' and '*Repression*' as reflect in Tennessee Williams play *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Milan Kundera *Life is Elsewhere* (1973), our choice to focus on Freud's concepts on desire and repression is guided by our aim to examine how both authors depict this fundamental concept of psychoanalysis in their respective works.

#### a. Sigmund Freud's concepts on Repression and Desire

Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist is the founder of psychoanalysis. This theory studies the human mind, and it is a method of treating psychological disorders. Central to Freud's theory is the idea that human behavior is driven by unconscious desires. However, these desires are often in conflict with social norms and are thus repressed and pushed out of the consciousness. Nevertheless, Freud argues that repression does not eliminate desires, but instead it redirects them. In 1920s, particularly in works such *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920), he tries to explain the link between his earlier ideas about the unconscious and his later concepts of the Id, Ego and Superego, showing how repression functions to manage internal conflicts. Furthermore, among Sigmund Freud's most influential works are *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), *The Ego and The Id* (1923), and *The Interpretation of dreams* (1900).

**Desire:** isa central concept in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, it comes from the unconscious. Freud believes that many of desires are hidden in the unconcious mind, they express themselves through dreams (*Freud 1900, The Interpretation of Dreams, p.602*), he describes human behavior guided by two main instincts eros and thanatos (Freud 1920, *Beyond the pleasure principle*,p.12) Eros is the desire for love, connection, sex and Thanatos is the desire

for aggression, destruction or return to an intimate state. He says that dreams are the disguised fulfillment of repressed desires and wishes (Freud 1900, p.606). This means that in our daily lives, we don't really know what we want because our wishes are hidden in the unconscious mind, and they appear distinctively from a person to another, but generally they influence the pursuit of our lives, Freud claims: The mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant. (*Beyond The Pleasure Principle, Freud 1920, p.20*).

In this quote, he means that our mind is always working to keep our inner desires which create pressure inside the mind as low and stable as possible to make the person feel comfortable, for example by changing the desire into a dream or fantasy to satisfy the self.

**Repression:** It is a key concept of Freud, considered as one of the main defense mechanisms in his theory of the psyche. Based on his experience with his patients, Freud defines repression and argues in this regard,

In the first group are those cases in which the patients have not reacted[...] or because it was a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed (Freud 1895, p.10)

Freud asserts that repression is a process by which the mind pushes unacceptable thoughts, memories and desires out of conscious awareness (p.90). He claims that repression is essential for psychological function, because it allows individuals to maintain psychological stability by keeping disturbing or conflicting material outside of conscious thoughts (p.108). However, this repressed content can manifest in other ways, such as through dreams, neurotic symptoms, or slips of the tongue. Repression is an important part of Freud's theory on how the mind works and why people develop neuroses. He sees it as a way the mind defends itself from internal conflicts. However, because repressed memories don't go away completely,

they can cause mental tension, and trying to keep them buried can lead to mental health disorders. (Freud 1900-1901).

## **2. Materials**

This section of our research is dedicated to identify the biographical elements that connect the American Playwright Tennessee Williams and Czech novelist Milan Kundera focusing particularly on the personal psychological issues that may have influenced their works. We seek to explore more widely the concepts of desire and repression. Additionally, this part will also include brief synopses of the two selected works entitled *The Glass Menagerie* published in 1944 and *Life Is Elsewhere* published in 1973.

### **a. Biographical Background of Tennessee Williams and Milan Kundera**

Tennessee Williams, better known as Thomas Lanier Williams III, is an American playwright, who grew up south of United States, first in Mississippi and then in Missouri. The playwright comes from a troubled family with strict father and very caring mother. Due to childhood illness, he was not as strong as his father desired. This unsettled environment in their family inspired his writings, with his family members becoming characters in his plays. Williams developed a passion for writing early at eighteen, he attended university but he did not finish studies because of family pressure.

His father forced him to work in a shoe company. After some struggles in 1939, he got a grant that let him to move to New Orleans, where he found inspiration for his famous plays, especially: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which won the Pulitzer prize for drama, and he wrote his first successful commercial play *The Glass Menagerie (1944)*, which is considered as a semi-biographical work, drawing from his own life. In the following fourteen years, Williams created more successful plays, among them: *Summer and Smoke (1948)*, *The Rose Tattoo (1951)*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955)*, which also won the Pulitzer prize. Many of his plays

were adopted into acclaimed films boosting his popularity. In 1960, Williams struggled with mental and physical health. He wrote various works during this time, but his battle with drugs and alcohol hurt his plays.

Milan Kundera is a Czech novelist, essayist and poet whose works combine comedy with political criticism and philosophical issues. His works often focus on the intersections of personal and political life in totalitarian regimes. Kundera as a young writer was influenced by Soviet socialist realism. He became disillusioned with politics during the Prague spring of 1968. This was a time when Czechoslovakia tried to make changes that would allow more political and cultural freedom. Kundera supports these changes but became later critical when the Soviet Union invaded in August 1968 to stop the reforms.

Milan Kundera's works also touch themes of desire and repression and the complexities of human relationships, including the dynamics between mothers and their children. Kundera's early life in Czechoslovakia, particularly his relationship with his mother can be viewed as a formative in shaping his understanding of repression. Among his famous books: *Laughter and Forgetting* (1979), *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984).

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Milan Kundera faced censorship and his works were banned in his home country. In 1975, Kundera moved to France and this move was a turning point in his life because his writings experienced a major change and knew a remarkable success. As a writer who was politically active and deeply affected by the oppression of his time, Kundera's works continue to be crucial for understanding the intersection of philosophy, literature and politics in a totalitarian system.

## **b. Synopsis of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944)**

Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, revolves around a family consisting of Amanda Wingfield; the mother who raises her children alone, Tom who is the narrator and Laura who

is an introverted person. Williams highlights the complexities that the family faces, socially and psychologically with the absence of the father. In the first scene of the play, Tom introduces the setting and characters to the audience, showing the atmosphere in his family. The second scene focuses on Amanda who searches for her daughter's future by trying to get her married since she does not succeed in any of the plans she has for her. This reflects the mother caring side but also the desire to control. Laura lives in a virtual, imaginary world surrounded by her collection of glass animals which reflects her fragility. The third scene turns around Tom Wingfield who works as a simple employee in a shoe company and is very unsatisfied about his work, he feels pressure from his mother and tries to escape. He goes to the cinema every night to watch films that represent the life he wishes to live, as he has his own ambitions. There is a portrait of the father on the wall all over the play, although he is not present physically, his portrait serves as a reminder of his absence that has deeply affected the Wingfield family life. Amanda and Tom struggle with the feeling of abandonment, but Amanda idealises her husband as an adventurous man and the portrait reflects her connection to the past and her memories. The tension rises from the fourth scene as Amanda forces her son to find a partner for Laura, so Tom invites his colleague Jim to dinner to meet his sister. As Jim and Laura share a romantic moment they reveal the harsh reality of their lives, especially Laura's one. Jim advises her to step outside her comfort zone urging her to overcome her feeling of inferiority. The final scene shows Tom Wingfield who leaves his family like his father does.

### **c. Synopsis of *Life is Elsewhere***

Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, the story of a young poet called Jaromil who narrates through the complexities of his personal and artistic development. The story takes place in Czechoslovakia before, during and after World War II and shows Jaromil's life from childhood to adulthood. As a young boy, he is isolated, socially uncomfortable, and sensitive,

focusing on his artistic inclinations. His mother is a controlling figure who encourages him to write poems and to develop a public image as a poet. She treats him like a genius, she is convinced that her son is special compared to others.

However, Jaromil's self importance grows and his mother keeps telling him that he is a great artist, but deep inside, he feels that something is missing. He comes to understand that he desires more freedom and independence. While his mother's approval still matters to him, it no longer satisfies his growing desires. He tries to get freedom from his mother and begins flirting with girls. As he gets older Jaromil tries to have relationships with women but he struggles with sex and confidence. His relationships don't last at all, and he eventually blames his over-protective mother for his problems. Later Jaromil decides to focus on his poetry and politics so, he joins the Communist Revolution, and gains some recognition for his poetry. However, he is increasingly absorbed by his image and status rather than his actual work. As the novel unfolds, Jaromil becomes disillusioned with his career and his role in society, particularly as he faces the pressures of the political regime and the realization that his poetry has become a tool of propaganda. He is caught between personal desires, artistic ambitions, and expectations of society and politics. Despite all his efforts, he leaves nothing behind him. His inability to reconcile his inner world with the outside world, and his life which was filled with isolation and disappointment ends without achieving anything.

### III. Results

This section of our work presents our finding of the analysis on the American playwright Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Czech novelist Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* (1973). The analysis aims to discuss how both works reflect and illustrate key aspects of Freudian theory.

The first result we reached is that despite Williams' and Kundera's different lives and distant geographical, cultural backgrounds, their works reveal a shared focus on the theme of desire and repression. In fact, in the two chapters of our piece of research we have shown that both Freud's concepts of desire and repression are not only reflected in Williams and Kundera's literary works, but also have relation with their personal lives and histories. Their personal experiences were shaped by these concepts during their youth which makes the themes in their works easier for readers to connect with. With reference to Freud's concept of repression and desire, such life experiences help writers to create meaningful works that reflect the time and the society they live in.

Additionally, it is important to state that the characters of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and *Life is Elsewhere* (1973) mirror the personal experiences of the two writers. For instance Tom is portrayed in a way that mirrors Tennessee Williams' own internal conflict especially during the period he worked in a shoe company, a job which symbolized limitation for him, and Laura who reflect her sister Rose as they struggle with the same issues. On the other hand, the portrayal of Jaromil reflects Kundera's psychological unrest. The setting in both the Southern America and Czechoslovakia, as described in the works, are repressive and conservative. The emotional struggle of characters reflect this clearly. Laura, Tom, Amanda, Jaromil, and his mother all share a common desire for freedom and face similar battles against expectations and restrictions imposed on them.

We also reached the result that beyond their being literary products, both Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* (1973) reflect a universal conflict between desire and repression. In Freudian terms, human beings struggle to fulfill desires which are most of the time repressed by external forces like culture, religion, family or politics. As we have seen, both works are rich in psychological elements and offer strong social criticism, illustrating messages that go beyond their specific time and space.

## **IV. Discussion**

This section of our work discusses characters and thematic connections between Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* mainly through the exploration of desire and repression as reflected in both works. In the first chapter, we will analyse the character of Laura and Jaromil, as well as Amanda and Jaromil's mother. In the second chapter, we will explore symbolic elements that most represent repression and desire within each work, the discussion to the key concepts from Freud's theory of repression and desire to support our analysis.

### **Chapter one : Desire in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* (1973)**

As we have mentioned it previously, one thematic kinship between Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, and Kundera's *Life is elsewhere* is desire. This chapter investigates the concept of desire and the way in which it powerfully manifests in the protagonists of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and *Life is Elsewhere* (1973). The chapter will first examine how Amanda and Jaromil's mother embody a strong, underlying desire to build a sense of identity within the standards of their social and personal circumstances. We will show how this desire influences the lives of their children.

#### **1. Amanda and Jaromil's mother as Epitomes of Desire**

To start with, Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda Wingfield the mother figure is a woman who is still attached to her past and its values, which are instilled on her by Southern society. She tries to impose them to her children. She lives in a society that has a limited view of women and which restricted their choices, but she idealizes it, because she fails to recognize how fragile the situation truly is. In this sense, she normalizes those

pressures and expectations from society such as marriage as the ultimate goal and social status tied to men.

As a Southern Belle, she was raised in a bourgeois society that prioritizes finding a husband, over building a life for herself and being independent. The most ironic aspect of the story is that Amanda is both proud and entirely convinced by the idea, and this is reflected when she tells her children :

Amanda: Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—

Tom: I know what's coming!

Laura: Yes. But let her tell it.

Tom: Again?

Laura: She loves to tell it.

Amanda: One Sunday in Blue Mountain—your mother received—seventeen!—gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring infloding chairs from the parish house. (Williams 1944,scene1,p.402)

This shows Amanda's deep unspoken desire to regain her sense of admiration, status, and the stability she once left. The reaction of her son Tom towards his mother highlights Amanda's tendency to repeat the same stories. This echoes Sigmund Freud's idea that our mental state is influenced by desires we can not fulfill. "The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality". (Freud 1908, p.23).

Amanda's desire for social comfort is tied to her sense of self worth. When she reminds being admired by seventeen gentleman-callers, it's not just a memory, it is a moment that reminds her that she once matters in the eyes of others and desired. Now, she faces the harsh reality of her life shaped by poverty and abandonment, she returns to those

memories as a way to feel important again. In her conversation with Laura in scene six, Amanda admits,

See how I sashayed around the ballroom, Laura (she raises her skirt and does a mincing step around the room) I wore it on Sundays for my gentleman callers! I had it on the day I met your father—  
(Williams 1944, scene 6, p.435)

This scene reveals Amanda's attempt in searching the comfort that comes from a basic need we all share: to feel that our lives have meaning and that we have not been forgotten. (Freud 1930).

Like Tennessee Williams, Milan Kundera shows the struggle between desire and repression in *Life is Elsewhere* (1973) through Jaromil's mother who is described as a selfish person because she does not only love her son, but she also uses him to feel better about her own life. Kundera writes in this context,

Mama thought of the empty days that would soon resume, and she said: darling there's a sadness in me you'll never understand. Then she looked into her son's eyes, and it seems to her that she saw a great love there and a yearning to understand. This frightened her; she couldn't really confide a woman's troubles to a child! but at the same time those understanding eyes attracted her like a vice. (Kundera, 1973, p.26)

In this brief interaction, we understand that 'Mama' has many unfulfilled dreams, and she tries to live them through her child, with Jaromil she is hoping to gain comprehension that she always yearned to satisfy her self and her desires even that Jaromil is just a child. With reference to Freud's theory on desire, he argues that repressed desires are unconscious, and find indirect satisfaction through fantasy, art, or other people (Freud 1900, p.488).

The mother in *Life Is Elsewhere* mirrors Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, they are both shaped by their repressive societies that limit their freedom. Jaromil's mother, grows

up in a patriarchal society where women are marginalized, she can not be truly an independent woman. Strict values were settled on her and she imposes them to her son, although Czechoslovak society in the 20th century was relatively progressive, the woman status was still overlooked and ignored, they had no opportunities to secure their future by themselves and to pursue their own dreams. ( SL Wolchik 2017).

Mama idealizes her past, she was raised in a bourgeois family where she feels safe and comfort, she was satisfied of her past life with her parents, but she chooses leaving them, as the author claims:

Wasn't her great love for the poet's father a romantic rebellion against the dullness and regularity of her parents' life? Wasn't there a hidden likeness between the untamed landscape and the boldness she, the daughter of a rich merchant, showed in choosing a penniless engineer who had just finished his studies? (Kundera 1973, p.3-4)

The passage suggests that Mama's love for the poet's father is a form of rebellion against regularity and the expectations of her upbringing. By choosing him, she asserts independence and profound connection between her inner desire and the reality she lives in.

Jaromil's mother naively believes that life outside will be the same as the comfort and safety she experienced with her parents, she believes that marriage will be a place that will offer her the same warmth and compassion, Kundera argues in this context,

The engineer's prompt capitulation, however, couldn't hide from the poet's mother that the adventure she had precipitated herself into with a heedlessness she found sublime was not the great shared love she believed she had a full right to (kundera 1973, p.4)

This passage from *Life is Elsewhere* reflects how Jaromil's mother has an ideal image of the world and believes that life outside her parents' home would be just as kind and caring.

She expected her lover for whom she left her parents, to treat her in the same way her father once did, but when she gets married, reality is different, she does not meet her desires, and she is deeply dissatisfied. In Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda Wingfield's obsession with retelling stories of her youth is a prominent element. It reflects her desire to escape the disappointment of her present life, and instead she is still nostalgic to the past. Despite the years that have passed, Amanda creates her own family, she could never escape the expectations of her former society. And this is reflected on her obsession of getting married her daughter Laura. Tom says:

Tom: after the fiasco at Rubicam's business college, the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play more and more important part in mother's calculations. It became an obsession. Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment. (Williams 1944, scene 3, p.410-411)

This scene shows how much Amanda oppresses her children with the idea of marriage, and as Tom says it became an obsession, and the image of the gentleman caller haunted their apartment.

She is still trapped by strict gender beliefs and she could not reconcile with the changing world around her. The Wingfield family is affected by the absence of the father, but none feels loss of such an important member of the family more intensely than her. She can not fully accept the reality of being abandoned by her husband. And this pressure influences her role as a mother and a father at the same time. Amanda's desire was to impose her ideals on her children Tom and Laura, believing that this will bring them success and will help them to progress in their life and future only to satisfy her desire:

Amanda: No, I don't have secrets. I'll tell you what I wished for the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! I wish for that whenever there's a

moon, and when there isn't a moon, and when there isn't a moon, I wish for it, too. (Williams 1944, p.426)

All what she wants for her children is fulfillment and success in order to be able to recognize the broken image of her family that she could not accept, and She tries also to fix it by focusing too much on finding a perfect husband for Laura, and by pressuring Tom to take the responsibility. In her mind, this could restore the lost image of the Wingfield family. This reflects Amanda's desire to recognize what is lost, she wants to feel valued again, and creates a future that protect her children from the same pain she once experienced.

The emotional world of Jaromil's mother in *Life is Elsewhere* is also affected by the abandonment of her husband as like Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, so this demonstrates how important is to look at the emotional life of Kundera's characters. Kundera emphasizes Mama's desire for a present husband for her and a father for her son, she longs for it but she could not afford to experience the feeling of having a husband psychologically present for his family.

The day Jaromil showed his poems to Mama, she waited in vain for her husband, and she also waited in vain the next day and the following days. (Kundera 1973, p.79)

Our analysis allows us to observe that in *Life is Elsewhere (1973)* the whole story turns around many oppositions; desire vs repression, individuality vs conformity, motherhood vs control. The theme of desire appears again and again, especially in the character of Jaromil's mother who embodies attention between her need for affection and fulfillment and the strict expectations placed by her role as a mother. As she says here to her son: "I want you to know that my life is far from being full of love, she said to him; and another time she went so far as to confide to him: "as a mama, I'm happy, but a mama is not only a mama, she is also a woman". (Kundera 1973, p.27). Saying to Jaromil that Mama is also

a woman, signifies her desire to go beyond of her role as mother and to embrace life fully as a woman, with her own needs, emotions, and aspirations near of expectations.

Kundera explores how Mama is disillusioned by the failure of her marriage, she returns to her parental home seeking of support and stability. Kundera explains in this passage how Jaromil's mother was hopeful and optimistic about marriage, expecting it to bring love, romance and positive change in her life. She believes that starting a life with her partner would allow her to escape the constraints of her past and live emotional fulfillment. However, when her husband became distant just after the birth of her son, her expectations collapse.

The poignant end of rebellious! First she rebelled against her parents for sake of the young engineer, and then she ran to her parents for help against him. Her parents didn't let her down: they spoke plainly to the engineer (Kundera 1973, p.4)

This distance leaves her emotionally devastated and shapes her future relationships, as a single mother, she redirected all her unachieved desires into her relation with her son, the desire of living love and tenderness with a partner becomes repressed by rejection. So, she uses Jaromil to replace the romantic connection she lost, because her oppressed desire did not really disappear, it is only transformed, through her role as mother.

She fell in love with the naked little man, who was being humiliated for and because of her. Gazing at his lovely face she began to hope that the child growing in her belly would resemble this handsome foe of her husband's. She wanted the resemblance to be so strong that she would be able to imagine the child as this young man's rather than her husband's. (Kundera 1973, p.6)

This passage shows how 'Mama' develops a powerful dependency on Jaromil, she is afraid of losing him like she loses his father, as a result, her maternal love becomes possessive and controlling. She desires keeping Jaromil entirely for herself, and this is reflected in various moments in the novel. "She is tranquil, she knows that her son is still hers; neither women

nor the world have taken him away from her". (Kundera 1973, p.141). The mother sees any outside relationship as a danger, something that might pull him away from her.

Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* and Jaromil's mother in *Life is Elsewhere*, begin as caring mothers devoted to their children and overloving them, but their unresolved desires turned that love into control. Their maternal love becomes possessive, limiting their children's independence and turning motherhood into a crucial form of emotional domination. Through the two characters, Amanda and Jaromil's mother, both Tennessee Williams and Milan Kundera show how hidden desire can turn to control and how personal lives are highlighted by conflict between inner needs and social rules, the two long for intimacy, freedom or security.

## **2- Jaromil and Laura's fragmented Desires:**

In Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, the male protagonist Jaromil has a complex and fragmented desire, Milan Kundera describes him as a conflicted character guided by his multiple desires beginning with a profound need to discover and define his identity. He desires to be seen and admired, especially as an artistic poet, he searches himself in poetry and tries to give meaning to his life by this way. He needs to feel special since his childhood, because of his mother who sees him as genius and who teaches him that his worth is linked to be exceptional. She tries to create attention around him to prove his value and sometimes even his existence. This is a reminder of Jaromil's exceptionality by Kundera,

He never forgot that at the age of five he had already been considered as an exceptional child, different from others; the behavior of his classmates, who made fun of his schoolbag and shirt, also (at times harshly) confirmed his uniqueness. Until this moment that uniqueness had only been a vague and empty notion; it had been an incomprehensible hope or an incomprehensible rejection; but now it had received a name: original inner world. (Kundera 1973, p.25)

Jaromil expresses his desires generally in his writing because he is rarely heard in real life, even from the closest people to him. He uses his role as an artist to hide behind it a facade of romanticism, he presents himself as a sensitive poet in order to gain admiration and emotional reassurance, his poetry becomes a means of self affirmation to create an idealized image of himself as a profound artist. Jaromil's need for a clear sense of identity is not just a personal struggle, it is closely connected to the political and cultural climate of Czechoslovakia .He writes for what others expects from him, to reinforce his image as an ideal young revolutionary. In doing so, he searches for identity, his desire to be reorganized makes him lose touch with who he really is, he is not truly happy writing poetry, deep down he never finds his own voice, as Freud states it: "rather than living our lives, we are "lived" by unknown and uncontrollable forces". (Freud 1923).

Jaromil wants something new and different in his life, but he can not reach it, he dreams of something bigger than what he can not fully understand. His desire is so deep that he does not know exactly what he is looking for, he just believes that happiness and meaning are waiting for him in a distant future. For him, fulfillment is not in the present but in an unreachable unknown place. As the author claims,

Everything seems to indicate that Jaromil's immense desire for the new (the religion of the new) had merely been the desire for inconceivable, still unknown, coition, a desire projected into a foggy distance (Kundera 1973, p.162)

In *Life Is Elsewhere*, the absence of Jaromil's father leaves a deep emotional gap in his life. He grows up without him, so his place is empty and he desires to complete it with other external skills like art. "Jaromil loves this photograph of a man he hardly knew and whose image was beginning to blur in his mind[...] He missed this man very much". (Kundera 1973, p :143)

In the *Glass Menagerie*, Laura searches connection with the world in the sense of personal identity, her desire is more silent and introvert than Jaromil, she lives in an empty world, shaped by isolation, lack of self confidence, and doing nothing on her life, Amanda's words,

Amanda: We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two years and nothing has happen. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along

Tom: I guess she's the type that people call home girls  
(Williams 1944, p.422)

She does not express her needs, so instead, she expresses them through the overcare she gives to her glass animals; delicate and easily broken like herself. This overcaring does not only reflect her need for stability but also the attention and the way she wants others interact with her, especially her family. Laura has a deep desire for validation and human connection, but because of her fears of being hurt or rejected, she hides them by creating a protective shell, pretending to be indifferent to love or to life, beyond her small world, she doesn't give importance to nothing. Even when her mother told her about the coming of Jim, she does not react. As it is shown in this scene

Amanda: why are you trembling?

Laura: mother, you've made me so nervous!

Amanda: how have I made you nervous?

Laura: by all this fuss! You make it seem so important!

Amanda: I don't understand you, Laura. You couldn't be satisfied but just setting home, and yet whenever I try to arrange something for you, you seem to resist it.  
(Williams, 1944, scene 6, p .433)

The carapace of detachment masks a rich inner life that needs affection and acceptance. While Jaromil expresses his desires in writing, Laura expresses hers through silence and symbolic gestures, such as the glass animals that she collects. She is a shy person and her discussion with Jim shows how much she wants closeness but she is too scared and can not attend it.

Jim: as I remember you sort of stuck by yourself.

Laura: I –I—never have had much luck at –making friends

Jim: you were shy with people!

Laura: I tried not to be, but never could. (Williams 1944, p.450)

This moment highlights also Laura's desire for belonging, and her struggle with social interaction. Her isolation is not by choice, it is something she could not overcome, even when she wants to join others, her anxiety takes over, and she goes back, deep down, she wants to be noticed and feel important.

With reference to Sigmund Freud's theory, in both Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* and Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie*, Jaromil and Laura show how desire can be affected by loneliness. They express their desires in very different ways: Jaromil's desire is driven by his need to control, so, Kundera criticizes him by showing how he uses women and especially the 'redhead girl', to make himself a man and reinforce his own image of a strong person. On the other hand Laura's desire is quiet and hidden, she is known for her shyness and fragility and her glass menagerie helps her to escape the real world. While Jaromil uses desire to control, Laura avoids it because she is scared of showing love and being hurt in turn.

Jaromil's desire is not limited to wanting acceptance or connection in society, it deeply affects how he relates to others, especially the woman with whom he is. Shaped by his mother possessiveness and emotional overcontrol, Jaromil unconsciously repeats those same patterns, he becomes controlling, jealous and emotionally unstable in his romantic relationships. He does not truly understand what he wants from love, instead of searching a mutual understanding and emotional intimacy, he tries to dominate as he was dominated in his childhood.

The confusion is especially clear in his sexual relationships, where he lacks confidence and feels powerless. To cope with his inner weakness and dissatisfaction, he creates an imaginary

character named Xavier, a fantasy version of himself who is strong, desirable and who lives several lives.

Wasn't it marvelous to live as Xavier lived? Not to be imprisoned in a single life? To be mortal, of course, and yet to have several lives? (Kundera 1973, p.167)

Even his companion calls him Xavier 'You're my Xavier'(p167), Xavier is not just a fantasy; he becomes a container of Jaromil's repressed desires which in Freudian sense are the fears and instincts that he can not accept in his conscious identity. By admiring that his girlfriend calls him Xavier, Jaromil attempts to live through this imagined character, hoping to fulfill what he feels he can not achieve as himself. However, this only leads to more instability, his relationship becomes marked by jealousy and emotional manipulation, he can not love freely because this idea of love is fused by possession and control.

"I will strangle you if anyone ever touches you", he said, and he still has his hand around the girl's throat; he was thrilled to feel the girl's possible non-existence in this contact; he thought that, at least at this moment, the redhead really belonged to him, and a sensation of elated power intoxicated him, a sensation so beautiful that he began again to make love. (Kundera 1973, p.170)

Even in love, he seeks validation from society, which becomes evident when he sacrifices his girlfriend's brother to the political authority; an act showing how far he desires to protect his image as a 'Hero' and as a loyal citizen. Ultimately, Jaromil's desires are fragmented, shaped by repression, control, and a longing to escape himself. He does not know how to live authentically, he only knows how to perform, to possess and chase illusions.

Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* has a hidden desire for love, she does not say much but her actions speak for her, deep down she hopes someone might truly see and accept her. Laura's desire becomes clear through her interaction with Jim, the colleague of her brother.

When the conversation starts and for the first time in the play, we see her slowly opening up by expressing part of herself, her interests, and her glass collection.

Jim: Now how about you? Isn't there something you take more interest in than anything else?

Laura: well, I do—as I said—have my—glass collection—(a peal of girlish laughter from the kitchen)

Jim: I'm not right sure i know what you're talking about. What kind of glass it is?

Laura: little articles of it, they're ornaments mostly! most of them are little animals made out of glass, the tiniest little animals in the work. Mother calls them a glass menagerie! here's an exemple of one, if you'd like to see it ! this one is one of the oldest. It's nearly thirteen. (Williams 1944, scene 7, p.454-455).

At that moment Laura is not just talking, but she is also allowing herself to be seen, her deep desire for connection, affection, and understanding quitey comes to the surface. She shares intimate moment with Jim, she dances and it was a special moment, like a small break from her harsh reality and usual loneliness. This moment shows how much Laura wants to be loved and valued.

They smile across it with mutual wonder. Laura crouches beside him and they begin to turn through it. Laura's shyness is dissolving in his warmth. (Williams 1944, scene 7, p.451)

From a Freudian perspective, Laura's meeting with Jim shows how her repressed side demonstrates her shy, quiet image she shows to others to protect herself. But deep inside, her desire holds her real feelings, like her strong desire to be loved and accepted. So the moment with Jim demonstrates how her hidden desire to connect with someone begins to come out.

Both Milan Kundera and Williams Tennessee use their characters Jaromil and Laura to express their own deep personal desires and stuggles, Kundera through Jaromil shows how can a person feel lost in a world that expects obedience and perfection. Like Jaromil, Kundera faced pressure in a society that controls people's actions and even thoughts, especially during

the communist era. His character reflects a desire to be free, to be seen as important, and to escape feelings of weakness. On the other hand, Williams uses Laura to show his own feeling of loneliness, sensitivity and the longing to be loved without judgement. Laura's hope and emotional pain mirror Williams' own experiences with family troubles and feeling different from others. Through both characters, the authors express how hard it is to find true connection and identity in a world full of expectations and fears.

### 3. The illusion of Perfection as a Mask of Desire

In Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, the characters hide their repressed desires behind the illusion of perfection. Within the repressive settings they live in, they mask their repressed desires with the illusion of fulfillment. Their illusions offer temporary comfort but ultimately reveal how fragile and destructive the pursuit of fulfillment can be.

To begin with, in Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda Wingfield is still attached to the image of her former self as a Southern Belle, and these memories make her feel wise and admired. She thinks that her former version of the past is ideal, and that this allows her to feel superior. She believes that she knows what is best for Tom and Laura, she often dictates their choices even in the little aspects of their daily lives, and she guides them with the belief that she is a perfect mother.

Tom : I haven't enjoyed one bit of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that make me rush through meals with you hawk-like attention to every bit I take. Sickening—spoils my appetite—all this discussion of—animals' secretion—salivary glands—mastication'

Amanda (*lightly*) temperament like a metropolitan star! (*her eyes and browses down stage*) you're not excused from the table. (Williams 1944, scene 1, p.402)

Amanda's desire for admiration is deeply rooted in her need to find meaning in the sacrifice she had made to live in denial toward the painful reality of her life. To maintain her dignity, she exaggerates in constructing the image of herself as a resilient mother, who has done everything for her children. Though she is sometimes disappointed from what she receives in return from them. "I don't intend to humor your silliness, Laura I've had too much from you and your brother, both" (Williams 1944 scene 6, p.436). Amanda seeks for admiration from both her children and herself, she uses this to confirm her worth in a world that did not value her, she has an emotional emptiness caused by her husband's leaving and the unrealized youthful dreams. Amanda justifies her desires and her oppressive side on her family by the illusion of perfection, that becomes not only a mask but a psychological strategy to avoid confronting her personal insecurities and the chaos of her inner life, she insists on maintaining appearances, dressing up for imaginary guests, as if perfection and social grades could restore her lost harmony. One of the most direct examples of this, is when she dresses up in an old elegant gown to receive Laura's gentleman caller.

Now look at yourself young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be! I've got to fix myself now! You're going to be surprised by your mother's appearance! (she crosses through portieres, hummingaily) (Williams 1944, scene 6, p.434)

Amanda wears her old dresses from her youth to pretend that she is still the elegant woman, she once was. (she wears a girlish frock of yellowed voile with a blue silk sash she carries a bunch of jonquils—the legend of her youth is nearly received Feverishly). (p. 434).

Amanda is still attached even to the husband who abandoned her, despite the pain and hardship he caused, she continues to recall him with affection, "that gallantly smiling gentleman" (p. 442), focusing only on the positive memories. This allows her, to idealize their relationship to avoid the reality of his absence and her unfulfilled desire. Amanda lives in a state of emotional contradiction, she believes that she deserves a better husband, one of the

many refined gentlemencallers of her youth, who could offer her stability, respect, and comfort. Eventhough she knows that her heart carries the departure of her man, she clings to a romanticized image of him, she chooses referring to him as an adventurous to preserve the illusion of love even when it conflicts with the truth.

I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me. All my gentlmencallers were sons of planters and so of course I assumed that I would be married to one and raise my family on a large peace o land with plenty of servants. [...]—I married no planter! I married a man who worked for the telephone company!—that gallantly smiling gentleman overthere! (points to the picture)a telephone man who—fell in love with long-distance!—now he travels and I dont't even know where!—but what am I going on for about my—tribulations ? (Williams 1944, scene 6, p.442-443).

In Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere* too, Jaromil's mother constructs an ideal that is not an act of pure love, but a mask that covers a narcissistic, possessive, and emotionally dependant desire. She uses motherhood not to nurture, but to define herself. Her need to be everything to him leads to Jaromil's emotional suffocation, and to her own isolation masked by the tragic beauty of the role of the perfect mother that she invented. "No, she no longer wanted to show him either her inside or her outside; she wanted to regain the protection of her modesty, and therefore to be insincere and write only about her child and her sacred duties as a mother". (Kundera 1973, p.45).

'Mama' masks her complexities and tries to pretend perfection. But this latter is not consistent, it comes accross as exaggerated, almost compulsive. She sees herself as ideal, sacrificing single mother, who raises her child without the need of a man's presence;

Instinctively, modelling herself on the Virgin Mary, who became a mother without the intervention of a human begetter and thus the ideal of aternal love without a father's trouble making interference, she felt a provocative desire to name her

child Apollo, a name that to her meant “he who has no human father“(Kundera 1973, p.6)

Jaromil’s mother controls every aspect of his life under the guise of love and caring. She projects herself as morally superior and emotionally fulfilled. Her pretending perfection allows her to dominate her son’s life, she masks her manipulative behavior behind the appearance of projection, using it as a way to guide everything around her so that she always feels needed and important. She has a habit of experiencing life through her son, especially through his poetry and fame. She tries to give her own life more meaning by this way. Mama’s feeling of superiority is well reflected on her reaction to her son’s relationships with girls, particularly with the redhead girl, she thinks that no girl can be as perfect as her son and as herself.

Of course, there’s nothing incurable about it. Just keep inviting her here a bite more. In our environment she’ll become refined and well mannered (Kundera 1973, p.174)

The mother tries to weaken and change Jaromil’s mind about relations “Mama’s words about affairs that aren’t considered important kept resonating in Jaromil’s head”. (p.175). She accepts the thought of him growing emotionally independent because of her. Her apparent perfection hides a profound need for emotional domination, and unconscious desire to keep him tied to her and also her jealousy and fear of losing her son’s affection and being replaced. The way the mother manipulates the relationship highlights a narcissistic nature of her desire, she can not share his love because she sees affection as her rightful possession.

It is important to consider that in Freudian Psychoanalytic theory, the dynamics of illusion of perfection as a mask for desire, is shaped by the interactions between two key elements: illusion of perfection and repressed desires that are hidden within the person as he claims: “illusions commend themselves to us because they save us pain and allow us to enjoy pleasure instead”. (Freud 1927, p.26). We can find it in the character of the mothers in *The*

*Glass Menagerie* and *Life is Elsewhere*; through their possessive behaviours and the pretending perfect roles as single mothers. Both of them adopt the role of the ideal to gain validation and meaning in the societies they live in. In their view, fulfilling the role of the respectable women is what gives them worth in the eyes of others. Over time, they confuse the image they show to the world, believing that any failure concerning the social norms would not just lead to public judgment, but also will make them feel unworthy on personal level, and this pushes them to prioritize their illusion of fulfillment over their repressed desires.

This chapter looks at how desire is shown in both works *The Glass Menagerie* and *Life is Elsewhere* through the characters, showing the different ways it controls their thoughts and actions. These desires often become oppressive, limiting the characters' freedom and shaping the course of their lives.

## **Chapter two: Repression in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere***

This chapter examines the theme of repression in *The Glass Menagerie* and *Life is Elsewhere*. In Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, repression is experienced by Laura and Tom through their mother Amanda. In Kundera's work, it is reflected in the restrictive and manipulative relationships between Jaromil and his controlling mother.

### **1. Laura and Jaromil as Victims of Repression:**

To start with both Laura, a female protagonist in Williams's play, then Jaromil, the male protagonist in Kundera's work stand as symbols of repression. We can see this in the way they act and relate to the world around them through their lives. *The Glass Menagerie* illustrates Laura's psychological condition and profound fragility, Laura Amanda's daughter, is unable to achieve any of her goals, even the insignificant ones. She drops out of high school and later fails in business college due to her shyness and social anxiety:

Amanda: I went to the typing instructor and introduced my self as your our mother. She didn't know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We don't have any such student enrolled at the school! I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early january. I wonder, she said if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days attendance. No, I said Laura, my daughter, has been going to school everyday for the past six weeks! (Williams1944, scene2, p.407)

Laura is fragile and has a slight limp from a childhood illness, which makes her feel different from others. "I'm crippled" (Williams 1944) .Laura grows up without father, he abandoned the family, when she was still young, leaving behind him only a smiling photograph, and this abandonment, not only removes a paternal figure but also imposes significant emotional tensions in the family. "This is our father who left us a long time ago.[...] The last we heard of

him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words—‘Hello—Good-bye!’ and no address”. (Williams 1944, scene1,p.401)

The father’s absence affected Laura’s perception of men and relationships; Laura loses her emotional support and grows without a father’s guidance, so she struggles with the feeling of abandonment. This leads to difficulties in forming normal social relationships, as she might not have experienced positive interactions with a male role model. This condition increases her repression, causing her to feel uncomfortable with others; she suffers from low self-confidence and her mother’s pressure to find her a husband only make worse the situation.

Amanda: [...] how many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon? (*Tom throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan*).

Laura (*alone in the dining-room*): I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

Amanda (*reappearing, airily*):What? No one - not one? You must be joking! (*Laura nervously echoes her laugh*). (Williams1944, scene1 P. 404)

Just like Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*, Jaromil in *Life is Elsewhere* stands as a victim of repression. Kundera describes Jaromil as a sensitive person, who grows up with an unclear understanding of who he is.

Jaromil was no longer at all convinced that everything he thought and felt was solely his, as if all ideas had always existed in a definitive form and could only be borrowed as a form a public library. But who then was he? What could his own self really consist of? He bent over that self in order to peer into it, but all he could find was thereflection of himself bending over himself to peer into thatself ... (Kundera 1974,p.27).

Jaromil is very influenced by his overprotective mother who idealizes him and encourages him to see himself as special and superior even at school toward his classmates, so he struggles to engage with social interactions.

Mama was convinced that her son was not only gifted (he had learned to read when he was five) but also that he was exceptionally sensitive in a way different from other children.[...], he listened with great interest. He would look deeply into the eyes of guests, imagining rapturously that their eyes were looking at him as a singular, exceptional child, one who might not be a child at all. ( Kundera 1973, p.13)

The mother's overprotective side stems from the emotional absence of the father. Without a father to serve as a model for him, Jaromil's understanding of masculinity and authority is badly lacking, he is unable to have a positive view of the world. His father has just a symbolic presence no real relationship with his son even though, he is around, Jaromil still feels that something is missing. Deep down, he struggles with this emptiness, he wants to understand what it means to be a man, and especially a poet because he seeks for admiration by using his small talks since he was a child. "Everyone liked Jaromil, and Mama listened with pleasure to his small talks, ideas, and discreet boasting [...] to be sure he would still thirst for admiration, but he has learned to gain it with terse phrases naively and modestly uttered." (Kundera, 1973, p.24). It's noticeable that Jaromil's repression comes from his inability to build real relationships, he struggles to connect emotionally and socially, he escapes to his inner world, he is out of touch with reality and lives in a self-centred world, to avoid pressure.

Mother love imprints a mark on boys' brows that rebuffs the friendliness of schoolmates. Eventually Jaromil gained the skill to hide that stigma, but after his glorious arrival at school he experienced a difficult time (lasting a year or two) during which his schoolmates who taunted him with a passion, also beat him up several times just for fun of it. (Kundera 1973, p.17).

Jaromil's character in *Life is Elsewhere* closely embodies that of Milan Kundera, as both grow up with an overcontrolling mother and an absent father. Kundera's own childhood was challenging with complex and distant relationships. They both were affected by the lack of a strong paternal figure, though, in different ways with the harsh reality of their lives.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, the southern society with its traditional values influences Laura's life. In conservative South America, women were not really independent, they were expected to act in a certain way, follow a strict gender roles and they were obliged to marry a respectable man because marriage at that time was a priority for each woman, in order to be stable socially and financially, and these expectations are present in Amanda,

Amanda: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives, stay home and watch the parades go by? amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? [...] I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the south barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife! stuck away in some little mouse-trap of a room encouraged by one in-law to visit another little bird like women without any nest eating the crust of humility all their life. (Williams 1944, scene2, p.409).

Laura's mother; Amanda, often reminds her daughter and oppresses her about how she used to be a popular southern belle surrounded by many gentlemen callers, as she is comparing her younger self to Laura and this puts pressure on Laura and makes her feel like she is not good enough, this lowers her self esteem, she always feels herself inferior to the world around her and especially to her mother. As it is claims in this quote,

Laura: It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue mountain...*(Tom utters another groan. Laura glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little)* Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid. (Williams 1944, scene1, p.405).

Laura could not attend the ideal image of southern women, she did not meet any of its standards. The societal pressure that Laura faces, pushes her to retreat in a world of her own turning off the development of her personality, a world full of fear, loneliness and self doubt. Laura tries to hide the true side of herself, she was unable to express her emotions or to live in the real world, she escapes to where she feels safe and protected as she puts it:

Laura: I went to the art museum and bird-houses at the zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the jewel-box, that big glass house where they raise a tropical flowers (Williams 1944, p.408).

She also creates a fantasy world with collection of glass animals which reflect her fragility, they are small, delicate and weak, just like Laura's personality. She spends the majority of her time taking care of them because they bring her comfort, "she is washing and polishing her collection of glass" (p.410). The glass animals are more than just toys, they represent Laura's inner world, her need to feel protected and the way she hides herself from society that does not accept her as she is, and this can be seen as a form of repression.

With reference to Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, the protagonist Laura has a deep connection with the southern environment. It affects them in similar ways. Both author and character were raised in a society with strict traditions and values that they could not follow. Williams tries to escape life through art, only to face it and demonstrate the society full of contradictions where people seek meaning in an unequal world through his plays as it is said in the paper of (Vesnatripcovic-Samardzic 2016) . In a comparative way, both Laura and Jaromil live in similar kind of restrictions and repression. Jaromil was raised by the idea that a poet must be heroic figure, while Laura is stuck in the idea that an ideal southern woman need to be saved by a man. In the repressive world they each come from, the two protagonists have to hold all the societal expectations around them.

In *Life is Elsewhere*, the Czechoslovak society is more than a place, Jaromil has not only dreams of poetry, youth, or revolutionary ideals, but he feels pressured to fulfill them because this society is under early communist rule dominated by ideological control and manipulation even of citizens' emotions

What did he say? That in a previous society love had been so deformed by concern for money, by social considerations, by prejudices that it could really not be itself but rather a shadow of itself. Only the new era, by sweeping away the power of money and the influence of prejudice, would make man fully human and love greater than it has ever been in the past. Socialist love poetry is thus the expression of great, liberated emotion. (Kundera 1973, p.197).

Jaromil's mother for example sees him as a gifted, sensitive artist and pushes him to become a poet and she convinces him that he is a great poet, "believe your mama [...] you have an immense talent ...you are a poet" (Kundera, 1973,p :161).This becomes his first form of pressure coming from home, he was trying to become what others want instead of who he truly was. Outside home, society also plays a role especially after the revolution, by treating poets like heroes. Jaromil finds his identity, the one that will be admired and helps him to belong to his society. The government pushes poets to support the regime, and this makes them feel seen and have a place, even though they don't understand the politics, their art becomes a tool of conformity.

Poetry's role is at its most important in revolutionary times; poetry gave the revolution its voice, and in exchange the revolution freed poetry from its isolation; today the poet knows that he is understood by the people and especially understood by young people because youth, poetry, and revolution are one and the same! (Kundera1973, p.143)

Both Jaromil and Milan Kundera are shaped by the repressive communist 'Regime of Communist Czechoslovakia', where personal freedom is sacrificed to the collective purpose (Milan Olejnik, 2017).

Laura Wingfield's adulthood in *The Glass Menagerie* is highlighted by her emotional fragility, she could not grow and really steps into adulthood, she avoids real world and creates her own. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Laura's behaviour can be understood as a form of repression because she searches to escape from the pressure of external world and

loses herself in her world of glass animals, she doesn't assume her fears and she represses them inside her mind. "She notices things and I think – she broods about them. (Tom looks up). A few days ago I came in and she was crying". (Williams 1944, scene 4, p.420). Amanda hopes that finding a gentlemancaller for Laura could reinforce her emotional paralysis and will help her to go outside of her box and she describes her daughter as weak, dependent woman:

I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independant—why, [...] I don't say me because I'm old and don't matter! I say for your sister because she's young and dependant. I put her in business colleague—a dismal failure! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach. I took her over the Young people's league at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records. What kind of life is that for a girl to lead? (Williams 1944, scene 4, p.422)

In this quote, Amanda's conversataion with Tom reveals her strong desire to secure a better future for her daughter by finding her a husband, which she sees as the only path to Laura's independence. At the same time, Amanda shifts the entire responsibility for Tom, placing on him the burden of fulfilling both parental and societal expectations. This interaction not only highlights Amanda's anxiety about Laura's future but also demonstrates the oppressive dynamics within the family, where individual desires and duties are unequally distributed.

When Jim O'conor the colleague of Tom arrives, Laura's reaction was different from the one expected especially from her mother, Laura won't set with them at the table. She is distressed by anxiety especially because she knows Jim. He is her first love when she was in high school, so her emotions intensify, her feelings are frozen by fear, and the weight of her family's expectations though. "Then catches her breath and darts through the portieres like a frightened deer". (Williams1944, scene 5, p.438).

The arrival of Jim O'conor, disturbs Laura's repressed world, because she was obliged to confront him, and go with him into deep conversations, Laura is naturally shy, and struggles to interact with Jim when he just arrives, she is speechless because of her social anxiety.

*(Laura sits up nervously as he enters. Her speech at first is low and breathless from the almost intolerable strain of being alone with a stranger).*

(THE LEGEND: 'I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU REMEMBER ME AT ALL')

*(In her first speeches in this scene, before Jim's warmth overcomes her paralysing shyness, Laura's voice is thin and breathless as though she has just run up a steep flight of stairs.)*  
(Williams 1944, scene7,p.447)

However, as Jim speaks to her with kindness and interest, he gains her trust and makes her feel comfortable. This allows Laura to express herself and for the first time in the play, she begins to talk about her thoughts, her feelings, and her hidden fears. Laura shares aspects of her inner world that reflect her deep insecurity and emotional fragility, showing just how much she is isolated from others and connected to her glass animals that reflects her only comfortable world.

Jim: what are you doing now? Laura: I don't do anything much, oh please don't think I sit around doing nothing! My glass collection takes up a good deal of time. Glass is something you have to take good care of. (Williams1944, scene7, p.453)

She shares with him her collection of glass animals which reflects a personal part of her world, she shows him her favourite; a delicate glass unicorn which represents her own difference from others and her sensibility. The unicorn, unlike other horses, is unique just like how Laura sees herself, rare, and does not have place in the real world. When she gives the unicorn to Jim saying: "I trust you with him"(Williams,1944, p:455), it is not just a gesture of sharing an object, but an emotional offering of herself entirely. When Jim accidentally breaks

the glass unicorn, Laura does not get angry on the outside. Instead, she stays calm and acts as if it does not matter, even though it clearly hurt her.

Laura: Horn! It doesn't matter. Maybe it's a blessing in disguise.

Jim: you'll never forgive me. I bet that that was your favorite piece of glass.

Laura: I don't have favorites much. It's no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are you traffic jars the shelves and things fall off them. (Williams 1944, scene 7, p. 457)

According to Freudian theory of repression, Laura hides her real emotions, pushing them inside rather than expressing them she even tries to justify the accident by saying: "now it is just like all other horses". (Williams 1944, p. 457). In doing so, she reflects her own need to feel normal and being accepted, avoiding confrontation with what she really feels.

After sharing an intimate moment with Jim, he tells her that he is engaged. She is hurt and shocked, the news stop her small hope that she creates during their conversation, the hope that someone accepts her and takes care of her, but when he tells her about the engagement once again she does not get angry, she is silent and still unable to react, she pushes her feelings of broken heart into the shadow of her unconscious, hiding them even from herself. She hides and controls her emotions to preserve an image of gentleness. "*She bites her lip which was trembling and then bravely smiles. She opens her hand again on the broken glass ornament. Then; she gently takes his hands and raises it level with her own. She carefully places the unicorn in the palm of his hand*". (Williams, 1944, scene 7, p. 460)

Laura's moment of hope ends, she returns to silence and she loses her chance to connect with the only man whom she wanted to trust, she is disappointed, she could not progress and she fails in achieving a real adulthood. No future, no clear path, she goes back to her inner world, and all this is symbolized by a candle light that she puts in her hand at the

end of the play. Laura returns to her isolation, her future appears stocked and her life insignificant, with a little chance to go forward.

Jaromil and Laura's identities are profoundly sculpted by their parental and social influence. Because of repression, they both never truly achieve anything meaningful in their adult life. In *Life is Elsewhere*, though, Jaromil grows and takes on the appearance of a man, he continues to operate with the mind and emotional depth of a child, he prefers being attached to illusions rather than facing his reality of an adult "for adulthood is invisible; adulthood is total, or it doesn't exist. As long as Jaromil remains a child..." (Kundera 1973, p.137). He is pushed to recognize himself as both a poet and revolutionary, and his personal development is profoundly lost between his artistic vision and his emotional undergrowth.

At eighteen Lermontov has become a soldier so as to run away from his grandmother and her burdensome maternal love. He has exchanged the pen which is the key to his soul, for the pistol, which is the key to the world's doors. (Kundera, 1973, p. 137)

Kundera shows how Jaromil is influenced by outside forces and especially the strict political system he ends-up following as it is mentioned in this passage:

on the contrary, nowadays it is the poems that are the beggars; they are beginning to be admitted to the socialist paradise; but the young revolutionaries who guard the gates of this paradise must be stern [...] "What is this nonsense he's feeding us?" Jaromil shouted and others joined him. (Kundera 1973, p. 145)

Over the course of the novel, Jaromil is incapable of building authentic relationships, he fails to build lasting bonds, as he has no lasting romantic partner and no genuine friends, leaving him isolated despite his longing for recognition and connection. Even his poetry, which initially gave his life a sense of meaning and purpose, reflecting his inability to achieve either personal or artistic fulfillment. This emptiness highlights the deep conflict between Jaromil's

desire to embody the image of heroic poet and his failure to engage with the world in a meaningful way,

In an immature young man, the yearning long persists for a safety and unity of the universe that he alone completely filled inside his mother, and he is anxious about (or angered by) the relativized adult world in which he is now engulfed like a droplet in an ocean of otherness. (Kundera 1973, P. 186)

Jaromil's poetry in *Life is Elsewhere* became less about the truth or his own feelings, and more about pleasing others and authorities, the poetry that he uses to escape, to feel safety and search freedom became the chains that binds him. To assure the identity of a 'poet', he represses his doubts, his sexuality and even his sense of self. Now if we compare this to Milan Kundera himself, the contrast is vivid and significant. Kundera's life is also touched by the repressive atmosphere of communist Czechoslovakia. Yet Kundera finds a way to face it with a critical minds and strong sense of independence using his art as a form of resistance. Although he supported Communism when he was young, over time he moves away from it and became one of its most thoughtful and honest critic.

From a Freudian perspective, Jaromil's psychological development is deeply limited by the repression in his own desires for autonomy. According to Freud, repression involves the unconscious exclusion of distressing thoughts or memories from consciousness. In Jaromil's case, his inability to confront his unresolved childhood conflicts, particularly those caused by his overbearing mother and his sexual anxieties. Jaromil's relationship with his girlfriend in *Life is Elsewhere* shows how much he struggles with jealousy and confusion about love and sex. He wants to connect to someone but he does not know how. Instead of trusting his girlfriend he becomes controlling and suspicious, especially when she shows she has her own life, "a scalding wave of jealousy filled Jaromil's body". (Kundera 1973, p.174). Redhead girl's independence makes him feel insecure, like he might not be good enough or

strong enough as a man, even if he realizes that his behaviour is toxic and unhealthy, he continues to believe that this is a way to express his love as it is reflected in this passage below:

It was a self destructive anger, for he knew very well that by driving the redheaded girl a way he was driving away the only women he had; he sensed that his anger was unjustified and that he was unjust to the girl, but knowing this was probably what made him still more cruel, for what attracted him was the abyss; the abyss of solitude, the abyss of self condemnation; he knew that he would be unhappy without his girlfriend (he would be alone) and dissatisfied with himself. (Kundera1973, p.214)

In his past, Jaromil was treated as a child for a long time from his mother, she controls every aspect of his life, he is immature to form a mature relationship and he is afraid of intimacy, he can not understand his life, his needs, his adulthood, eventhough his mother puts on him pressure but inside of him he was always searching of her, even in his romantic relationships, Kundera states in this regard,

Jaromil saw the opposition in her face, and he became inflexible. Yes, he wanted to return into the “sweet fragrance”, he was looking for the old maternal universe, but he had long since stopped looking for it in his mama; in the search for the lost mama it was Mama who hampered him most. (Kundera1973, p.188)

Jaromil never truly understood what is it to have a meaningful relationship with a woman, and this is clear in the way he betrays his girlfriend by reporting her brother to state. This act shows Jaromil’s immaturity and his need of validation, he is not loyal, he chooses to submit his girl friend brother to the authorities sacrificing his relationships. Jaromil gives importance to appearances and roles as a revolutionary poet, rather than empathy and understanding, in doing so, he prioritizes his position over love. Because of Jaromil’s repressed desires, he tries to dominate the redhead girl in all aspects, he does not know how to behave with his companion and this is reflected in this quote, where he talks to redhead girl about his

definition of love, he tries to convince her to denounce her brother. Jaromil says to redhead girl:

Love means all or nothing. Love is total or it doesn't exist. I'm on this side and he's on the other side. You have to be with me and not somewhere in the middle. And if you're with me, you have to want what I want, do what I do to the fate of the revolution is my own personal fate. If someone takes action against the revolution he is taking action against me. If my enemies are not your enemies then you are my enemy. (Kundera 1973, p.216)

Jaromil fails in his career and his life in general, he finds himself only with his mother, he is convinced that she is the only one who really loves him, since he loses everyone and feels isolated. He is tied to the harsh truth that his father never wants him. And all this symbolizes the complete failure in his life including his autonomy and greatness.

## **2. Tom as a Victim of Repression**

In the *Glass Menagerie*, Tom Wingfield is seen as a character who is victim of repression, like his sister Laura, he works at a shoe company, a job he does not enjoy. He feels repressed by the responsibilities forced upon him both by society and his family, particularly by his mother Amanda who puts a lot of pressure on him, she often criticizes his choices and makes him feel that he will end up like his father who leaves the family as it is shown in this short dialogue:

Amanda: What right have you got to jeopardize your job? jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we'd manage if you were—

Tom: listen! you think I'm crazy about the warehouse?(he bends fiercely toward her slight figure) you think I'm in love with the continental shoe makers? you think I want to spend fifty-five years downthere in that—I go [...] for sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever! and you say self—self's all I ever think of. Why, listen if self is what

I thought of, mother I'd be where he is—gone! (pointing the father's picture) (Williams 1944, scene 4, p.414)

The sense of repression and dissatisfaction with life is very reflected on what Tom says to his mother, his words also reveal how she fills him with the fear that he will end up like his father, Tom appears lost between a boring job and the constraint of home life, this internal conflict can be explained through the Freudian concept of repression which manifests when people push away their real desires because they are not allowed to express themselves such as Tom who dreams of adventure, freedom and living exciting life. To escape his problems, he always spends his nights out watching movies as he says “I go to the movies because—I like adventure. Adventure is something I don't have much of at work. So I go to the movies” (p.441). It is clear that Tom can not follow his dreams because of his family's situation and the oppressed societal norms, his escapes make him appear self-centred sometimes. As it is shown in his conversation with his mother

Amanda: Go to the movies, go! don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job! don't let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! just go, go, go—to the movies!

Tom: All right, I will! the more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I'll go, and I won't go to the movies!

Amanda: Go, then! Then! Go to the moon—you selfish dreamer!  
(Williams, 1944, scene 7, p. 464)

In this above quotation, Amanda believes that her son is a selfish man who does not care about her or his sister Laura. At that moment Tom feels overwhelmed and under pressure and he declares that he does not just go to the movies but he intends to leave them forever.

For him, his evening outings are symbolic, they are more than a pass-time, they are a way to imagine a better future, and a way to live his hidden wishes, even if in fact this makes him only more angry and sad overtime. So his repressed feelings don't disappear, they come

back and he feels himself trapped until he finally decides to leave his family “ I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps”. (p.464-465)

Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* is widely regarded as a semi-autobiographical character representing Tennessee Williams himself. Similar to Williams; Tom feels familial obligations, especially from his overbearing mother Amanda, such as Williams’ relationship with his mother ‘Edwina’. Both Tom and Williams feel responsibility toward their sisters and family, but they struggle to balance between their responsibilities and their personal desires.

### **3. Amanda and Jaromil’s Mother as Agents of Repression**

Although their situation may be seen a bit different, Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* and Jaromil’s mother in *Life is Elsewhere* are both portrayed as a repressive figures, blinded by their excessive love and controlling behavior toward their children. Amanda becomes entirely focused on securing Laura’s future through marriage, while Jaromil’s mother projects her ambitions into her son, shaping him into the poet she wants him to be. In both cases, maternal affection turn into a limiting force, restricting the children’s freedom instead of supporting it. Their love becomes oppressive, defining and constraining the paths of Laura and Jaromil’s life.

To begin with, Amanda in Williams’ work is a complicated character who highlights both overcontrolling and protectiveness. Tennessee Williams describes her as a dramatic, nostalgic and controlling figure. Her life is dominated by the consequences of her failed marriage and her fall from social status, Mister Wingfield abandoned the family, leaving behind him a woman who never truly understood the meaning of responsibility, so Amanda accepts her situation and rather than expressing bitterness or sadness over this betrayal, she

represses her pain by justifying this act as nothing more than inevitable destiny. She masks her true emotions of fearness and pain as she says in this context: “What gives her any idea? However, you do act strangely. I—am not criticizing, understand that! I know your ambitions [...] There are so many things in my heart that I can not describe to you! I’ve never told you but I—loved your father”. (Williams 1944,scene 4, p.420)

Amanda opens her heart to her son, revealing her vision of life, her deep fears and that she has many things she feels unable to express. For the first time, she openly assumes that she loves her husband as shown in the quote above. Amanda here refuses to show how raising two children alone is not simple as that for her, and how it generates tragic pain to the family. She hides her true emotions, to be socially acceptable, she and her children. Amanda has an old strict fashioned view of moral values; she criticizes their behaviour and limits their freedom by repressing anything she finds as inappropriate, she tries to impose her standards on Laura and especially on Tom because she is afraid that he will be like his father, as it is claimed in this scene:

The wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my Amanda: Oh, I can see the handwriting on face!It’s terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation!—then left! Good bye! (Williams, scene, 4 p.422)

This passage illustrates much Amanda’s fear of seeing her son step out of her standards repeating the same things his father once did, the scene shows that she has never truly overcome with the absence of her husband, and everything around her serves as a reminder of her hidden pain.

Jaromil’s mother in Milan Kundera’s *Life is Elsewhere* is one of the main characters. She is depicted as a complex and repressive figure much like the character of Amanda Wingfield in Tennessee Williams the *Glass Menagerie*, as the author claims:

The poet's mother, perceiving that her lover refused to share her joyous hopes, was hurt, and she stopped talking to him until the day the doctor confirmed her pregnancy. The poet's father said that he knew a gynecologist who would discreetly relieve her of her worries, and she burst into tears (Kundera 1973, p.04)

This quote reveals how Mama is abandoned by her husband, who refuses to take the responsibility for fatherhood. This also reflects a deep lack of paternal instinct, the father does not respond with joy or commitment but rather with rejection.

Yet through his reaction the poet's mother decides to continue the pregnancy alone and to raise her child by her own. The decision of Jaromil's mother becomes an act of defiance, because she represses her pain of abandonment. She is afraid for her son's future but to hide these feelings she idealizes him, and she sees him not only as her child but as a result of her sacrifice and the validation of her decision. She sees Jaromil perfect with all societal expectations, she tries to show an image of him that fits with all societal ideals forcing him to wear a mask of a perfect genius from his childhood. Jaromil's mother hides all Jaromil's flaws and represses him with her over-caring, she did not let him any sense of personal independence or intimacy. Kundera states in this regard,

Jaromil paid no attention to this clothing, for mamaa took care of it, she chooses his clothes for him, she chooses his underwear she made sure he didn't catch cold by seeing to it that he wore warm under-shorts. (Kundera 1973, p.202-203)

This passage highlights how Jaromil's mother does not allow him to develop a sense of identity, she controls even the most intimate aspects of his life, such as choosing his underwear, and her son has no sense of responsibility or self independence.

This chapter examines how characters in both works *The Glass Menagerie* and *Life is Elsewhere* are oppressed and how their desires turn into a form of repression. It also highlights the victims of this repression and explores its main causes.

#### IV. Conclusion

This research, explored the issue of desire and repression in American playwright Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Czech novelist Milan Kundera's *Life is Elsewhere*, relying on psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's concepts of '*Desire*' and '*Repression*'. This piece of research demonstrates that in their efforts to portray the repressed desires of modern individuals in South America and Czechoslovakia, Williams and Kundera use their art to show how characters struggle between what they really want and what the external forces imposed on them.

Our research underlines the strong autobiographical dimension of both works. Literature becomes for Williams and Kundera a medium through which personal experiences of limitation, conflict, and repression are transformed into art. This confirms Freud's view that creative expression is often a sublimation of repression emotions and desires. Both writers, through different styles and settings, give voice to struggles that were deeply rooted in their own lives, thereby making their works resonate more strongly with readers. Another conclusion we have drawn is that both works extend beyond individual psychology and can be read as forms of social criticism. Williams critiques the suffocating weight of traditions and conformity in American society, while Kundera exposes dangers of ideological control in Czechoslovakia.

In addition, this study highlights the importance of psychoanalysis as critical framework for literature. While Freud's theory have been contested and reinterpreted, they remain powerful tools for analyzing the interplay between psychology, society and art. By applying the Freudian concept of repression and desire, we uncovered dimensions of meaning that link Williams' and Kundera's works not only to their authors' personal histories but also to broader cultural and psychological patterns. This suggests that psychoanalytic criticism

continues to be a valuable approach for literary analysis, capable of bridging the gap between personal experience and collective history.

The scope of this dissertation did not allow us to explore other issues though, Tennessee Williams and Milan Kundera address a wide range interesting themes, we therefore encourage students explore other themes such as illusion vs reality, feminism, and patriarchy since both authors are guided by the restrictions of their controlling society and family.

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