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General Introduction

In using myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him.... It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.... Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art (Eliot: 177-178)

This thesis seeks to explore the form and meanings that myth and ritual assume in selected plays by American modernist playwright Tennessee Williams. Methodologically, it relies on the anthropological, psychological and literary paradigms borrowed from James George Frazer's, Carl Gustav Jung's and Northrop Frye's major works on myth and ritual. We will attempt to show that in his quest to translate modern man's metamorphosis and tragedy in post World War II America, Williams reterritorializes Greek myth and ritual mainly of vegetation deities. We will demonstrate that compared to his contemporaries mainly Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams stands as the playwright of the 'other America', in that while the former were acclaimed as America's conventional playwrights, Williams was discarded as the playwright who profaned America's cultural and religious conventions.

By 1920, O'Neill had concentrated on the theme of the success and failure of the American Dream. Miller and Albee in *Death of a Salesman* (1940) and *The American Dream* (1960) have directly attacked the dangers of a sacred image demonstrating in a variety of techniques the fatal, soul-destroying consequences of unquestioned generalized acceptance of and participation in the principles of a potentially destructive national myth, the myth of the 'Manifest Destiny'.

The Post World War II era illustrates that when popular cultural myths are vocally questioned and demythologized a critical public consciousness can be stimulated (Jamison and Eyerman,1995). This in fact was reflected in the American cultural and religious life as the American Counterculture. The counter is that the revolution in attitudes and morals were not sudden but were a part of the longer trajectory of changes over the twentieth century in the evolution of modernism. We assume that Williams became known for his profanations against the hypocrisies of the American forefathers. He sought self-determination under new values and standards, hence he declares himself as the vanguard of a new society. Tennessee Williams' major contribution in terms of dramatic technique was to find a theatrical framework by which the audience was allowed into the inner workings of the minds and souls of the characters. Upon closer examination of the post war era, not all aspects of the conduct of the war fit the dramatic archetype. The use of atomic weapons on Japan, and the failure to take action against the concentration camps, for instance, called into question the moral purity and motives of the United States, the supposed protagonist in the war. In the twenty five years or so following the war the emergence of the cold war, the rising tensions of race relations, the growing awareness of poverty, the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and even a discomfort with the materialism of the 'affluent society' all contributed to a re-evaluation of the American society and erosion of the archetype.

Our investigation of Williams' use of myth will be undertaken on a sample of ten plays that he produced during the 40s,50s and 60s that coincide not only with post World War II era but with the 'counterculture' in America as well. The corpus comprises Williams': *Battle of Angels*(1940)*Orpheus Descending*(1957), *A Streetcar Named Desire*(1947), *Sweet Bird of Youth*(1959), *The Rose Tattoo*(1951), *Camino Real*(1953), *Suddenly Last Summer*(1959), *The Night of the Iguana*(1961),*The Milk Train doesn't Stop Here Anymore*(1963)*Summer and Smoke*,(1948)*The Seven Descents of Myrtle or Kingdom of Earth*(1968), *In the Bar of*

a Tokyo Hotel (1969), *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*(1970)and his novel *The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone*(1950).

2-Issue and Working Hypotheses

The basic assumption in this thesis is that American playwright Tennessee Williams permeated his plays of the three first decades after World War II with mythical elements, and he has adapted the mythical symbols, patterns, and motifs to his own artistic needs, fitting them to plot, structure, characters, themes and language. The extent to which these elements affect the meanings will be discussed all along this thesis. Yet, because his critics have failed to recognize the extent of the mythic elements, they have failed to recognize their impact. Even when the more obvious Dionysian and Christian allusions to birth, death and resurrection are recognized, they are nearly always condemned as inappropriate and having little or no organic relationship to the meaning.

Our investigation of myth and ritual in Tennessee Williams' drama stems from a set of major myth influences on the playwright and his oeuvre. The first is Williams' acknowledgement to poet T.S.Eliot, and his '*The Waste Land*' as a particularly lasting influence. Eliot explicitly acknowledges his interest in myth and ritual. In fact, a year after his famous review of *Ulysses*, Eliot recognized and praised James Joyce's' mythical method as inspiration for modern writers saying that through using myth to manipulate a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, James Joyce pursued a method which others must pursue after him. For modernists like Joyce, Williams, in the case of this dissertation, and for others the use of myth is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. Instead of the narrative method, it became possible to use the mythical method. The purpose was to make the modern world possible for art.(Eliot, :177-178)The reminisces of Eliot and his *The*

Waste Land are noticeable in some of the plays under study like *Camino Real* and others through both poet and playwright's use of 'fertility rites'.

The second major myth influence that we suppose has greatly contributed to the shaping of Williams' myth and ritual infused drama is without doubt the Jungian one. According to Jung, myths fulfill a therapeutic function by opening up human beings to their unconscious, thus preventing neurosis and paving the way to 'individuation'. Because they emanate from the collective unconscious, their significance is universal and timeless. Knowing that Williams spent a year in Psychoanalysis, there is no doubt that his terminology of 'Unconscious mind' and 'images' closely reflect Gustav Jung's psychology that seems the collective unconsciousness as the repository of universal symbols or images that Jung terms 'the Archetypes of the mind'. In one of the plays under study Williams says: "like some archetype of the human unconsciousness, the image haunted our small apartment"(Williams,1971:159). He also says:

I can't deny that I use a lot of those things called symbols, but being a self-defensive creature, I say that symbols are nothing but the natural speech of drama. We all have in our conscious and unconscious minds a great vocabulary of images, and I think all human communication is based on these images as are our dreams (Williams,1978:66)

The third hypothesis supposes that Williams' readings of Greek has shaped his drama for a life's time. In fact Williams acknowledges his reading of mythology in his Episcopalian Ministergrandfather's library and his exposition to the Christian myth of Jesus' birth, sacrifice for mankind and resurrection. This has greatly influenced his choice of the myth of Vegetation deities, fertility rites and the ritual of birth, death and rebirth being the most tragic and therefore the most relevant to modern man's metamorphosis as his philosophy.(Williams,1964)

Finally, we assume that Williams' elaborate use of myth and ritual symbolism stems from his two major influences namely American poet Hart Crane and novelist D.H. Lawrence. Hart

Crane is celebrated as America's most influential poets of the twentieth century. His expressionistic style was heavily inspired by T.S. Eliot, yet Crane is also one of the literary history's most tragic heroes. Struggling with his homosexuality in an era of conservatism, he took his own life at the age of 32 by jumping overboard into the Gulf of Mexico in 1932 after being beaten. His body was never recovered but his legacy endures. Tennessee Williams 'fell in love' with Crane's poetry(Williams,1967)

It is worth to remind that the Christ symbolism reinforces the vegetation god themes of death and rebirth in terms more familiar than those of ancient myth. Yet this cannot be understood when the vegetation god element itself is not recognized. But once this element has been recognized, we must ask the ultimate questions: what do the mythic elements mean outside of their mythic context, after they have been displaced from their mythic origins? More specifically, what do sacrifice and rebirth of the vegetation gods mean in the modern world? What does the goddess consort relationship mean in a modern world? What of the sexual abnormalities of Williams' young god like protagonists who are the "mutilated" and the "fugitive kind" are related both to the mythic elements and to the modern world as Tennessee Williams presents it? And finally, Why does Williams in almost all of his plays put an artist as a hero, be he a singer, a poet, a painter or else all endowed with a redemptive power for rebirth?

Probably through his own experiences with psychoanalysis, Williams seems to be clearly aware of this psychotherapeutic function of artistic creation. Indeed, in his self interview of 1957 he even extended his observations to indicate that he suspected, at least, something of the communal nature of the stimuli behind artistic creation, even though they might seem highly individuated. Williams asks himself the questions below:

A...I have followed the developing tension and anger and violence of the world and time that I live in through my own steadily increasing tension as a writer and person.

Q. Then you admit that this 'developing tension,' as you call it, is a reflection of a condition in yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. A morbid condition?

A. Yes

Q. Perhaps verging on the psychotic?

A. I guess my work has always been a kind of psychotherapy for me.

Q. But how can you expect audiences to be impressed by plays and other writings that are created as a release for the tensions of a possible or incipient madman?

A. It releases their own.

Q. Their own what?

A. Increasing tensions, verging on the psychotic.

Q. You think the world's going mad?

A. Going? I'd say nearly gone (Williams, 1972:14)

If we assume that the once conscious organization of the perceived world as anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss terms it has historically receded into an unconscious set of reflections, then we have arrived at Jung's "instinctual images" or what Freudians might refer to as 'unconscious mythological thought forms' (Freud, 1965). That these structures are not merely of anthropological psychological interest may be deduced from the close relationship created by Jung in the actual psychoanalytic treatment of patients between artistic creation and the bringing into the open these "instinctual images." In a process he called "the individuation process," Jung would encourage each patient to use his own tastes and talents to develop his dream and fantasy material in any number of artistic disciplines 'dramatic, dialectic, visual, acoustic, or in the form of dancing, painting, drawing, or modeling' (Jung:72) If we can see beyond Williams' satiric use of the language: ("a morbid condition," "verging on the psychotic," "incipient madman") here, he has suggested more than an Aristotelian notion of catharsis. He asserts that the world around him resembles a chaos strongly suggestive of that described by Artaud, and thus that his works must appeal to the violent mythic images formed by the instincts of his fellow human beings.

In answering these questions, we must likewise consider what death and rebirth and the god goddess relationship meant in their original contexts, for it is these meanings on which Williams bases his own conceptions of reality. That is to say, it is the past myth from which he constructs a present myth, a "true story of our time and the world we live in..."(Williams,1949: 47)Mircea Eliade notes that 'anguish before nothingness and death' seems to be a specifically modern phenomenon. In all the other, non-European cultures, that is, in the other religions, Death is never felt as an absolute end or as Nothingness: it is regarded rather as a rite of passage to another mode of being; and for that reason always referred to in relation to the symbolisms and rituals of initiation, rebirth or resurrection(Eliade, 1958:172) In the early religions, he explains, "Death is the Great Initiation." This is true also of Christianity, but, as Eliade continues, "a great part of the modern world has lost faith, and for this mass of mankind anxiety in the face of Death presents itself as anguish before Nothingness."(Ibid:175)

Varying the theme only slightly, Tennessee Williams presents "anxiety in the face of Death" anguish before time and time is Nothingness. "Whether we admit it to ourselves, or not," the playwright tells us, "We are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence."(Williams, 1952) This sense of impermanence likewise haunts Williams' plays. "Death," Eliade continues, "prepares the new, purely spiritual birth, access to a mode of being not subject to the destroying action of Time."(Eliade,1958:180) Escape from time is escape from mortality, and immortality is god like; death is the way to immortality, and thus death is the way to becoming one with God(Ibid)

In restoring to death its primitive significance as a rite of passage, Williams gives particular attention to the mode of death or the death equivalent. Most often it takes the form of an ancient ritual such as crucifixion, dismemberment, immolation, cannibalism, or castration. Throughout his history, man has been preoccupied with death. For the man without faith,

death marks the end of all life; for the religious man, it is the beginning of a higher life. Either way it is man's ultimate concern. For Tennessee Williams, nothing can be created without death, and the death and rebirth of the 'Cosmic Male' is, as it will be shown in the discussion part, Williams' major theme.

The selected plays in this thesis are centered on what were known in ancient times as the "Death Mysteries." Characterized by the worship of a goddess, the death mysteries stood in contrast to the mysteries of birth and regeneration, which were devoted to the worship of a god. Because the goddess was regarded as the source of all fertility and birth and the god the agent of that fertility, it was the goddess who was worshipped as supreme in the mystery of death and rebirth. It was she who was responsible for life rising renewed from the grave, for it was she who symbolized the earth, the mortal part of nature. The masculine principle, the immortal part of nature signified by the sun, was the object of the Earth Goddess. According to ancient myth, the Earth swallowed up the sun nightly in the west, only to see it rise again in the east.

Williams had portrayed this myth and this relationship of the sun and the earth early in his career in the short play depicting D. H. Lawrence's death. Written in 1941, the final scene of *Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* presents Lawrence watching the sunset moments before his own death. "When first you look at the sun," he declares, "it strikes you blind Life's blinding ... "He stirs and leans forward in his chair."The sun's going down. He's seduced by the harlot of darkness. . . . Now she has got him, they're copulating together! The sun is exhausted, the harlot has taken his strength and now she will start to destroy him. She's eating him up...Oh, but he won't stay down. He'll climb back out of her belly and there will be light. In the end there will always be light..."(Williams,1941:54). Eliade explains it,

When the Earth becomes a goddess of Death, it is simply because she is felt to be the universal womb, the inexhaustible source of all creation. Death is not, in itself, a definitive end, not an absolute annihilation, as it is sometimes thought to be in the modern world. Death is likened to the seed

which is sown in the bosom of the Earth Mother to give birth to a new plant. Thus, one might speak of an optimistic view of death, since death is regarded as a return to the Mother, a temporary re-entry into the maternal bosom(Eliade, 1959:184)

Because the primordial concept of the earth involved features both of nourishment and famine, the Earth Goddess was an ambivalent figure. She was both nourisher and protector and devourer; she was both Good Mother and Terrible Mother. Neumann tells us that the death mysteries are mysteries of the Terrible Mother for they are "based on her devouring ensnaring function, in which she draws the life of the individual back into herself. Here the womb becomes a devouring maw and the conceptual symbols of diminution, rending, hacking to pieces, and annihilation, or rot and decay, have their place..."(Newmann, 1960:71-72) And thus "because ritual killing and dismemberment are a necessary transition toward rebirth and new fertility, the destruction of the luminous gods in the journey through the underworld appears as a cosmic equivalent of the birth of the new day."(Ibid:192)The basis of Williams' metaphysics and the ancient religions was the maternal principle. Kybele, Aphrodite, Isis and the other earth goddesses were both beautiful and destructive, both good and terrible.

In psychological terms, the idea is an especially interesting one since Williams has said much about his strong childhood ties with his mother, and since he has publicly acknowledged his homosexual tendencies (on the David Frost Show). Burstein's comment that the plays are mostly about incest may not be unfounded, although the plays clearly are not merely parables of possible incestuous drives on the part of the author or even of Jung's universal instinct toward matriarchal incest. Severely condemned by many critics as sensationalism and exploitation, the sexual abnormalities are nevertheless an integral part of Williams' metaphysics just as they were an integral part of myth in primitive and ancient cults, a religious ideal founded in myth and holding a sacred and transpersonal significance. The essential feature common to all of these sexual concepts is the union of the god and the

goddess in varying ways. Homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, all represent, in Williams' work varying degrees of the two sexes. Primarily male, primarily female, or both equally, the individual represents a union of the masculine and feminine principles. The ancient cults regarded such a union as a return to the primordial time of the hermaphroditic round from which all creation was thought to have emerged. As Neumann explains, "The round is the calabash containing the World Parents... The World Parents, heaven and earth, lie one on top of the other in the round, spacelessly and timelessly united, for as yet nothing has come between them to create duality out of the original unity. The container of the masculine and feminine opposites is the great hermaphrodite, the primal creative element who combines the poles in himself..."(Neumann,1958:9).

When asked about the theme of a finished work, Williams generally looks vague and answers, "It is a play about life." (Williams, 1948:) Then he explains: "I have never been certain of what my plays meant very precisely since I have always written mostly from the unconscious..."(Ibid)Adrian Hall, director of the off Broadway production of *Orpheus Descending*, supports this explanation, remarking that Williams works from some "dark metaphysical source," that "he writes out of some really subjective contact with his psyche. He is in contact with himself."(Hall,1964)

Perhaps we should let this stand as an explanation for the flood of archetypal images, symbols, and themes which has made Williams' work rich ground in which to unearth mythic artifacts. Every artist is entitled to an artistic creation. But although mythic artifacts as artifacts are interesting and decorative, they are of less significance than the knowledge of their relationship to the individual or the society that created them, the spirit that informed them. The spirit which informs Williams' myth infused plays is one of universal truth. Drawing upon the myths of the past Williams has created the "true story of our time and the world we live in..."(Williams,1956) Finding a meaning for the modern world reflected in the

mythic meanings, Williams has worked, reworked, and molded the myths until they have little outward resemblance to their archetypes; yet he has retained the essential meanings of those archetypes. In his search for a metaphor for man's struggle to attain his original unity, whether it be with his mother or the cosmos, Williams has discovered the language of myth, and he has employed this language fully during at least the three first decades after World War II. Divine androgyny, gods and goddesses, sacrifice and rebirth Williams has found in these mythic elements metaphysics, and through them he has transformed that metaphysics into theatre. He has used these elements to inform every aspect of his work his plot and structure, his characters, his themes, his language, and even the frequently nonrealistic staging of which he is so fond as it will be shown throughout the discussion chapters of this thesis.

Part One: Historical Context and Methodological Framework

Introduction

This part of our work investigates the cultural, social, political and religious backgrounds that underlie the drama of Tennessee Williams of the three first decades after World War II. As we have hypothesized that Williams was the vanguard of American counterculture, we intend first to review the background of the American counterculture that informs Williams' plays. The second chapter examines the Dionysian myth which is the core of the vegetation deities and the birth, death and rebirth ritual.

Chapter One: Historical Context of Tennessee Williams' Drama

Introduction:

This chapter intends to survey the socio cultural and historical context that informs Williams' drama under scrutiny. It will be demonstrated that the playwright could not remain unaffected by the growing tensions and turbulences that marked post war America. It is worth to remind that in the back drop of the seeming complacency of the 1950s were the Cold War, arms race, and threat of nuclear destruction as well as the Korean War as the United States gained ground on the world stage as an international leader. This did not engender loyalty and patriotism but rather skepticism, debate, and resistance. The Vietnam War and compulsory draft was not taken as something to necessarily honor. For many it was something to fight on ideological grounds, 'make love not war' (Rosemont, 1956). Social mores also changed dramatically. Divorce, non-marriage, living together, same sex relationships, multiple relationships, and the empowerment of women and youth were choices to be debated and advanced. The younger generation in a post-Victorian era experimented with gender roles and relationships including sexual behaviors given the introduction of birth control and choices about when and where to have children (Allyn, 2005). The older generation still lived within the

boundaries of Victorian culture and mores with traditional gender roles and the expectations of marriage and nuclear family life.

1-The Birth of American Counterculture

The Post World War II period was commonly known for acts of profanation against many of the sacred myths about the character and specialness of the United States of America. Profanation being an act of violating sacred things, showing disrespect, or exhibiting irreverent behavior towards beliefs taken to be honorable and above question reached not only religious conservatism but American culture as well. Profanation is also making common and accessible that which was previously understood as beyond questioning. In fact in the context of the supposedly conforming atmosphere of the 1950s, groups of young people began to develop their own style in the 1960s that took pleasure in non-conformity at least to adult standards. The economic prosperity of common Americans was questioned politically and culturally. J.D.Salinger's *The Catcher of the Rye*(1951) Beat writers Allen Ginsberg's *The Howl* and Jack Kerouak's *On the Road*(1957) celebrated spontaneity, sensual gratification ,LSD psychedelics, free sex and open road as alternatives to suburban conformity and family commitment. As still other instances, Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1949) and *The White Negro*(1957) romanticized young street blacks, or 'Hipsters', as cultural models for the repressed middle-class whites. From Hollywood came Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*(1954) and James Dean as the misunderstood in *Rebel without a Cause*(1955) It is worth to mention that the message of such works was often ambiguous at best before Freudian explanation of repression and other traumata were accepted by conventional Americans.

The post war counterculture reshaped even the world of popular music. While mainstream music celebrated conservative issues like domesticity and romantic love, in the 50s, a very different genre labeled 'Rock and Roll', a mixture of the heavy beat and open sexuality of

black rhythm and Blues, became vastly popular with younger generations. The most outstanding of all was Elvis Presley from Mississippi who recorded his first songs at eighteen in a Memphis studio in 1953. Elvis enjoyed a phenomenal string of fourteen million seller records from 1956 to 1958. The way into which Elvis Presley with his electric guitar challenged the dominant culture is of great relevance and need for us to the discussion of Williams' 'Elvisian' hero in both *Orpheus Descending* and *Battle of Angels*. In the same way Ginsberg's *Howl* and Kerouac's *On the Road* will enlighten us upon Williams' poet and fugitive kind heroes in selected plays which echo Williams' cultural non-conformism that is as the vanguard of the 'Other' America.

2- Post War Religious Profanation: Cults and Mystery Religions

Tens of thousands of young people in the American fifties and sixties drifted or broke away from parents to explore alternative world-views and lifestyles. A minority actually joined commune or cults. These varied in philosophy and regime from the gentle to the extreme. The true cults that proliferated in the American 60s and early 70s resemble those of the Hellenistic and imperial Roman eras (Paglia, 1979:45). Such phenomena are symptoms of cultural fracturing in cosmopolitan periods of rapid expansion and mobility. Consisting of small groups of the disaffected or rootless, cults are sects that may or may not evolve into full religions. Hence, the cult phenomenon even at its most strange expression demonstrates the sociological dynamic of the birth of religions, as they flare up, coalesce, and strengthen or vanish as Camille Paglia asserts in his *Cults and Cosmic Consciousness*. Cult is a foster family that requires complete severance from past connections kin, spouses, friends. (p.52) Membership in cults may begin with a sudden conversion experience where an individual feels that ultimate truth has been glimpsed. This may lead to the conviction that the cult view is the only possible view, which therefore must be promulgated to the benighted or is too refined to be understood by others (ibid) A persecution complex and siege mentality may

result: cult members feel that the world is the enemy and that only martyrdom will vindicate their faith. Hence mystery religions had great appeal to the powerless and dispossessed.

The major Mediterranean mystery religions of Dionysus, Demeter, Isis, and others anticipated, influenced, or vied with Christianity (p.59) Compared to the sometimes dry veneration of the Olympians, mystery religion was characterized by a worshipper's powerful identification with and emotional connection to the god. We assume that the American sixties, had a climate of spiritual crisis and political unrest similar to that of ancient Palestine, then under Roman occupation. But this time the nascent religions faltered under the pitiless scrutiny of modern media (ibid). Few prophets or messiahs could survive the invasive TV camera. Yet a major source of cultic energies in twentieth-century America was the entertainment industry: the Hollywood studio system, cohering during and just after World War I, projected its manufactured stars as those of the pagan Pantheon. (p.70) Frenzied fans (a word derived from the Latin *fanatici*, for maddened worshippers of Cybele) had already been generated by grand opera in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when castrati sang female roles and were the dizzy object of coterie speculation and intrigue. (p.75)

Modern mass media immensely extended and broadened that phenomenon. Outbursts of religious emotion could be seen in the hysterical response of female fans to Rudolph Valentino, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, and the Beatles. Eroticism mixed with death is archetypally strong: there were nearly riots by distressed mourners after Valentino's death from a perforated ulcer at age thirty-one in 1926. The rumor that Elvis lives is still stubbornly planted in the culture, as if he were a demi-god who could conquer natural law (p.132). Tabloids have advertized Presley's canonization as the first 'Protestant saint. The same myth of surviving death is attached to rock star Jim Morrison, whose Paris grave has become a magnet for hippies of many nations (ibid). Cultism of this demonstrative kind is persistently associated with androgynous young men, who like Adonis are sometimes linked with mother

figures. Presley, for example, sank into depression and never fully recovered from his mother's unexpected death at age forty-six in 1958; after long substance abuse, he died prematurely at age forty-two in 1977. Rock music, even at its most macho, has repeatedly produced pretty, long-haired boys who hypnotized both sexes.(p.145) It is no coincidence that it was Paul McCartney, the "cutest" and most girlish of the Beatles, who inspired a false rumor that swept the world in 1969 that he was dead. Beatles' songs and album covers were feverishly scrutinized for clues and coded messages. In cultic experience, death is sexy. The evangelical fervor felt by many heretical young people in the 1960s was powered by rock music, which at that moment was becoming an art form. The big beat came from late-forties and fifties African-American rhythm and blues(p.154) But the titanic, all-enveloping sound of rock was produced by powerful, new amplification technology that subordinated the mind and activated the body in a way more extreme than anything seen in Western culture since the ancient times. Through the sensory assault of that thunderous music, a whole generation tapped into natural energies, tangible proof of humanity's link to the cosmos(ibid). "Flower power," the pacifist sixties credo, was a sentimentalized, neo-Romantic version of earth cult, which underlay the ancient worship of Dionysus. This 'Flower power' myth symbolism will be discussed further in this thesis in the chapter devoted to Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*. In *The Bacchae*, Euripides saw nature's frightful, destructive side, but that perception was gradually lost over time. *Bacchanalia* is the Latin term for the Dionysian ritual *orgia* (root of the English word "orgy"), where celebrants maddened by drink, drugs, and wildly rhythmic music went into ecstasy (*ecstasis*, "standing outside of"), abandoning or transcending their ordinary selves(p.148). Hence the association of Dionysus (called *Lusios*, the "Liberator") with theater(ibid). The Bacchanalia arrived in Southern Italy from Greece in the fifth century BC and eventually spread to Rome. Celebrants decked with myrtle and ivy danced to flutes and cymbals through city parks and woods in festivities that became notorious for open sexual

promiscuity and opportunistic crime. Our review of this background is necessary as it shows evidence that the Bacchanalia had evolved into private sex clubs in America of the post war era as typified by Williams in some of the plays under study, among which are *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*.

3.1950s and 1960s Psychological Disintegration: The LSD Drug and Psychedelic Churches

The religious impulse of the sixties has been obscured by a series of scandals that began mid-decade and spilled into the seventies communes that failed, charismatic leaders who turned psychotic, cults that ended in crime and murder(p.169). The sensational chain of events began with the dismissal in 1963 of Timothy Leary and his colleague Richard Alpert from psychology lectureships at Harvard for experimenting with LSD on student volunteers. This episode first brought LSD to public attention. An Irish Catholic turned self-described prophet, Leary envisioned a world network of “psychedelic churches” whose ‘Vatican’ would be his **League for Spiritual Discovery** (acronym:LSD), headquartered in Millbrook, New York, until it was closed after 1966(ibid). Though registered as a religious institution, the League was noted for its sex parties reportedly a frequent attraction of Leary’s Harvard offices as well.

The optimistic sixties saga degenerated into horrifying incidents of group psychology gone wrong. Most notorious is the case of Charles Manson, a drifter who became a fixture of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district during its famous 1967 “Summer of Love” and who gathered a group of fanatical devotees, hippie girls who thought he was both Jesus Christ and the devil(p.172). Manson had hypnotic powers as a cult leader. He became patriarch of the ‘Family,’ a commune on a ranch near Los Angeles where heavy use of a cornucopia of drugs was promoted and ritualistic group sex practiced. A student of the Bible, Manson believed

that the Book of Revelations prophesied the Beatles: modern pop culture, in other words, had an apocalyptic religious meaning (ibid). In August 1969, Manson dispatched a hit group to slaughter seven people in two nights, including the actress Sharon Tate, living in a rented house in the Hollywood Hills. In jailhouse confessions, Manson's girls boasted of the "sexual release" they felt in their Maenadic frenzy as they plunged their knives into their victims (p.175). Our review of this background is of great relevance to the discussion part namely to the chapters devoted to Williams' *Orpheus Descending* and *The Night of the Iguana* as the main protagonist is typical of the historical cult figures Charles Manson and Jim Jones.

CHAPTRE Two: Theoretical Frame Work

I- Myth –Ritual Theories and Drama

1- James George Frazer onThe Myth of Dionysus: Ancient Fertility Rites: Birth, Death and Resurrection.

Dionysus was the last god to enter Olympus. His origins, the legend of his birth, the new religion he advocated and the revels he introduced secured an unquestionably unique position for him in Greek mythology. He was the son of Zeus, the father of the Olympians, and a mortal princess (Semele). The common belief concerning his birth-legend is as follows: Zeus, in disguise, had a love affair with Semele, daughter of Cadmus, king of Thebes. Envious Hera advised Semele at her sixth month of pregnancy to request Zeus to appear in his true nature and form. When the god granted her desire, Semele was consumed by the thunder and lightning that accompanied Zeus:

The father did not let his son perish. He took the unborn child and sewed him up in his thigh for three months longer; and when the period of the nine months was accomplished, he brought his son into the light. Thus derives Dionysus' name as "twice-born" or the "child of the double door".

The myth of his birth is the most sublime expression of Dionysus' being. Beneath the myth lies the certainty that the enigmatic god is the spirit of a dual nature and of paradox; having been born by a divine male and a mortal female, he is already by birth a native of double realms. Divinity and mortality, masculinity and femininity amazingly blend in Dionysus' image; he is also the offspring of the clouds descending to earth in a storm, the blending of the watery and the fiery elements in nature. (This union of moisture and warmth, which fosters the fruits of the earth, is genially displayed in the fiery juice of the vine.)

The myth of his appearance among men, like the myth of his birth, has something unusual and thrilling about it. Dionysus always encounters man in a very special and strange way, creating opposition and anger. His religious call mostly addresses the women, who abandon their wifely morality and join the god in frenzied rites. This is the reason why, in shifting forms, the myth repeats the same story of initial reluctance of mankind to follow the Dionysian religion. However, there are other assumptions concerning the negative attitude towards Dionysus. One of them is that it was a late cult of a “stranger” who forced his way into Greece. It was thought that he migrated to Greece either from Phrygia or Lydia in Asia Minor, or directly from Thrace. In either case, Dionysus entered the mainland as a young victor who wrestled with the giants; and the Maenads, his ecstatic women-followers, drove the enemies into flight. In this manner, he became the divine archetype of all triumphant heroes. But his appearance and disappearance was quite different from those of the traditional gods. In Athens, he appeared during the festivities in his honor (Dionysia) to claim the Archon’s wife for his own. These nuptials are entirely different from the sacred nuptials of a god and a goddess commonly celebrated in cult. Dionysus’ union with the queen was probably intended to bring fertility to the land, but the fact remains that “there is no precedent in the history of cult for the rite of the sexual intercourse with the queen,” and the whole act shows the physical immediacy of the god among mortals.(Frazer,1957:509)

Dionysus’ duality by birth and nature is even more emphasized by his two-fold status of “presence and absence” among the mortals. The double status of the god found expression in a symbol that radically distinguishes the Dionysian cult from the others: it is an image out of which the double nature of the god stares, it is the mask. It is true that we encounter the mask in other Greek cults. But Dionysus is the genuine mask-god. His masks were usually made out of the wood of grape vines or fig trees. They represented Dionysus at his several

epiphanies. Sometimes they were so colossal that it was impossible for them to be worn by humans and were thought of as the representation of the god himself.

A-The Dionysian Mask

In several cults, it is characteristic of the spirits who appear in a mask that they appear with exciting immediacy among men, and, for this reason, men can also assume their role. Dionysus was the most powerful spirit that appeared in man's immediate proximity and his votaries were the human imitators that through the mask were transferred to the original image themselves. It is remarkable that while the Olympians were mostly depicted in profile, Dionysus' mask faced directly the viewer. He was the god of immediate confrontation in contrast to the aloofness of the Olympians.

The mask is pure confrontation – an antipode, and nothing else. It has no reverse side – “Spirits have no back,” people say. It has nothing which might transcend this mighty moment of confrontation. It has, in other words, no complete existence either. It is the symbol and the manifestation of that which is simultaneously there and not there: that which is excruciatingly near, that which is completely absent – both in one reality (Ibid)

Dionysus made his entry in a violent manner accompanied by drums, flutes, pipes and cymbals that made a terrible noise, which was called “pandemonium”. That wild uproar was interrupted by intervals of death-like silence. Otto Rank mentions Aeschylus who has given a picture of the wild tumult of the Thracian orgy. According to Aeschylus, the mere sound of the flute excited madness. “Madness dwells in the surge of clanging, shrieking and pealing sounds; it dwells also in silence. The women who follow Dionysus get their name, maenads, from this madness.”(Otto,1965:85)

This Dionysian madness bewitched the world by its revelation of a primeval order with all the elemental forms of creation and destruction. The whole of nature is an active participant

of this order and the barriers between animality, humanity, and divinity are reduced to the minimum. The traditional order of the world has been shaken by a new torrent of life. Rocks split open and streams of water gush forth. At the touch of the votaries' rods, wine-fountains or streams of milk and honey leak from the earth. The Maenads gird themselves with snakes and give suck to fawns and wolf cubs as if they were infants at their breast. Wonders and miracles occur wherever Dionysus appears: ship masts and women's looms are overgrown with ivy and grape vines; fire cannot burn his followers and no weapon of iron can harm them; walls fall in ruins, chains burst a sunder, locked doors swing open untouched by any hand.

However, among all the Dionysian marvels that transformed the world, there is one that has been considered as the god's greatest gift to mankind throughout the ages: it is the vine, a sacred plant that produces the wine, an elixir which intoxicates the followers with divine madness. The element that has distinguished the wine from all other plants is its power to inspire, to raise up the spirit, and to cause an ecstasy that bring the revelers in direct contact with the god. As it was mentioned in the myth of his birth, the fiery juice of the vine is a metaphor for Dionysus himself as the offspring of storm and fire.(Frazer,514)

It is an old folk belief that wine is associated with the life of nature in general. Otto cites Goeth's verse:

When the vines bloom anew,
The wine moves in the keg;
When the roses glow anew,
I don't know what is the matter with me(Otto,147)

In early Greek lyric poetry, Alcaeus sings that no plant should be planted in preference to the vine; Horace, in his turn, calls it the sacred plant that transcends grief, misery, and weakness:

You move with soft compulsion the mind that is often so dull;
You restore hope to hearts distressed; give strength and horns to the poor man.

Filled with you he trembles not at the truculence of kings or the soldiers' weapons.(Ibid,149)

It is also said that the wine was given to mankind after the great flood as divine assistance. Life, Zeus promised that one of his sons would bring to human race the vine for solace as the human counterpart the divine nectar. In the Bible after the flood, Noah planted the first vineyard to fulfill the prophecy that his father uttered at his birth: "He shall comfort us in our work and in the toil of our hands with the very ground which Jehovah has cursed.(Koutsoudaki,1984)Throughout Greek mythology, wine has been Dionysus' and other gods' and heroes' strongest confederate. It is with its help that Dionysus overcame the opposition of his enemies, and in one of the most famous episodes of *The Odyssey*, it is the wine that Ulysses takes along to confront the Cyclops.(Homer,1958:196)Finally, the nature of the drink causes different effects- from love, desire, sleep to deeds of violence and madness – reflects best the god's duality, both his endearing and terrible wildness.(Frazer,510)

However, even if the wine is the best guaranty of Dionysus' presence, the god does not live through it alone; he pervades a more general realm of vegetative nature. Along with the vine, the ivy distinguishes him as the laurel adorns Apollo. While the vine gives fruits in the summer, the ivy spreads out even in the middle of winter suggesting sterility and uselessness. It is used only for decorative purposes, and in particular, on graves. While the grape is invigorating, the ivy produces a poison that causes sterility or works as a cooling and purifying medicine.

According to Greek belief, Dionysus was the lord of all moist nature, exercising t over the growth of trees the same power that was manifested in the vine. Thus he was worshipped almost everywhere in Greece as the tree-god. The nature of the fig-tree and the pine-tree, which were more closely related to the worship of Dionysus, clearly manifests the elements of moisture and procreation.

In addition to his presence in the plant world, Dionysus had several epiphanies in the animal world. One of them was the bull who was looked upon by ancient peoples as a symbol of fertility. The he-goat was also one of the most loyal associates of god. The former was primarily a Cretan epiphany while the latter we find throughout Attica and later on in the Italian cult. The ass is the third and least associated with Dionysus out of the herbivorous animals that he favored. If this group symbolized fertility and sexual, there was another group of carnivorous animals (the lion, the panther, and the lynx) which represented the most bloodthirsty desire to kill. Dionysus' duality is once again revealed in the diverse nature of the animals that accompanied him or in whose form he appeared from time to time (Ibid:610). The significance of these vegetative and animal epiphanies will be discussed in more details as part of the Dionysian rituals and the rendering of the vegetation god.

There have survived several sources that describe the splendor of the Dionysian forces of life. However, it is an incontestable fact that Euripides' *The Bacchae* is the richest source of information about the Dionysian religion. In this tragedy, Euripides made no secret of his fascination for the thrilling Thracian god. The play deals with Dionysus' advent in the Greek mainland. Having established his worship in Asia Minor, the new god arrives in his native city Thebes. In the guise of a young votary of his own cult, he causes everyone whom he encounters to be seized by the contagious spirit of the god. The women of Thebes especially are highly affected by the Dionysian frenzy. Their looms are miraculously overgrown with ivy and grape vine; they desert hearth and home to celebrate on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron, the first bacchanal on the Greek mainland; they break loose from the everyday duties of ordinary life and hold their revels in a state of wild and ecstatic enthusiasm amidst nature's sights recalling careless times before the advent of civilization.

However, this idyllic bacchanal turns into a bloody nightmare when the new religion is confronted with strong opposition. This opposition is mainly concentrated on the persistence

of king of Thebes, Pentheus, who denies the divinity of his cousin. Soon, the resisting Pentheus is killed by the women who indiscriminately hurl themselves on men and beasts. He is dismembered and his mother, Agave, triumphantly carries his head into the city on the top of her “thyrsus”. The manner of Pentheus’ murder is of great significance. The theme of dismemberment (sparagmos) or lynching has been taken up by many contemporary theorists who parallel the nature of violence in old and modern times. René Girard, for example, in *La Violence et le Sacré*, he dedicates a chapter to the Dionysian aspect of his hypothesis of the sacrificial crisis and unanimous generative violence:

Il faut élargir le problème des Bacchantes aux dimensions de toute culture, religieuse et non religieuse, primitive et occidentale ; le problème est celui de l’origine violente, jamais repérée, aujourd’hui repérable dans la désintégration rapide des dernières pratiques sacrificielles de la culture occidentale.(Girard,1972 :196-97)

For Girard, Dionysus is the god of decisive mob action, a violent action that reconciles all the members of the community because it involves the participation of all. This violence is humanized by religion and especially divine intervention. The violent death of Pentheus provided the necessary outlet for a mass hysteria and restored peace.(Ibid)

Except for Pentheus, similar “sparagmoi” are the doom of many others in the myths that surround Dionysus. King of Thrace was dismembered because, like Pentheus, he had opposed the new religion. Orpheus, the priest of Apollo, was also dismembered and had his lyre broken.

But “sparagmos” is not only a form of death inflicted upon the enemies of Dionysus. It plays an important role in the god’s birth, childhood, and death myths. His birth is associated with Semele’s dismemberment by the thunderbolts that accompanied Zeus. During his childhood and especially in his Cretan identity as Dionysus-Zagreus, he was torn into shreds by the Titans and was reconstituted by Rea. The reconstitution of the infant Dionysus, as well as his

mother's resurrection and restoration among the deities, are all events that suddenly unmask themselves and reveal their real names to be Life and Death. The wild and infinite antitheses of these two extremes marvelously combine in the great oneness of Dionysus who is at the same time god of birth, death, and rebirth.

Even in biology creation results from division(Koutsoudaki,1984). In the same manner, there is a procreative power in Dionysus' "sparagmos" that generates life. Generation of new life and rebirth are the basic elements of the Dionysian cult, which are especially revealed through the practice of its annual rites. During the rites, Dionysus mainly appears as a suffering, dying god who must succumb to the violence of terrible enemies in the midst of the glory of his youthful greatness. The most celebrated myth of his destruction has him suffer as Zagreus (the great hunter) who is himself hunted to death. He is the render of men who is himself rent to pieces. In most cases the "sparagmos" is followed by "omophagia" (the devouring of the victim's raw flesh). The song of the Euripidean chorus in *The Bacchae* sings of Dionysus "dresser in the holy deer skin who hunts the blood of dying goats with ravenous lust for raw flesh."(Euripides,1960:135) He is also "Omistes" (the eater of raw flesh).

B- The Dionysian Fertility Rites

In his birth rites, for example, the mother goddess is devoured by her priestesses. Elsewhere, infants are sacrificed to Dionysus who is also called child killer. This devouring of raw flesh is generally interpreted as a sacramental sacrifice, which was supposed to bestow upon its participants the power of the god who had been killed and eaten . The victim could also have been an animal as the god appeared in several animal epiphanies. In *The Bacchae*, the Maenads pounce on a herd of cattle and tear them limb from limb. Actually the Maenads were, in a version of the myth looked upon as beasts of prey, transformed by Dionysus into

panthers before rendering Pentheus. The epiphanies of the god himself as killing and carnivorous animals are numerous. Dionysus is lion, panther, lynx, or killer bull.

But as it has already been mentioned, the post mortal eating of raw flesh also represents the planting of the seeds of rebirth. According to Hegel and Nietzsche, regeneration and destruction are only part of a continual creation: It is the nature of the finite to have within its essence the seeds of extinction; the hour of its birth is the hour of its death. (Hegel, *Logic*)

Dionysus: sensuality and cruelty. Transitoriness could be interpreted as the enjoyment of the power to generate and the power to destroy, as continual creation. (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*)

The annual rituals of Dionysus precisely reflect the process of generation and destruction as it is revealed in nature's annual circle and the rotation of the seasons. The god's dismemberment presages the winter season while his resurrection heralds the coming of the spring. Thus are also explained Dionysus' epiphanies as lion (spring), goat or bull (summer), and serpent (winter), which constitute the emblems of the tripartite year (Frazer, 514)

However, the myth and the rites of "sparagmos" are not only restricted to the fertility of the earth, his agricultural achievements, and above all the introduction of the wine. The preponderance of the women who are the main performers of the violent action is also of great significance. In *The Bacchae* there is a substitution of women for men in regard to violence. In this sense, Dionysus appears as a great social revolutionary - the first feminist in the history of mankind - in order to free the enslaved women. From Asia Minor, Dionysus is surrounded by women. His Lydian Maenads are at the same time his nurses, his foster mothers. In Thebes, he finds the women home-loving, wool-spinning wives, and mothers. As "Lysios" (liberator), Dionysus liberates the Theban women from their slavery; on his divine command, they abandon husbands, homes, and children and declare absolute surrender to the

god's will and limitless sacrifice. They become the Bacchantes who join the Maenads in the god's wild worship.

In Euripides' account, in addition to Dionysus revolutionary' attitude with regard to family organization and the emancipation of mortal women, there is another aspect of the god which should not be neglected: Dionysus' bisexuality, which constitutes another ruling force of his mythological personality. There is ample evidence of the god's femininity in the ancient references to him. He is referred to as 'Pseudanor' (the man without true virility), or even 'Gynnis' (the womanish) or the 'Flowery' (Frazer, 510). His childhood situation was not favorable for the development of his masculinity. Aside from the female role that his father played in his birth, his childhood was lacking in objects for masculine identification. He was surrounded by women nurses, and the only man with whom he kept company, his tutor, Silenus, was a very effeminate personality. It is also confirmed in the myths that Zeus wanted Dionysus to be born a girl since it had been decided on Olympus that the former would be "the god of men" and the latter "the god of women". Where all the other divinities are accompanied by attendants who are of the same sex as they, women make up the "Thiasos" (entourage) of Dionysus. In *The Bacchae*, he also comes denying his masculinity. He enters the house of Cadmus as an effeminate boy, beardless and dressed, like his Maenads, in a fawn skin. It is important to note that the Maenads in the Dionysian cult always appear accompanied by a young priest, a slim youth with long blond hair and a feminine appearance who represented the spirit of Dionysus and served as the object of the projection of Dionysus' femininity.

The abolishment of sexual difference is a major thematic motif in *The Bacchae* as well as in the Dionysian cult in general. From other epithets of the god such as "Dendrites" (the tree god), or "Endendros" (he in the tree), it is deduced that Dionysus' identification with trees

“means bisexuality—and the ability to produce offspring by himself,” as bisexuality is a characteristic of most trees and constitutes their natural completeness.(Koutsoudaki,1984)

However, the abolishment of the sexes is not the only loss of differences in the Dionysian religion. The affinity of the god with the vegetative nature and the realm of the animals demonstrates an abolishment of difference on the three organic levels: the human, the animal , and the plant world. Besides the already mentioned animal and plant epiphanies of the god and the metamorphoses of his anthropomorphous followers into animals (for example, the transformation of the Maenads into panthers), Dionysus was surrounded by other creatures like the Satyrs and Pan , who were partially anthropomorphic with goat-feet, tails, little horns, all features belonging to the animal world.

C- The Dionysian, Apolonian and Orphic Rituals

The abolishment of difference in the organic world, however, is only a continuation of similar wonders that occurred on a metaphysical level as it became obvious during the discussion of divinity and mortality in Dionysus’ birth myths. Day and Night, Life and Death, Divinity and Mortality, Humanity and Animality are all opposite dualities that merge into the great oneness of Dionysus. There are various writings about the Apollonian spirit and various versions of the Apollonian myth, but in general Apollo is the embodiment of the Hellenic spirit; beauty and harmony, sanity and moderation. The alliance of Apollo with Dionysus meant a reconciliation of radical opposites: Sun and Moon, Divinity and Mortality , Sanity and Madness, Individuality and Primitive Unity. Though the two gods were too radically different ever to become merged, this alliance meant a modification for both types of worship: the Dionysian earthly spirit “elevated into a new and higher duality, the eternal contrast between a restless, whirling life (Dionysus) and a still far-seeing spirit (Apollo)” (Otto,208)

The conflict of the two religions was solved with the creation of a unique legendary figure whose lifespan demonstrated an unshakable evidence for the transition from the Apollonian to the Dionysian elements: Orpheus, one of the most complex characters with which ancient evidence has presented us. In him the flexible mind of the Greeks associated the two gods in one cult and made it easier addressing the two as one.

In spite of the scantiness of historical evidence, Orpheus remains a spirit that invaded Greek literature, Greek philosophy, and above all Greek religion, which in some way was associated with his name. In Greek mythology, Orpheus is considered to be the son of Apollo. He played the lyre and his music had the power to calm the wild nature. During the voyage of the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, Orpheus is mentioned the singer of the chanties which gave the rowers their beat ; but his music could do more than that . There is one story that he calmed a stormy sea by its power and another that he charmed the Clashing Rocks while the Argo passed through.(Frazer, 497) Aeschylus told how Orpheus was a devoted worshipper of Apollo, the Sun-god .It was his custom to go up to Mount Pangaion first thing every morning in order to greet the sun. In this he incurred the anger of Dionysus, who was winning Greece to his own wild religion, and Dionysus sent against him his savage women converts,the Maenads. They tore him in pieces as in their orgies they were accustomed to dismember animals, and as in *The Bacchae* of Euripides they tear Pentheus(Ibid:514)

Orpheus' journey with the Argonauts , his wife's death and his journey to the Underworld to fetch her , are the two important incidents of his life that survived through legend . Euridice , a nymph whose love Orpheus had won by the sweetness of his music , was killed by the bite of a snake , which , according to Virgil's account ,she trod on while trying to escape the attentions of an unwanted lover. Orpheus,disconsolate, descended to the realm of Pluto where he began to play his lyre and thus obtained his prayer to lead Euridice back to the upper world . But because he failed to comply with the prohibition against looking back at his wife

who followed, Orpheus lost Eurydice forever. Another version of the myth says that the gods sent Orpheus back empty-handed from Hades and showed him only a phantom of his wife because he was only a poor-spirited musician trying to invade Hades alive instead of having the courage to join his beloved in the proper way, by dying. whether a result of reason or of taboo, Euridice's loss plunged Orpheus in a period of mourning during which he shunned entirely the company of women and so did not avoid the reputation of the originator for homosexual love. Thus his dismemberment by the infuriated women could be the divine command of Dionysus as it also could be the natural feminine wrath towards Orpheus who charmed the Thracian warriors with his lyre.

In either case the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements respectively correspond to the life and death of Orpheus. This transition from the Apollonian birth and life to a Dionysian death – a striking parallel to the god's dismemberment by the Titans – is of major significance as it testifies to the yielding of the earlier Apollonian cult to the invasion of Dionysicism. Moreover, Orpheus' "Sparagmos" and the breaking of his lyre by the Bacchantes symbolically mark the end of individual Apollonian music and form the prelude to a collective choral music: the dithyramb, the song and dance of the Dionysian rites, which fairly soon assumed a highly refined form and became the voice of the chorus in the Greek tragedy. Tragedy became a new literary genre and flourished in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in the Greece of the Golden Age (Ibid:71).

2-Carl Gustav Jung and Claude Levi Strauss: the 'Collective Unconscious' and the 'Individuation Process'

Jung has extensively investigated the connection between the instinctual chaos of the dream motivators of Artaud and the emergence of the work of art. His theories are derived from many years of the type of artistically creative psychoanalytic technique described previously.

And so it is with the hand that guides the crayon or brush, the foot that executes the dance step, with the eye and the ear, with the word and the thought: a dark impulse is the ultimate arbiter of the pattern, an unconscious a priori precipitates itself into plastic form, and one has no inkling that another person's consciousness is being guided by these same principles at the very point where one feels utterly exposed to the boundless subjective vagaries of chance. Over the whole procedure there seems to reign a dim foreknowledge not only of the pattern, but of its meaning. Images are identical, and as the first takes shape, so the latter becomes clear." (Jung,1960:74)

The communality of the motivations of artistic creations seems to be Jung's main point here, a communality which we will see that he labeled "the collective unconscious." However, it is interesting to note the parallel between the simultaneity of the revelation of image and meaning in this analytic process and the simultaneity of the revelation of image and meaning in the communicative medium of the theater. The perception of the image enables the analyst to perceive the meaning of the creation of the image, or its meaning in Jung's language. The audience in the theater is given multisensory stimuli simultaneously in an effort to achieve a synchronous revelation of the central imagery and the underlying meaning of that imagery. Jung goes on to formulate more closely the resemblances he has found among these generators of creative activity or unconscious dream precipitates: "These experience and reflections lead me to believe that there are certain collective unconscious conditions which act as regulators and stimulators of creative fantasy activity and call forth corresponding formations by availing themselves of the existing conscious material. They behave exactly like the motive forces of dreams, for which reason active imagination, as I have called this method, to some extent takes the place of dreams." (Ibid) It seems logical that the poet or writer himself is not consciously aware of these internal mechanisms which stimulate his creative fantasies. The ordinary dreamer is unaware of the causative factors behind the shape of his dreams. It is only when the analyst approaches his dream material and endeavors to see into the structure of recurring actions or beliefs that any insight into the origins of the dream activity can be attained. So the critic here assumes the role of analyst, bypassing the obvious

and searching for the internal, the unconscious motivating patterns which give form to the entire oeuvre.

It would be impossible to postulate that each artist creates anew a mode of perception, since the number of patterns of human actions which are probable is finite. Indeed, the number of situations perceived as having the necessary interest for drama, whether personal dream fantasies or public theater, is small and the possibilities have long ago been explored thoroughly, therefore we must look for pre-established pattern of perception in the work of the artist under scrutiny. These patterns of perception may be critically detected or defined as myths or rites, as Levi-Strauss suggested (Strauss:16) Thus myths or patterns of interpretation of reality form a continuing basis for artistic interpretation. A ritual celebration based on a certain myth is externalized in the work of "professional or academic art," as Levi-Strauss continues. This intentional or self-conscious art differs from primitive art in that the underlying ritual or myth of primitive art becomes the art work, whereas in self-conscious art, art for art's sake, the underlying myth or ritual remains beneath the surface, a model upon which the artist builds and elaborates. (Ibid:29)

In using these elements to define a critical approach which is feasible and rewarding, Kenneth Burke speaks of the "poem as chart." He explains:

Perhaps we could best indicate what we mean by speaking of the poem as chart if we called it the poet's contribution to an informal dictionary. As with proverbs, he finds some experience or relationship typical or recurrent, or significant enough for him to need a word for it. Except that his way of defining the word is not to use purely conceptual terms, as in a formal dictionary, but to show how his vision behaves, with appropriate attitudes. In this, again, it is like the proverb that does not merely name but names vindictively, or plaintively, or promisingly, or consolingly, etc. His namings need not be new ones. Often they are but memorializings of an experience long recognized.

But essentially, they are enactments, with every form of expression being capable of treatment as the efficient extension of one aspect or another of ritual drama (Burke,1978:29)

It is the critic's duty then to sift through the artist's vocabulary, organize his symbolic syntax and codify the chart or ritual upon which he bases his creation. We must be careful to heed the warning of Burke here about the special nature of the poet's vocabulary. Words do not always mean what they seem, or even what the poet as his own critic may interpret them to mean. The critic as analyst may often see further than the poet as self-analyst.

This psychoanalytic role is only a metaphoric one, however. The purpose of the present study is not medical but literary. We do not aim to lay bare the psyche of Williams, but to examine the purpose and structure of his work.

Burke says correctly that the psychoanalyst searches for universal patterns of human biography: thus he analyzes the man and the poem as one of the works of the man. The literary critic directs his analysis to the purpose of the work of art; thus he looks at the function and the biography of the work itself. The eventfulness of the works of Williams has been discussed at perhaps too great length: indeed, the critical literature has treated his plays primarily as events. The present approach thus is not concerned with the biography of the man, but the biography of the works of the man. The critical task is to search for the basic myths at the heart of these works, the theme with variations which unites them all in familial definition.

That a set of myths or rituals may successfully be found at the basis of such a collection of works using this method is attested to by the results of Jung's investigations using the creative individuation process. Of his method he comments:

The most remarkable thing about this method, I felt, was that it did not involve a 'reductio in primam figuram', but rather a synthesis supported by an attitude voluntarily adopted, though for the rest wholly neutral of passive conscious material and unconscious influences, hence a kind of spontaneous amplification of the archetypes(Jung:75)

These archetypes or unconscious influences are contained according to Jung in an active role deep within the subconscious mind, a role which would clearly involve them in the creative

process. "We must assume that the unconscious contains not only personal, but also impersonal, collective components in the form of inherited categories or archetypes. I have therefore advanced the hypothesis that at its deeper levels the unconscious possesses collective contents in a relatively active state. That is why I speak of the collective unconscious (Ibid:118)

The existence of these "collective elements of the unconscious" or "archetypes" may come to expression in the form of myths or fairy tales, according to Jung(Ibid:268)

Although Freud disputed many of Jung's contentions in this area, he did acknowledge the "mythological thought-forms" of the unconscious(Ibid:266)

If myth is the most accessible avenue to the structure of these unconscious motivations underlying the creative effort, then it is logical to examine what kind of myth we might be looking for in this particular context. The myth will to a certain extent reflect the demands of the era, since both the man and his collective unconscious exist as a part of that era. Robert Burstein suggests that a typical modern dramatist is "trying to improvise a ritual out of anguish and frustration. Instead of myths of communion, he offers myths of dispersal..."(Jung,1952:16)

Claude Levi-Strauss seems to agree with Jung's assessment of common originating point for myths or dreams, although, he places it in a more sociological phraseology : "myths and rites are far from being, as has often been held, the product of man's 'myth-making faculty', turning its back on reality. Their principal value is indeed to preserve until the present time the remains of methods of observation and reflection which were (and no doubt still are) precisely adapted to discoveries of a certain type: those which nature authorized from the starting point of a speculative organization and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms" (Strauss,1966:16)

If we assume that the once conscious organization of the perceived world of which Levi-Strauss speaks has historically retreated into an unconscious set of reflections, then we have arrived at Jung's "instinctual images" or what Freudians might refer to as "unconscious mythological thought forms." (Jung:286) That these structures are not merely of anthropological psychological interest may be deduced from the close relationship created by Jung in the actual psychoanalytic treatment of patients between artistic creation and the bringing into the open these "instinctual images." In a process he called "the individuation process," Jung would encourage each patient to use his own tastes and talents to develop his dream and fantasy material in any number of artistic disciplines -"dramatic, dialectic, visual, acoustic, or in the form of dancing, painting, drawing, or modeling."(Jung:66)

Levi-Strauss sees the emphasis in artistic creation as being on communication among three elements, or four, if we include the artist himself:

The process of artistic creation therefore consists in trying to communicate (within the immutable framework of a mutual confrontation of structure and accident) either with the model or with the materials or with the future user as the case may be, according to which of these the artist particularly looks to for his directions while he is at work. Each case roughly corresponds to a readily identifiable form of art: the first to the plastic arts of the West, the second to so-called primitive or early art, and the third to the applied arts. But it would be an oversimplification to take these identifications very strictly all forms of art allows all three aspects...." (Strauss:27)

Levi-Strauss is clearly thinking of art here as a conscious communication, and indeed his statement is far more applicable to the plastic arts, whether primitive or modern, than it seems to be to drama of any era. The materials of drama are, in simplest terms, people. The users of drama are also people; in ancient ritual drama the users and the materials were often identical. Thus drama is a communication, in which the dramatist is the catalyst or communicator, between a model and a set of users. The model is not a simple one as in the plastic arts, but a complex one made up of psychological, not physical, components.

The contents of this psychological model, the set of common feelings and perceptions, have historically been most simply externalized using the symbolic structures called myths. Such structures have incorporated bits of the essential instincts and presented them in an understandable milieu based on comprehensible, even occasionally familiar models from relative historical proximity. A myth about the sacrifice of a king, for instance, uses familiar roles and actions to externalize an ancient set of perceptions even yet not exactly clearly delineated. Of course, the myth presented its themes with human like gods, and kings acting the primitive roles. These were characterizations comprehensible to all the audience.

3-Nietzsche, Aristotle on Tragedy and Myth

Nietzsche discerns in *The Birth of Tragedy* two formative influences on tragedy in ancient Greece: the Apollonian and the Dionysian. His speculations about the historical origins of Greek tragedy are less valuable than his insight into the impulses and tensions that give birth to a tragic art. He emphasizes the Dionysian aspect of Greek thought and attributes a secondary role to the Apollonian spirit. For Nietzsche music expresses a universal desire, a primitive unity with no place for individuality. This Dionysian music is of contagious nature and creates an atmosphere of joy, pain, or ecstasy. The celebrant of this ecstasy is Nietzsche's Dionysian man, who has shattered the boundaries of individuation and has united himself with his fellow as well as with nature:

Now the slave emerges as freeman; all the rigid, hostile walls which either necessity or despotism has erected between men are shattered. Now that the gospel of universal harmony is sounded, each individual becomes not only reconciled to his fellow but actually at one with him – as though the veil of Maya had been torn apart and there remained only shreds following before the vision of mystical Oneness.(Nietzsche,1956:21)

This is one of the few triumphant visions that Nietzsche offers. Generally, he sees life as “a terrible plant springing from a terrible soil of primordial suffering.”(Ibid) this primordial Dionysian suffering is expressed through music, which, according to Nietzsche, is superior to

the Apollonian plastic arts for its universal and primary qualities that speak from the very heart of nature. In music one finds the Dionysian mirror of the world which reflects truth itself.(Nietzsche:29)

Nietzsche speaks of the necessity of the fusion of the Apollonian with the Dionysian art; and tragedy became the meeting place of their “discordant discord” because of the “thaumaturgy of a Hellenic act of will” that “accepted the yoke of marriage, and in that condition, begot Attic tragedy, which exhibits the salient features of both parents.” (Ibid:19) Thus, in the Attic tragedy, the dithyramb is the music that echoes the untold and unspeakable sadness of things. The chorus generates these pictures, but the suffering hero needs a longing for beauty. The Dionysian truth itself calls upon the Apollonian vision. The latter, representing the happy necessity of the individual to dream, creates through illusion a certain relief from the pain and the horror caused in him by the abyss of nothingness. Consequently, the Dionysian truth is expressed in the choral parts of the tragedy while the dialogue is inspired by the Apollonian dream image.

Like Nietzsche, most modern theorists have derived tragedy from the worship of Dionysus. In German literature there is a tradition of theoretical inquiry into the nature of Greek tragedy. This tradition continues beyond Nietzsche to Bertolt Brecht in our time. They make some attempt to relate the achievements of the Greek tragedians to the religious or social facts of Greek life. However, no matter what their personal feeling and theories are, they all take issue with the classic theory of tragedy propounded in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

This celebrated treatise after millenniums of years continues to be, if not in the foreground, then in the background of all discourse upon tragedy. The apex of Aristotle’s argument is his definition of tragedy as “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude ; in a language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament in the form of action, not narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its

catharsis of emotions”.(Aristotle,1968:56) “Katharsis,” as the utmost form of purification, bears the shocking denotation of a Dionysian rite rather than the repercussions of an Apollonian lyre. It is either achieved by daydreaming nor longing for the past or by having expectations about the future ; it refers immediately to the dynamic of the present. The idea of another world of punishment and horror was basically an early Orphic notion, an elite view, which painfully survived before the advent of Dionysicism(Ibid)

Aristotle did in effect trace tragedy back to the dithyramb, and it is undeniable that classical tragedy had a real connection with the Dionysian god. It was performed at the Great Dionysia, one of the annual festivals in Athens, where each playwright submitted three tragedies followed by a Satyr-play, a Greek masque that involved light treatments of various myths, but always involved a chorus of satyrs(Stern,1981:142) New-Aristotelian theories propounded by many scholars both before and after Nietzsche included the attempt to combine the dithyramb and the satyr-play in terms of a composite “satyric dithyramb”. In spite of the differences which appear in the numerous theories about the origins of tragedy, they all agree that tragedy arose out of a need to come to terms with the fact of death and the forces with which human life is surrounded. Consequently, the tragic poet concerns himself with the same problems as the religious leader.

For Aeschylus, man’s place in the universe and his relation to God or Nature is the axis around which all other matters revolve. The thought of man’s relations to the Olympians governs all other thoughts; it is said that Aeschylus “lifted Olympus itself upon his shoulders and added a cubic to the stature of Zeus.”(Dixon,1963:72) The drama of Sophocles, on the other hand, reveals a gentler and more polite spirit who looks at things from a closer, more human point of view. In Sophocles we cannot see the gods and the order of the world as clearly as in Aeschylus. But we see humans who are crushed for transgressing this order. Euripides, in his turn, created his gods as intolerable in a way so that his audience could not

fail to see the point that he was trying to make. He found no consolation for the suffering of the humans. Euripides' message was that man should not neglect the sources of joy, enthusiasm, and passion in life. This is precisely the message that *The Bacchae* tried to convey with the introduction of the humane religion of Dionysus.

It is also interesting to note that *The Bacchae*, being the last play of the last of the great Greek tragedians, also speaks of the life and the deeds of the last of the Greek gods. Dionysus, indeed, was the last to acquire, after his resurrection, a throne among the Olympians by ousting Hestia, the conservative goddess of the Hearth from her position. This replacement was final proof that sober sacrifices had yielded to wild revels. The establishment of Dionysus' divinity offered the assurance that life becomes painless when it cherishes a temper befitting mortal man. And the conservative traditionalists who, like Pentheus, defied Dionysus suffered a terrible fate.

Even if these differences are observed in the attitudes of the tragedians, although not indisputable, it is at least tenable that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its theme only the sufferings of Dionysus. Moreover Nietzsche sees all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage from the Aeschylean Prometheus to the Sophoclean Oedipus "as masks of the original hero, Dionysus"(Nietzsche:81) But Dionysus does not remain the basic religious archetype in Greek tragedy only. Through Bacchus, his Roman counterpart, he passed into the Christian world.

Ian Kott in *The Eating of the Gods* discusses in detail Christian liturgy as a symbolic repetition of a Dionysian ritual, "the birth, life, passion, death and resurrection of the Son of God".(Kott,1963:207)As for the Dionysian duality on the human and the divine, it can also be found in the structure of the Christian religion. Jung thus shows that Christian liturgy is one of the most universal structures:

The dual aspect of the Mask finds expression not only in the contrast between human and divine action , but also in the dual aspect of god and the God-man , who , although they are by nature a unity , nevertheless represent duality in the ritual drama. Without this “dichotomy of god,” if I may use such term, the whole act of sacrifice would be inconceivable and would lack actuality (Jung,1963:200)

Consequently, like the transformation of the Dionysian rites into Attic Tragedy, the transition from ritual to drama similarity occurred in the Christian world. All passion plays, mystery, and miracle plays preserved a deep ritual structure. “The theme of fertility and rebirth,” Hardison suggests, “can be treated as analogue, rather than disguised equivalent, of the Christian archetype.”(Hardison,1965:40) “In the rite of the Mass,” adds Kott, “the recreation of death and resurrection ends with Communion – the eating of the living God, which is spiritual rebirth and promise of all salvation.”(Kott:219).

4-Freud, Brecht and Artaud: Dionysian Rites and Modern Drama

Sigmund Freud had also discerned connections between the Dionysiac rite and the religious drama of the Middle Ages:

In Greek tragedy the special subject-matter of the performance was the suffering of the divine goat, Dionysus, and the lamentation of the goats who were his followers and who identified themselves with him. That being so, it is easy to understand how drama, which had become extinct, was kindled into fresh life in the Middle Ages around the passion of Christ (Freud,1950:156)

The symbolic signs of the resurrection are similar in *The Bacchae* as in all Medieval passion plays; the archetypal signs of earthquake and thunder, for example, always accompany the ritual death and rebirth. In fact, there is evidence that the tragedies of Euripides must have been interpreted in the Middle Ages as mystery and miracle plays, since a fragment of *The Bacchae* was used by a twelfth century Latin poet in order to describe the entombment of Christ, and the text of *The Bacchae* itself could be completed only thanks to the anonymous

poem “Christus Patiens.”(Koutsoudaki,1984) It is also worth noting that Nietzsche signed his last letters, before he succumbed to madness, “Dionysus” and the Crucified.”(Ibid)

However, Brecht wrote in his *‘Little Organon’*: “theater may be said to be derived from ritual, but that is only to say that it becomes theater once the two have separated.”(Brecht,1964:181) It is true that characters of Dionysian nature continued to exist through the plays of the great periods of world drama, as in the Elizabethan and in the French Renaissance theatre. However, the technical aspect of theatre (staging, costumes, etc.) is very distant from the structure of a Dionysian spectacle. It is not until the twentieth century that plays appear not only to be permeated with the Dionysian spirit but to have also a structure similar to that of a Dionysian ritual (Ibid)

As Dionysus’ resurrection symbolized his union with the cosmos, his rites brought a revolutionary and metaphysical trend to more sober levels of the past, a re-examination of the whole being by a means of “Katharsis” more total than in any pre-existing rituals. Antonin Artaud in *Le Théâtre et son Double* claims for the twentieth century theater a comparable process where “Katharsis” is attained through horror, cruelty, violence, and death. The Dionysian spectacle, as it appeared during the rites honoring the god or in *The Bacchae*, is similar to the theory of Artaud, a theory that was extensively applied in French theater after 1938 and that substantially influenced world theater.

Dionysus’ birth, dismemberment, resurrection, and final union with the cosmos depict, as it has already been discussed, the Creation, the Process of Becoming, and the Chaos. Each aspect becomes a rude personification of the powers of nature. In his *Le Théâtre de la Cruauté*, Artaud envisages a Metaphysical theater dominated by similar ideas:

Un appel à certaines idées inhabituelles, dont le destin est justement de ne pouvoir être limitées, ni même formellement dessinées. Ces idées qui touchent à la Création, au Devenir, au chaos, et sont toutes d’ordre cosmique, fournissent une première notion d’un domaine dont le Théâtre

s'est déshabitué. Elles peuvent créer une sorte d'équation passionnante entre l'homme, la Société, la Nature et les Objets (Artaud, 1964 :137)

The theatre, Artaud argues, should be a reflection of magic and rites : ' c'est là l'objet de la magie et des rites, dont le théâtre n'est qu'un reflet' (Ibid:139)

Dionysus's followers lived in nature and conducted orgies, fell in ecstasy, and practiced cannibalism to honor the revered god. In his "Technique" in "*Le Théâtre de la Cruauté*", Artaud describes the theater as a means of true illusion replete with dreams, erotic obsessions, the practice of crime, and even cannibalism:

Le Théâtre ne pourra redevenir lui-même, c'est –à-dire constituer un moyen d'illusions vraie, qu'en fournissant au spectateur des précipités véridiques de rêves, ou son goût du crime, ses obsessions érotiques, sa sauvagerie, ses chimères, son sens utopique de la vie et des choses, son cannibalisme même, mais débordant, sur un plan pas supposé et illusoire, mais intérieur (Ibid)

It is evident that Artaud's theater does not return to the stylized pattern of the fifth century B.C. Attic Drama, but it does recall the Dionysian revels. The performance, Artaud states, should resemble a ritual taking place in a construction reminiscent of "lieux sacrés," where the spectators will sit in the middle and the action of the spectacle will unfold around them (Ibid) Also, as it happened in the Dionysian ritual, Artaud describes as interchangeable the role of the spectator. As for the character of the plays, it should always reflect a wild ritual nature. Theater is not possible without primitive cruelty, concludes Artaud's first manifesto: "c'est par la peau qu'on fera rentrer la métaphysique dans les esprits." (Ibid :151)

In his ' Second Manifeste ' of *Le théâtre de la cruauté*, Artaud refers more directly to a cosmogony, destiny, and totality and echoes an ancient ritual primitiveness for the modern stage:

L'intervention du hasard, le magnétisme de la fatalité...les personnages grandis à la taille de dieux, de héros, ou de monstres, aux dimensions mythiques... ces dieux ou héros, ces monstres, ces forces naturelles et

cosmiques seront interprétés d'après les images sacrées les plus antiques(Ibid :151)

It is this “retour aux vieux Mythes primitifs “ that Artaud applies not only to the content of the plays but also to staging and to the different theatrical devices: the sounds, the music, the lighting should also contribute to a “shocking effect” in order to attain “Katharsis” through violence and cruelty. As for the costumes, they should have a “destination rituelle.”(Ibid:187)

5-The Dionysian Epiphanies and Modern Theatre

Dionysus' votaries arrayed themselves in fantastic garb, wore the fawn skin, and crowned themselves with vine leaves and ivy. An important symbol of their array was the Dionysian mask which simultaneously expresses the nearness and the remoteness of Dionysus and is linked with the eternal paradoxes of the god's duality. The Dionysian game between appearance and reality, femininity and masculinity, divinity and mortality, finds its perfect expression in the use of the mask. The mask has remained especially popular as a representation of the spirits from the Middle Ages through modern times (e .g. ,Mardi Gras customs). Artaud demanded for the Twentieth Century Theater a theatrical presentation where the duality of existence is manifested through colossal Dionysian masks:

Des mannequins, des masques énormes, des objets aux proportions singulières apparaitront au même titre que des images verbales, insisteront sur le côté concret de toute image et de toute expression, avec pour contrepartie que des choses qui exigent d'habitude leur figuration objective seront escamotées ou dissimulées.(Ibid :148)

“Masks disappear when the monsters once assume human forms, when tragedy completely forgets its ritual origins”, René Girard states.(Girard,1977:45) However, when the visible ritual masks disappear the invisible ones always appear in tragedy. Depersonification and false identity followed by “anagnorisis” (recognition) is a common practice in Attic drama. In the same manner, in the twentieth century Western drama both the visible and the invisible masks are present. The former are eminent in the plays of Jarry, Apollinaire, Cocteau, Genet,

for example, whose theater attains “Katharsis” through an aesthetic violence.(Koutsoudki,1984)

In Genet’s *Les Nègres* masks play a major role. As in *The Bacchae* , murder is committed offstage and then performed and danced on stage in masks, ecstatically in all its cruelty and beauty. Kott argues that “in the entire history of drama it is the only other play that has a structure similar to that of *The Bacchae* ; the ritual is laid bare and destroyed through its realization on the stage.”⁴⁸ As Dionysus was a spectator in *The Bacchae*, Genet also requires that there be at least one white spectator at every performance. He should be dressed in ceremonial costume and the actors will play for him. If there are no white spectators, white masks are to be given to black members of the audience.

In summary, it is clear that the masks appear in many contemporary plays illustrating different levels of reality. Together with the mirror – another instrument for the representation of the double, the mask is favored by most avant-gardes and all playwrights who aspire to the creation of a total theater. This use of the mask is part of the attempt to recover for drama its primary Dionysian identity as a pre-literary form. The modification of conventional drama that occurs in the twentieth century parallels the dialectic process of dogmatism and emancipation that took place from Aeschylus to Euripides.

II-Myth and Ritual Criticism: Definition of Concepts.

1- Harrison- Cornford-Murray Anthropological Myth and Ritual School of Criticism.

Myth and ritual criticism has concerned itself with the examination of the feasibility of using myth and ritual as dramatic devices. While some like Sir James George Frazer explained it as historical diffusion, others like Carl Gustav Jung through his archetypes explain it as the universality of the human mind and argues that mythology is the language of the psyche through

what he terms 'archetypal images'. Criticism like John B. Vickery's 1966 collection of essays, *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice* is essentially an updating of the Harrison- Cornford-Murray anthropological myth and ritual school of criticism.

Myth and ritual criticism enables the critic to examine the works of any author and to find mythic patterns and elements in these works whether the author intended them or not. Thus critics from Murray through Fergusson have discussed mythic patterns and rhythms in drama from Aeschylus through Eliot.

This kind of criticism has brought important contributions into literature, particularly myth infused drama, of the past and of the present. But when we begin to consider the number of playwrights who consciously set out to use myth as an artistic device, we begin to realize that yet another approach to these authors is necessary. It is not enough merely to recognize the patterns of myth informing the various works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, Sartre, Anouilh, and Ionesco; of Strindberg and Ibsen; of Eliot, O'Neill, and Williams; of small groups such as *The Living Theater Antigone*, *The Mummers* or *Dionysus in 69*. If the pattern, the ritual rhythms, are obvious; what must be scrutinized are the uses to which these elements are used. The purpose is to recognize that a conscious use of myth exists and that, if we are to understand the dramatic urge fully, we must understand one of the theatre's major devices and the employment of that device, the device of myth.

Up to the time of Williams' literary production, there has been momentous progress in the study of myth in literature. In 1966 Richmond Hathorn examined in his *Tragedy, Myth, and Mysteries* a handful of major tragedies primarily Greek tracing them to their mythic sources and showing how their adaptations of particular myths were related to primal or archetypal patterns of fertility gods and goddesses, sacrifice and rebirth, and how they were related to the total meaning, the "mystery" which the play expressed. Hathorn's contemporary Nelvin Vos

published in 1969, a study of comedy in which he compares the structure of comedy to the sacrifice- rebirth structure of Christianity, but he neither considers it as a conscious structural device nor evaluates its effectiveness. In more recent years, there has been a successive production of three book length studies of myth in drama: Hugh Dickinson's *Myth on the Modern Stage*, Angela Belli's *Ancient Greek Myths and Modern Drama: a Study in Continuity*, and Thomas Porter's *Myth and Modern American Drama*. Although all three critics are structuralist in their approach (thus departing from the Cambridge School of myth critics), they fail to evaluate the results of the use of myth as a structural device.

For Dickinson, a significant use of myth consists primarily of the dramatist's accuracy and consistency in adhering to the plot of the Greek myth. For Belli, myth is a source solely of ideas social, political, psychological, religious, and philosophical to be imposed directly and generally superficially, on a play (p123). And for Porter, the term "myth" is used so loosely that it can refer to any cultural milieu influencing the action. thus Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* is, for him, a "mythic" play because it deals with the "Southern plantation myth" or the "death of a myth"(Porter,1969:153).In Dickinson's book, perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most subjective of the three, there is, as Ruby Cohn points out in the December, 1969 issue of *Modern Drama*, "scant mention of the stage," and, as Cohn also points out, both Angela Belli and Professor Dickinson view modern mythic drama as "part of a French cultural empire into which American tourists are admitted with proper credentials"(Cohn,1969:319). Yet to our knowledge, it is an American, Tennessee Williams, whose myth infused dramas are most frequently staged today.

Williams' reputation has long been established in France, and revivals of his work have scored current success throughout Europe, while Eliot's, O'Neill's and a lot of French playwrights' mythic works are primarily read. And it is an American, Tennessee Williams, who uses myth in a highly theatrical way rather than relegating it to a purely thematic function although this

is certainly one of its functions or regarding it as instant tragedy in a world hard put to find the makings of true tragedy (the latter of which O'Neill tended to do). For these reasons it would seem profitable to examine some of Tennessee Williams' works in order to discover some of the functions of myth for this prolific and frequently very successful playwright. By considering the myths in relation to certain essential elements of the plays i.e, to plot, structure, character, theme, and language it may be possible to draw some conclusions about the uses and effectiveness of myth in the theatre of Tennessee Williams and, indirectly, in the modern theatre in general.

The primary task in any discussion of myth is to determine the precise meaning "myth" is to be given. As already noted in relation to Dickinson's Belli's and Porter's books, the term has been employed quite differently by different critics in different times. For most nineteenth century myth scholars and some twentieth century ones (Edith Hamilton, for example), myth was the outgrowth of a natural human impulse to explain the various phenomena of nature; a myth was a primitive scientific theory created in order to understand the origin of man, his cultures, institutions and religious rituals. "Myth," then, referred to any of the theories of origin, ritual, cult, prestige, and eschatology, as Samuel H. Hooke classifies them in his *Middle Eastern Mythologies*(1963) whether they arose out of the Near, Middle, or Far East or the Western Greco-Roman worlds. This is essentially an anthropological view of myth.

For the metaphysician, however, a myth may be a "true story" or an allegorical one, or both. As Mircea Eliade explains it in his *Myth and Reality*(1963), "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the beginnings."(Eliade:1-2)But if myth can be considered in historical terms, it can also be interpreted allegorically, for it is "sacred, exemplary, significant," and it "supplies models for human behavior and, by that very fact, gives meaning and value to life."(Ibid).As David Bidney has noted in his *Myth and Symbolism and Truth* "idealistic philosophers and

theologians have, from ancient to modern times, interpreted myth allegorically as symbolizing some transcendental, timeless truth but have differed among themselves as to the nature of the object and truth so symbolized".(Bidney,1966:1-8) This view is very similar to Hawthorne's concept of myth as he explains it in his *Tragedy, Myth and Mystery* as:

Literature that directly symbolizes man's position of mystery, that is, the mystery of human existence. A modification of the myth-as-philosophy concept is the view that although myths offer patterns of feeling and thought, we are likely to find in them not philosophy but [as Eliot] the 'emotional equivalent' of philosophy. (Hawthorne,1966).

What we understand is that we may be sure at least that myth is never philosophical without being something else." But whether myth is philosophy or the "emotional equivalent" of philosophy, the important point is that it does stand for something else. Once its element of allegory and symbolism are focused upon, the potential for the use of myth as an artistic device is obvious.

In his *The Flight of the Wild Gander*, Joseph Campbell defines myth in quite a different way. "Mythology," says Campbell, "is psychology, misread as cosmology, history, and biography."(Campbell,1969:33) Turning to the psychologists, we find myth viewed in quite another light. The general opinion of the early psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud, Peter Abraham, and Otto Rank, is that myths are "group phantasies," wish fulfillments, sex symbolism. The anthropologist critics are not unaffected by this view; Jane Ellen Harrison cites Freud in her definition of myth:

"Myth is not an attempted explanation of either facts or rites. Myth is a fragment of the soul life, the dream- thinking of the people, as dream is the myth of the individual. As Freud says, "it is probable that myths correspond to the distorted residue of the wish phantasies of whole nations, the secularized dreams of young humanity." Mythical tradition it would seem does not set forth any actual account of old events that is the function of legend; but rather myth acts in such a way that it always reveals a wish-thought common to humanity and constantly rejuvenated"(Harrison,1962:210)

2-Carl Gustav Jung on Myth

Jung departs from the Freudian analytic interpretations, but accepts the universal psychological basis of myth. And finally, Erich Neumann, in his important studies of the 'Great Mother' and the origins of consciousness, builds upon the theory of the collective unconscious, applying Jung's concept to the 'modern consciousness'. Quoting Jung, Neumann declares:

"Myth is the primordial language natural to these [unconscious] psychic processes, and no intellectual formulation comes anywhere near the richness and expressiveness of mythical imagery. Such processes deal with the primordial images, and these are best and most succinctly reproduced by figurative speech." This "figurative speech" is the language of the symbol, the original language of the unconscious and of mankind.(Neumann,1955:115)

Thus myth whether it originated as science, history, philosophy or psychology is a way of saying one thing in terms of another. Essentially, myth is symbol, and once this symbolism, with its "primordial images" of the archetypes and language of myth is fully focused upon, the potential for myth as an artistic device becomes clearer still.

With reference to the above reviewed myth criticism, we think that Tennessee Williams' conscious use of myth as a dramatic device can safely be discussed in the coming parts of this thesis. What sustains our assumption is the fact that Williams set the pattern with his first published short story in 1928. Based on a passage from Herodotus, the story opens with the pagan priests of the city casting themselves against the stones of the pavement in an act of expiation for a great sacrilege which had been committed. They are the forerunners of the sacrificial Christ figures and vegetation gods of the later stories, plays, and poems. Mythic symbols and images are significantly used throughout Williams' work. There is the Dionysus of *Orpheus Descending*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*; there is the biblical Lot in *Kingdom of Earth*; there is the phoenix, central to

Camino Real and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, as well as *I Rise in Flame* and *Cried the Phoenix*. Additional mythic figures or derivatives are clearly employed throughout Williams' plays, stories, and poems. Illustrations can be found through his use of the mythic Apollo, Prometheus, Bacchus, Aphrodite, and the Elysian Fields; Cassandra and Buddha, St. Sebastian, St. Valentine, and innumerable variations of Mary and Christ, together with chalices, lyres, crucifixes, statues of stone angels and hermaphroditic figures and other mythic artifacts. With such evidence there is little need to point to Williams' acknowledged wide reading in his grandfather's classical library, to his exposure to Christian myth through his grandfather's Episcopalian ministry and his brother's Roman Catholic crusading, or to his semester's study of Greek at Washington University. They do, however, further attest to Williams' knowledge (be it shallow or profound) of particular myths and of certain major mythic symbols which can be employed for literal purposes (plot or structure) and for metaphysical purposes.

That Williams is aware of the psychological aspects of myth is likewise clear. If myth is the "primordial language" of the unconscious mind of universal man, Williams has certainly had sufficient occasion to assimilate these images, either directly from the psychoanalysts themselves or indirectly from literary influences rich in psychological symbols such as Rilke, Rimbaud, Lawrence, and Proust. His year of psychoanalysis with Dr. Lawrence Kubie, begun in the spring of 1957, also spurred him to read widely in related subjects and increased his familiarity with psychological symbolism and its meaning. Nevertheless, Williams was already familiar with much psychological symbolism. In *Battle of Angels*, his first play to be produced professionally (1945), his protagonist is amused by Vee Talbott's painting of the red steeple of the Church of the Resurrection, much as the audience is amused by the fact that Serafina Del Rosa's virile lovers both drive truckloads of bananas. And in reference to the

film version of *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams could speak of the slashing of Chance's face as a psychological equivalent of physical castration.

Although Freudian symbols are perhaps the most obvious (and there is practically no critic who has not noted them and generally castigated Williams for them), there are still the more mythically and, for the most part, artistically significant Jungian images and themes. Williams has referred to the great influence of D. H. Lawrence and has acknowledged his early familiarity with the *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* in which Lawrence mentions Jung and his mother incest theory, the Magna Mater, the Terrible Mother, and the male's struggle against death in the womb. It was these letters which influenced Williams greatly when he was creating his vision of Lawrence in 1941 (*IRise in Flame Cried the Phoenix*, produced in 1951). Williams has referred also to Frieda Lawrence's grip on her husband in a letter to Paul Bigelow in October of 1941. Describing the play in theories of Jung's "human odyssey" and mother incest theories, Williams observed that it is "the story of a woman's devotion to a man of genius and a man's, a sort of satyr's, pilgrimage through times inimical to natural beings a would be satyr never quite released from the umbilicus". He later reiterated the danger of the Freudian and Jungian maternal world in a television interview with Mike Wallace when he explained that his and all neuroses sprang from "infantile omnipotence," the security to which we become accustomed as children and whose inevitable loss outrages us. And on yet another occasion, referring to material security, he called it "a kind of death," declaring that it could be escaped "unless you embrace the Bitch Goddess, as William James called her, with both arms and find in her smothering caresses exactly what the homesick little boy in you always wanted, absolute protection and utter effortlessness." (Williams, 1941) This is not to psychoanalyse Williams. It is simply to point out the playwright's familiarity with the Freudian and particularly the Jungian concepts and images concepts which appear throughout his work.

It is impossible not to believe, even after such a brief survey of the evidence as this, that the mother lovers, dream images and womb symbols, that the son lovers, the saviors, the deaths and rebirths only to begin the list are highly conscious, perhaps even self-conscious, uses of the "unconscious" images of myth. Indeed, Williams' very theory of symbolism is a paraphrase of the Jungian "collective unconscious": "We all have in our conscious and unconscious minds a great vocabulary of images, and I think all human communication is based on these images as are our dreams..."(Williams,1956) The extent, of course, to which these symbols both metaphysical and psychological are integrated with one another and with the work as a whole will vary, but this does not affect the consciousness with which the symbols are employed. Only a writer who is keenly aware of the allegorical significance of his language could conclude a story with the creation of this curious monument: "It showed three figures of indeterminate gender astride a leaping dolphin. One bore a crucifix, one a cornucopia, and one a Grecian lyre."¹⁶

In 1957, **Orpheus Descending**, the play which Williams had been revising for seventeen years, opened on Broadway. Although the full extent of the mythic device in this play, as in those that followed, has not yet been determined, the play marked a point in Williams' work in which the obvious use of myth as illustrated by Val Xavier, the Orpheus and Christ figure merged with the less obvious but no less significant mythic pattern of the vegetation god who is sacrificed in the name of the earth goddess and who, through his sacrifice, is reborn. In the decade following, *Orpheus Descending* was to be established as an archetype. Its basic Christ vegetation god pattern was repeated in at least five of Williams' later full length plays: *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *the Night of the Iguana*, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, and *Kingdom of Earth*. Examination of the plays three of them major successes reveals that each revolves essentially about god and goddess, sacrifice and rebirth. Although specific Christian and classical myths are frequently referred to there are

Christ, Marys, and any number of martyrs and saints, as well as such Greek and Roman deities as Aphrodite, Athena, Eros, Venus, Orpheus, Dionysus, Hermes, Apollo, Prometheus, etc. Williams' mythic pattern more often involves a much looser framework. There is something of Frazer's dying gods in these plays, for example. There are Attis and Kybele, Adonis and Astarte, Osiris and Isis. Much of the seasonal myth is drawn from the realm of Sir Frazer *The Golden Bough*. Adonis and Aphrodite, Dionysus and Semele, Tammuz and Ishtar, Dumuzi and Inanna all are vegetation gods and goddesses and all share many of the characteristics of the more popularly known myths. It should also be observed that there is in these myths by their very nature much violence: sacrifice and death by immolation, dismemberment, and crucifixion; castration, rape, and cannibalism. There is even surprisingly or not, depending on how well we know our myths androgyny, hermaphroditism, transvestism, and homosexuality. These provide a good deal of the violence and perversion which permeate Williams' work and are generally condemned as "gothic" at best and sensationalism at worst. A study of his use of myth may also help to explain something of this use of violence and perversion.

Clearly, Tennessee Williams has preferred the use of myth as a major dramatic vehicle to translate modern man's metamorphosis and art's redemptive power as a therapy. And clearly, that vehicle must be studied if we are fully to understand and accurately to evaluate Williams' work. We must recognize the elements of the vehicle, the types of myth that are employed and the ways in which those types Greek, Christian, Middle Eastern, Oriental, or else, are integrated. We must also recognize the levels on which the vehicle operates.

3- Williams' Dialogism with Myth Theories: The Artist as Dionysus on Modern American Stage

Tennessee Williams is recognized as one of the leading playwrights to have emerged in the American theater in the twentieth century. He was part of the rich tradition of the Old South

and one of the most creative American literary figures who turned out plays, film scripts, short stories, poems and articles on theater, memoirs.

His early work consisted of poems, short stories, or one-act plays. As he later admitted, his longer plays emerged out of earlier one-actors or short stories... written years before. I work over them again and again'. (Williams,1956)Most of his poems, published in *Five Young American Poets* (1944), were revised and incorporated in a later volume, In *The Winter of Cities* (1964). His collection of short stories *One Arm and Other Stories* (1948) reflects, like his poems, Williams' wandering years in grim apartments and city streets inhabited by lost souls. His short plays in the collection *American Blues* (1948) won a prize and an introduction to the literary agent Audrey Wood.

But Williams' emergence as a major dramatist was initiated with the opening of his poetic drama, *The Glass Menagerie*, which was greeted with great enthusiasm in 1945 in New York City. This play promised a new epoch in American stage history, and its opening has been compared by critics to mark the beginning of a new era such as the production of Corneille's *Le Cid*(1636), *Molière's Le Docteur Amoureux* (1658) , or Chekov's *The Seagull* (1898).

From then on Williams tried for many decades to create works that appealed to the public. His dedication to writing is remarkable, and he has repeatedly called it his reason for living. The main motive behind his prolific creation was to interpret reality in a universal language. Like O'Neill, he chose for popular theater an ancient Greek myth that dealt with the exposure of suffering; and the South offered him the background for the portrayal of man's primordial suffering in an unfriendly universe.

Williams' use of myth aspires to a symbolic representation of human suffering in our time. The critics seem to agree that three major schemata appear behind Williams' mythic structure: "the ritual myth of the theater, the literary myth of the twentieth century American, and the Freudian-Jungian myth of modern man."(Hirsch,1979:8)

The ritual legends of the ancient Greeks and particularly the archetypal myth of the “dying god”, who bears the name “Dionysus” for the Western World, can be considered Williams’ prime source of inspiration. As has been discussed in the first chapter, the Christian ritual and the passion plays were later reenactment of the Dionysian “sparagmos,” which is probably the most appropriately chosen example of the archetypal myth of suffering. As for the psychological systems of Freud and Jung, they are both concerned with the apprehensions of modern man and explain them in the light of their archetypal significance with reference to the Dionysian cycle of birth-“sparagmos”-rebirth.(Ibid:25)

Where Freud and psychoanalysis provide Williams with an insight for the description of archetypal suffering in humanity (Oedipal and Iocasta complexes, for example), Jung’s more poetic nature also shares with the playwright the belief that art’s role is as a reconciling symbol mechanism by which the conflicts of life might be resolved. Fertility rites in general and the Dionysian myth in particular for both its ritual of “sparagmos” that portrayed the archetypal image of suffering, as well as the genesis of theatre which sprang from that ritual, gives to the presentation of the “katharsis” a means of relief from existing tensions and conflicts.

Williams’ use of Dionysicism is evident in his theater. A very interesting sample of this use can be found in *Battle of Angels*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Camino Real*, and *Suddenly Last Summer*. These plays present various treatments of the ritual and the myth in the playwright’s effort to give a universal meaning to the plights of modern man. Among all the myths of ancient Greece, there is probably none that offers a greater variety of different approaches than that of Dionysus. Social, cultural, political, economic and psychological aspects can be interpreted with the use of the Dionysian myth. However, since the Dionysian myth is both personal as well as collective, reflecting the situation of the twentieth century

western man, it is quite interesting to see the extent to which the playwright lives up to the standard of being himself truly a 'Dionysian' figure.

4-Tennessee Williams, the Dionysian Man, Artist and American Counterculture

The struggle over his Dionysian double has provided conflicts in both the life and works of Tennessee Williams. He was born in 1911 in his grandfather's Episcopal Rectory, in Columbus, Mississippi, his mother was Edwina Dakin, the rector's daughter, married to Cornelius Williams, a traveling salesman for a shoe company. Their marriage never worked out. Edwina was of Quaker-Germanic origin, beautiful and dignified, a "Southern gentlewoman." On the contrary, Cornelius was aggressive and domineering.

From his parents' relationship Williams inherited the continuous struggle between the body and the soul. His Dionysian father appeared in many versions in the playwright's works: he is Charlie Cotton in *Last of my Solid Gold Watches* (1943); Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. During his father's travels, Williams spent beautiful years of childhood at home in the rural, leisurely community of Mississippi. His sister, Rose, was then his inseparable companion, the "ideal playmate" in a life that "was pleasant, full of dreams." They would enact a story out of The Arabian Nights, or they would play with a deck of cards the "Siege of Troy," Williams taking the Greek side and Rose the Trojan.

This period is marked by two incidents that influenced the later life of the playwright. The first one was the departure of Ozzie, their black nanny and story-teller, who, according to Williams' sense of guilt, left the family because during a fight he called her "nigger". This incident evolved into his abhorrence of discrimination which was obvious in many of his works, like *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending*. The second incident was a serious

case of diphtheria that confined him in a semi-solitary universe exclusively populated by women: his mother and the “two living roses in his life,” his grandmother and his sister.

This Southern peaceful existence did not last for long. His father moved the family to a grim apartment in St. Louis. Williams developed a negative attitude towards the grey Midwestern city and recalled the Southern landscape with nostalgia. Williams speaks of the small apartments that the family habituated with great resentment:

A perpetually dim little apartment in a wilderness of identical brick and concrete structures with no grass and no trees nearer than the park (...) ugly rows of apartment buildings the color of dried blood and mustard...(Williams,1950:201)

Williams and his sister tried to transform their claustrophobic surroundings into a dream world. They painted Rose’s room white and installed a collection of glass animals that were later to be portrayed in *The Glass Menagerie*.

Those little glass animals (...) came to represent in my memory all the softest emotions that belong to recollections of things past. They stood for all the small and tender things that relieve the austere pattern of life and make it endurable to the sensitive. The areaway where the cats were torn to pieces was one thing – my sister’s white curtains and tiny menagerie of glass were another. Somewhere between them was the world that we lived in.(Ibid:215)

Rose’s initiation into puberty caused a cessation of this childhood intimacy. At the age of eleven, Williams was deeply hurt. He sought consolation in writing at the time; it became his favorite preoccupation to compensate for the irreparable loss of his games with Rose:

For the first time, yes, I saw her beauty. I consciously avowed it to myself, although it seems to me that I turned away from it, averted my look from the pride with which she strolled into the parlor and stood by the mantel mirror to be admired. And it was then, about that time that I began to find life unsatisfactory as an explanation of itself and was forced to adopt the method of the artist of not explaining but putting the blocks together in some other way that seems more significant to him, which is a rather fancy way of saying I started writing. (Williams,1959:69)

His father's presence was overpowering at the moment. Writing became for Williams a place of retreat from his father's accusations against his effeminate quiet manner and interest in books. As Williams himself declares, writing was "an escape from a world of reality," in which he was "acutely uncomfortable."(Ibid)

From being called a sissy by the neighborhood Kids, and Miss Nancy by my father, because I would rather read books in my grandfather's large and classical library than play marbles and baseball and other normal kid games, a result of a severe childhood illness and of excessive attachment to the female members of my family, who had coaxed me back into life.(Ibid)

This period intensifies Williams' repulsion toward his father and increases the affection that he had for his mother: When I was younger I hated him with a passionate loathing. He was a big, powerful man and he intimidated all of us (...) My mother hated his guts too. She still does. She doesn't have a good word to say for him, and didn't even attend his funeral.(Ibid,78) His unhappy family history is reflected in the emotional conflict that appears in his plays. The characters are caught between the rectory and the Moon Lake Casino, which appear in his early plays such as *Orpheus Descending* and *Battle of Angels* or *Summer and Smoke* (1947) is the symbol of debauchery to which Williams feels at the same time repelled and attracted. Despite Williams' negative feelings for his father; it seems that he had inherited from him many elements of his Dionysian personality: violence, stubbornness, passion for travels and adventure and above all his love for alcohol. There is an evident sense of rebellion in Williams' adolescent years, a Dionysian reaction against the inhibitions of Puritanism with which the Apollonian serene figure of his mother had tried to indoctrinate him. In the years that followed it is evident that the conflict between his Apollonian mother and his Dionysian father was resolved in favor of the latter.

As a man and as an artist, the playwright reacted to his puritan Southern upbringing with a Dionysian attitude. His initial division between the Apollonian and the Dionysian element is also introduced in many of his later plays, e.g. in a character like Alma Winemiller in *Summer and Smoke*. Alma; like Williams, tries to escape the world of the Episcopal rectory in which she has grown up. The playwright speaks of her as his favorite because he “came out so late and so did Alma, and she had the greatest struggle.

Since 1935, though, a Dionysian fervor inspired Williams’ writing. As a student in the Washington University in St. Louis, he was involved with a Bohemian group of students and Poets. He then began to produce plays at a feverish pace. Clark Mc Burney, a leading member of that group, recalls that Williams had fanatical and inexhaustible energies in his plights his presentence was almost grotesque. It was Dionysian, demoniac. He wasn’t aiming basically at material success. For him, Williams succeeded because it was fatal need.(Hirsch,1959:62)

During those days his Dionysian energies for wreathing was appropriately supported by alcohol, the Greek god’s prime stimulant. The state of drunkenness, literal or metaphorical, is present in an almost sacred manner in many of his works. The scene of love-making in his short story *‘The Field of Blue Children’* is an erotic metaphor of this kind and presents the lovers grouping towards a Dionysian awareness of their sexual selves:

The whole field was covered with dancing blue flowers, there was a wind scudding through them and they brook before at in pale blue waves, sending up a soft whispering sawn (...) he led her out over the field where the flowers Rose in pale blue waves to her knees and she felt their soft petals against her bare flesh and she lay down among them and stretched her arms through them and pressed her lips against them and felt them all about her , accepting and embracing her , and a kind of drunkenness possessed her. ‘Williams,1962:53)

Historically speaking, this equates the mood of the post war counterculture which was known for the orgiastic rites celebrated by groups of youth in events like the **Wood Stock Festival**.

As stated previously in the general introduction to this thesis, the present work attempts to approach a sample of Williams' dramatic oeuvre from a new direction, one which acknowledges its place in the modern theater and assumes that its internal consistencies must be related to the themes and directions of the drama of the twentieth century. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter is to discern any dialogue between the playwright and myth tradition in the twentieth century. It is worth to mention that On May 9th, 1972, at a symposium on his work, Williams said: "All my plays are one dramatic whole....I think an artist is obsessed with certain themes." (Williams,1972). Williams's 'all plays' encompass a quarter of a century production of which the most successful drama was that written during the 'turbulent' three first decades after World War II.

5- Williams, Artaud and Tragic Theatre

There are certain tensions, influences of the kind of tragic humanism which imbue his work and which he could not have escaped. These common psychological anxieties are reflections not just of the pressures weighing on modern playwrights, but they are tensions from which all common people feel the need of relief. Williams translates humanity's common desire for relief as being rooted in a need for some sort of ritual: as French theorist Antonin Artaud puts it "Science is growing arrogant and assured, but is providing no magical ideas or metaphysical grace to satisfy mankind's yearning for ritual and sanctity (Artaud,1958:92-94).

In order to explain or justify modern playwrights' dialogism with 'mystery myths' being the most tragic form, Artaud says that

If the theater, like dreams, is bloody and inhuman, it is, more than just that, to manifest an unforgettably root within human beings the idea of a perpetual conflict,' spasm' in which life is continually torn, in which everything in creation rises up and exerts itself against people's appointed position. It is in order to perpetuate in a concrete and immediate way the metaphysical ideas of certain fables whose very atrocity and energy suffice to show their origin and continuity in essential principles(Artaud:85)

Artaud proposes a new scale upon which the value of any theatrical enterprise may be measured. These scale measures all that the audience sees in terms of the extent to which the play makes real the stuff of their dreams. "Everyday love, personal ambition, struggles for status, all has value only in proportion to their relation to the terrible lyricism of the myths to which the great masses of men have assented.(Ibid:90)

As for Williams' and modern playwrights' themes, Artaud suggests that they have to 'concentrate, around...atrocious crimes...drama which, without resorting to the defunct images of the old myths, shows that it can extract the forces which struggle within theme'(Ibid:85). In another passage from the same work, Artaud recommends that the theater engage the very themes Williams has frequently been concerned with, to the horror of his bourgeois reviewers. "The theater will never find itself again-i e, constitute a means of true illusion-except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior. (Ibid:92). If the dreams of men are violent, then Artaud demands that the artistic precipitates of those dreams must reflect those interior violence.

Believing that the act of creation is a way of satisfying this need, Williams re-appropriated Greek myth of the most tragic kind in order to translate modern American cultural psychological and religious metamorphosis after World War II. In fact the twentieth century witnessed the coming of age of those myths known as 'mystery cults' the most typical of which was the Dionysian cult.

Williams' literary stand was at its apogee by the 50s and 60s. Both decades witnessed a return to primitive religions. Hinduism and Buddhism, by extinguishing the ego and urging acceptance of ultimate reality, see suffering and injustice as essential conditions of life that cannot be changed but only endured. Alteration of consciousness—"blowing your mind"—

became an end or value in itself in the sixties. Drugs remade the Western world-view by shattering conventions of time, space, and personal identity.

6-Williams, the ‘Mummers’ and Plastic Theatre

One of Williams’ first steps towards a stronger acquisition of a Dionysian awareness was his becoming a member of the **Mummers**, a first rate little theater group of St. Louis. The Mummers were leftist, Bohemian, rebellious, and inventive and believed in the theater’s social commitment. The Mummers, like Dionysus’ revelers were not professional actors. They came from every profession and social status, and performed their plays as ritual of Dionysian madness that shocked the audience:

They put on bad shows sometimes , but never put on a show that didn’t deliver a punch to the solar plexus, maybe not in the first act, maybe not in the second, but always at last a good hard punch was delivered, and it made a difference in the lives of the spectators that they had come to that play and seen that show.(Williams,1970:29)

Williams defines theatre as something wild, something exciting, and something that you are not used to. ‘Off beat is the word,’(Ibid) Williams had a Dionysian concept of art. In his opinion, theater as an expression of art, should aim to introduce Dionysian order that challenges the pre-existing orderliness of organized society:

In my opinion art is a kind of anarchy, and the theater a province of art (...) Art is anarchy in juxtaposition with organized society. It runs counter to the sort of orderliness on which organized society apparently must be based. It is a benevolent anarchy: it must be that and if it is true art, it is . It is benevolent in the sense of constructing something which is missing, and what it constructs may be merely criticism of things as they exist (...) And my mind shot back to the St. Louis group I have mentioned, a group called the Mummers.(Ibid:)

In addition to his association with the Mummers, Williams’ stay in New Orleans was another turning point in his life. There he was introduced into a truly “Dionysian society.” The people

that frequented the bars and the cheap hotels of the old city lived wild, frenzied lives. They were prostitutes, procurers, homosexuals, and other night people, “a Kaleidoscope of drink, sex and revelry,” who revealed to the playwright the fascination of night life: ‘The cities have the same name, but they are different cities, as different as night and day. There’s something wild in a country that only the night people know’ (Ibid,1954:14)

In New Orleans, Williams attained the freedom that he always desired away from the principles of his mother’s household: ‘I found the kind of freedom I had always needed. And the shock of it against the Puritanism of my nature has given a subject, a theme, which I have never ceased exploiting’. (Ibid:16)

After the influence of the Mummies and the people of New Orleans, Williams broke through most of his past repressions and defended a personal, social, and sexual liberation. D. H. Lawrence becomes then his literary paragon. (Ibid) The writers’ personal situation was similar and, after his reading of *Sons and Lovers*, Williams was captivated with Lawrence’s Dionysian passion of the physical self, summed up in the latter’s statement: “Whatever the unborn and the dead may know, they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh.” (Nelson,1964:54)

In his play, *The Case of the Crushed Petunias* (1941), Williams equates sex with the joy of life. A young man rescues a young spinster from virginity – a fate labeled ‘Death Unlimited’ as opposed to sex of ‘Life Incorporated’. The young man is a Dionysus, who symbolically suggests that wild roses, the flowers of Dionysus’ Oriental identity as Adonis, should replace the petunias in the young lady’s garden in Primanproper, Massachusetts. Roses, as the symbol of Dionysian eroticism also appear with dazzling abundance in the famous *Rose Tattoo*. “The rosa mystica,” as Williams himself testifies, is the light on the bare golden flesh of a god”. It is also “the fruit of the vine that takes earth, sun, and air and distills them into

juices that deprive men not of reason but of a different thing called prudence.(Williams,1962:56).

Eroticism in Greek myth always interested Williams. From early childhood, he was infatuated with Greek legends, in general. As mentioned, one of his favorite childhood games was the “Siege of Troy” in which he represented the Greeks. In his *Memoirs*, Williams “vividly recalls” among all the games of his own invention, this particular game:

I had already read the *Iliad* and I turned the black and red cards into two opposite armies battling for Troy. The royalty, the face cards of both Greeks and Trojans, were the kings, princes, and heroes; the cards merely numbered were the common soldiers. They would battle in this fashion: I would slap a red and black card together and the one that fell upon the bedspread face up was the victor. By ignoring history, the fate of Troy was decided solely by these little tournaments of the cards.(Ibid,1975:11)

At the age of sixteen, he received his first publication in *Weird Tales* with his short story, ‘*The Vengeance of Nitocris*,’ which was inspired by the ancient histories of Herodotus:

I drew upon a paragraph in the ancient histories of Herodotus to create a story of how the Egyptian queen, Nitocris, invited all of her enemies to a lavish banquet in a subterranean hall on the shores on the Nile, and how, at the height of this banquet, she excused herself from the table and opened sluice gates admitting the waters of the Nile into the locked banquet hall, drowning her unloved guests like so many rats.(Ibid,1959)

In the plays discussed, one can see how Williams makes use of the Greek myth as he deals with personal, social, or political issues. The Dionysian myth appealed to him for many reasons. Dionysus was the god of intoxication and erotic ecstasy; he was the god of religious and social rebellion; finally he was the wanderer god whose dance and music initiated the birth of tragedy.

In his early play, *Battle of Angels* or *Orpheus Descending*, Williams must have been attracted by the legendary figure of Orpheus, one of Dionysus’s multiple identities, for at

least two major reasons: in addition to this exclusively Dionysian characteristics. Orpheus is the prototype of a poet surrounded by an unfriendly world, and he is also considered to be the archetypal originator of homosexual love.(Frazer,1957:497) In the first version of the play , Orpheus-Valentine is a writer, in the second a musician, and in both version there is an artist-painter, the sheriff's wife; all three feel like strangers in their environment and find it impossible to make peace with the violence that exists in their Southern surrounding.

The role of the artist is very crucial in Williams' plays. The wandering poet, in particular lonely and unable to adjust in society is one of Williams' favorite themes. From his early years he developed a great love for the nomad poet incarnated in Hart Crane .The latter' poems accompanied Williams as his only permanent library for several years. As Nancy Tischler, a Williams critic comments on this infatuation:

More than anything else, Hart Crane must have appealed to Williams on a purely personal level. He must have felt a kinship with this lonely, Dionysian poet – a homeless wanderer like himself.(Tischler,1961:1)

Val in *Orpheus Descending* and Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer* play the Dionysian role of the artist in contact with society. Although Val is presented as a vigorous male who attracts women and is able to impregnate them, there is evidence that, before coming to two River County, he had exercised a kind of Apollonian orphism abstaining from women. *Suddenly Last Summer* is a play written eighteen years later, and Williams is more open here about homosexuality. Sebastian the protagonist is a homosexual artist and his annual poems are his only achievements.

Both characters' allusions to the homonymous saints, St. Valentine and St. Sebastian, also make an interesting point. The first play takes place in February, and the Temple Sisters report on their receiving a malicious Valentine card. Williams' interest in St. Sebastian's martyrdom is evidenced in his 1948 poem, '*San Sebastiano de Sodoma.*' In the play,

Catharine reports that Sebastian and she spent all their afternoons in Cabeza de Lobo on “a beach that’s named for Sebastian’s name saint” and “it’s known as la Plaza San Sebastian.”(Williams, 1956:78) As Dionysus was a god whose temper and deeds were meant to reflect the so-called “weakness of human nature,” Williams tries in the same manner to illustrate his rebellion against Puritanism by borrowing from the legends of two saints whose lives involved digressions from the conservative concept of sainthood.

As is obvious in Williams’ plays, his search for God is remote from the faith of the Southern environment in which he was brought up. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Catharine Holly remarks that “we’re all of us children in a kindergarten trying to spell God’s name with the wrong alphabet blocks!”(Ibid:40) Williams’ spelling of God’s name is defined through the doctor’s explanation to the priest in *The Rose Tattoo*: people “find God in each other”.

This union of the divine and the mortal element in man was the religious background against which the Dionysian rites were performed; and Williams absolutely loved his contemporary reenactment of the Dionysian rites during the Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans. The Southern City is the location of the Venable’s mansion in *Suddenly Last Summer* and is near Serafina’s Sicilian village in *The Rose Tattoo*. As for *Camino Real*, the location of the play could be any seaport, and, among the possible list of names that Williams gives in his stage directions, New Orleans is included. In the Southern town of *Orpheus Descending*, Sandra, Myra and the rest of the women dream of a prolonging ‘Mardi Gras’ situation that would last forever.

From the point of view of their Dionysian “sparagmos”, however, these four plays could be classified as “generative” and “non-generative.” *Battle of Angels/Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer* assert a Dionysian awareness and the forms of “sparagmos” (Val is lynched and Sebastian is eaten alive) that end the plot of each play is followed by forms of resurrection. In the former play, Val’s snake skin jacket is immortalized in a museum, and in

the latter, Sebastian's poem is completed . Likewise, *Camino Real* and *The Rose Tattoo* are among Williams' plays in which the Dionysian heroes' "sparagmoi" herald a personal or social rebirth.

In all plays, the symbolism of Dionysian "sparagmos" is linked with Williams' exploration of the theme of violence that plagued his contemporary society and his native South, in particular.(Jackson,1965:46) The playwright is more interested in condemning violent discrimination against minorities, blacks, homosexuals, foreigners, and women. In *Orpheus Descending* a black is being lynched and "a wop from the old country" is burnt alive. Val himself, for his sympathy towards the black guitarist, is being accused of coming to the county in order to organize the niggers".

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, the hero is a homosexual artist who is cannibalized. On the other hand, the entire establishment of organized society(family, clergy, and medical care) tries to silence Catharine's voice of truth. Williams hated violence as it was practiced by social institutions that turned out to be "institutions of violence." In *Camino Real* violence is present everywhere and the word "hermano" is banned. In his foreword to the play, Williams says that this play is his "conception of the time and the world he lives in."(Williams,1957:1) With Camino's fantastic parade of images, Williams tries to depict a holistic image of violence throughout the world. Kilroy, the archetypal fertility god, could be either the legendary world war hero or Geronimo, the American Indian leader of the Apaches. The play touches many political issues and international affairs such as the threat of an atomic war, the freedom of the press, and the USA involvement in the politics of South America. A detailed analysis of this play alone could defy the insensitive argument of some critics who claim that:

Williams is not a social dramatist. Social movements, politics, "causes" – these have no part in the Williams' play. His work cannot be read as any sort of social index of mid-century America, except insofar as the sexuality of his characters – and Williams' treatment of their sexuality – can be said to reflect the time.(Hirsch:108)

It is undoubtedly true that sexuality can define a society, and ,in particular, the sense of freedom and the moral code of a certain society, but Williams was not only interested in this aspect of society. Although he was not actively involved in politics, he speaks of himself in his earlier years as “having all the makings of a Communist” and he considers himself later on to be a socialist who condemned the “atrocities of the American involvement in Vietnam,” “Nixon’s total lack of honesty and of moral sense” and other political attitudes of his government. Williams was interested “in the discovery of a new social system – certainly not Communist, but an enlightened form of socialism.”(Williams,1979:94-95)

In *Camino Real* he expresses his hatred for power, inhumanity, materialism, and demonstrates his love for the poor and the diseased. Williams despaired “of love being lasting, and of people getting along together... as nations and as individuals.”(Williams,1962:73)

Williams seems to conclude that the only hope for man is love and compassion. As in *Camino Real*, love “makes the water flow again on the mountains”, and it can redeem the situation of the twentieth century man who has experienced a record of sufferings, wars and conflicts. Trying to find a human answer to suffering, Williams portrays a ‘Euripidean’ anti-hero, who is a configuration of masks. The “Dionysian double” is apparent in most of the characters that Williams creates and the struggle of his modern anti-hero is to evade the multiplicity of his human personality.

The playwright believed that his anti-hero, as a member of the human race, carried within him a sense of guilt, and when he was asked why he put so much unpleasantness on the stage, he answered in Aristotelian terms:If there is any truth in the Aristotelian idea that violence is purged by its poetic representation on a stage, then it may be that my cycle of violent plays have had a moral justification after all.(Williams,1979:109-110) Williams lists his “fellow defendants” on the matter among his contemporary playwrights:

My fellow defendants are Lillian Hellman, Albert Camus, Jean Genet, and others. I would assume, such as Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Jean Anouilh, Eugène Ionesco, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and Edward Albee. It's a distinguished list and I am proud to be on it, and hopeful that my plea for the defense will not compromise them too much.(Ibid:36)

In addition to his thematic contribution to the international stage, Williams also created a distinctive production form with an abundance of “extra-literary accents.” His anti-realistic techniques composed a theater that he himself called “plastic,” a form that had already appeared in the theories of the French symbolists. In the language of Artaud, it is “poetry in space” and its architectural structure is composed of “word, music dance, plastic art, pantomime, mimicry, gesticulation, intonation, architecture, lighting, and scenery.”(Jackson:94)

An early example of Williams' plastic form is *The Purification* (1946), a play that bears a strong resemblance to a choreographic study. The protagonist explains to the spectator why truth cannot be communicated through music and dance. The Dionysian double of life and death is expressed through the two different apparitions of Elena, Elena of the Spring and Desert Elena, and the Dionysian ritual of music and choral movements ends with an Aristotelian purgation of guilt, which is exposed and paid by a double “sparagmos”. Together with the music and dance, painting is also one of Williams' major interpretative forms: De Chirico in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, El Greco in *The Glass Menagerie* while *Orpheus Descending*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Camino Real* are surrealistic visions that borrow from Dali or Max Ernst.(Ibid:124)

Camino Real, in particular, is distinguished for the “plasticity” that Williams has achieved and has approached the “synthesis” that he considered to be “ideal theater.” As in the French theater of the avant-garde, these techniques are not employed “for the simple delight of the spectator”: They are philosophical – even theological – in their intent, for they attempt to re-

establish the ritual function of theatre. They are intended as modes of signification: signs of a present search for truth.(Ibid:108)

Conclusion to Part One

It is true that, from the beginning of his career, Williams was preoccupied with the formulation of a dramaturgy for his theater, but he was more concerned with situation and meaning than with dramatic and literary techniques. And his use of Dionysian myth, in addition to the return of the ritual to the stage, basically aimed to explore the contemporary themes of American society , and, in particular, the myth of the American Dream. Through purgation in most of Williams' drama, the protagonists reject their god-like stature as the representatives of the American Dream and regain their humane qualities in post war America.

In almost all of Williams' plays, the American Dream can survive only through the ritual during which humane consciousness is acquired. The simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the American Dream is one of the most fearsome dichotomies for the contemporary American. Williams' anti-hero is the victim of this dichotomy and, like a Jungian man; he perpetuates the interminable search for his true American self. He is himself the archetype of universal evil as well as the image of universal good.'(Jackson:76)

The search for his true self was a lifetime processes for Williams the man the writer. His androgynous nature was perhaps his principal division which made him feel a "stranger" in society. The open declaration of his homosexuality in his later works confirmed once more his Dionysian nature as Dionysicism supports the abolishment of sexual differences. The god himself was an effeminate boy where his social reform emphasized the emancipation of women. Williams' personal preoccupation with his androgynous nature made him very sensible to the psychology of women who appear in his plays mostly fighting between their Southern Puritanism and the frustrations of their feminine sexuality.

Williams' second major division involved the relationship of the artist's life to art. He believes, as is evident in the selected plays, that the life and the work of an artist coincide. The artist is also for Williams "the nervous system of any age or nation," which, "when profoundly disturbed by its environment, the work it produces will inescapably reflect the disturbance, sometimes obliquely and sometimes with violent directness." (Williams, 1979:119-120) The playwright then sees the artist's work as the expression of a personal "catharsis" consequently followed by a social "purification" as it will be shown in the following discussion of the plays under study.

Part Two:

The Myth and Ritual of Birth, Death and Rebirth in Williams' Plays

Introduction: This part of our thesis explores the Dionysian myth of birth, death and resurrection in selected plays by Tennessee Williams. The vision of Tennessee Williams owes much to his life experience. He himself has suffered from 'hypochondria, claustrophobia and wanderlust' in an unbearable state of homelessness. He has suffered from a sense of betrayal throughout his life. Val Xavier in *Battle of Angels* is almost Williams himself. Val has his guitar to escape the ugly evils of his surroundings and Williams has his writings to give him company in the dark and lonely world. Williams himself has been very lonely and identifies himself with the characters who cannot live alone and who seek to escape on one pretext or the other. Myra, in *Battle of Angels*, owns the shoe company and Val is only her employee. Her sentiments ripen for him as she needs some sort of elixir to survive. The world around her is without pleasure as she has no company in it. She needs expression of herself through something and that something is her attraction towards Val. Mrs. Vee Talbott feels that her life did not begin till she expressed herself through art. Art becomes her companion afterwards. Even then she is bewildered and lonely and desired to express herself to someone who may have the endurance to face it. The overwhelming effect of loneliness sharpens her keenness to become one with the universe.

Tennessee Williams finds man trying to become a part of the universe even though he is humble, frightened and guilty at heart. Man desperately tries to appear otherwise. He does not seem to express himself fully to another human being because ambiguity is an integral part of his nature. His shames and fears remain hidden inside him because he does not believe even in his own essential dignity and decency. Sebastian Venable, in *Suddenly Last Summer*, needs a companion for his life. His mother also feels the same need. Both try to feel their need fulfilled in each other. They do not express their desire to anyone as they are afraid and ashamed of it. He tries to seek it in Catharine but does not find it. The pain of loneliness grows more and more acute and at last he collapses on the ground. Williams' vision of man is

not of a barren creature, totally without hope. There is hope in him which is born out of the wish to live. The love of life gives his characters energy to struggle against all the violent forces that seek to destroy them. At the same time Williams' vision of the world finds an all pervading chaos in the whole universe. Man needs a place where he may rest with someone to whom he may be emotionally attached.

Chapter Three: Post War Revival of Cults and Cosmic Consciousness

Introduction

Parallel to Post World War II prosperous and affluent America was the Cold War, arms race, the Vietnam War and the threat of nuclear destruction as well as the Korean War as the United States gained ground on the world stage as an international leader. This did not engender loyalty and patriotism but rather skepticism, debate, and resistance. The Vietnam War and compulsory draft was not taken as something to necessarily honor. For many it was something to fight on ideological grounds. "Make love not war." Was an anti-war slogan in the 60s popularized by Penelope and Franklin Rosemont who made buttons distributed at the Mother's Day Peace March in 1965. The slogan was featured in John Lennon's song 'Mind Games' and Bob Marley's 'No More Trouble' in 1973(Allyn,2001). Social mores also changed dramatically. Divorce, non-marriage, living together, same sex relationships, multiple relationships, and the empowerment of women and youth were choices to be debated and advanced. The younger generation in a post-Victorian era experimented with gender roles and relationships including free sexual behaviors. The older generation still lived within the boundaries of Victorian culture, mores and religious conservatism with traditional gender roles and the expectations of marriage and nuclear family life. This will be exposed through our analysis of Williams' *Battle of Angels*(1945), *Orpheus Descending*(1958), *Kingdom of Earth*(1967) or *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*() and Williams' only novel *The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone*(1950).The analysis of the selected plays will reveal how Tennessee

Williams stood as the cultural 'Other' and as a vanguard of the anti-conformist post war America.

1-*Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending*: The Myth of the Sacrificial Young God

Battle of Angels (1940) is one of Williams' favorite plays. The use of the myth of Dionysus in the play expresses the playwright himself who believed that *Battle of Angels* was "coming directly from his heart as an expression of fundamental human hungers." (Williams, 1941) It has been often labeled as "the root Williams play, a powerful mixture of sex, violence and religion." (Hirsch, 1979:8) He revised it for seventeen years before its mature version, *Orpheus Descending*, appeared in 1957.

Battle of Angels was the first play by Tennessee Williams to be given a professional production (Boston, December 30, 1940), and, despite its unfavorable initial critical reception, Williams stubbornly continued to have faith in its possibilities. He revised and rewrote it for seventeen years, until it emerged as *Orpheus Descending*. In his introduction to the printed edition of both plays, he rightfully refers to it as one play in two versions. He explains that, "I have never quit working on this one, not even now." (Williams, 1958:ix) Indeed, it was to return still later as a film, the fugitive kind.

It is thus appropriate to examine both *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending* together as two versions of a single play, a play which Williams called, "a lyrical play about memories and the loneliness of them." (Ibid) This play is, however, much more than merely a memory play. It is a drama in which Williams has erected an elaborate structure of symbols and characterizations upon. Which reenact the self immolation of a modern divine artist. This divine artist figure is propelled toward his fate by his gradual discovery of the existential solitude imposed upon all living things by the very circumstances of their being. Williams is attempting to draw upon the strength of the underlying central myth of sacrifice, and place it

in the context of the quest of the traditional Chivalric knight-errant. Williams modernizes the form by having the quest end in an existential enlightenment which brings about the sacrifice of the artist who is both man and god.

There is an undeniably clear consistency of motifs when we compare both works. The hero has changed his artistic directions, but not his name, in *Orpheus Descending*. The name of the female lead has changed from Myra Torrance to Lady Torrance, but her intentions toward Val Xavier are obviously congruent. Each work is heavily burdened with mythological allusions. In each play, the presentation stresses nonrealistic elements of stagecraft. Music may rise from no source. The set "represents in nonrealistic fashion a general dry goods store...." (3) Beulah's opening monologue in *Orpheus Descending* is directed to "set the nonrealistic key for the whole production (6)

Williams uses the same setting in each Play; It is a small Southern town located in Two Rivers County somewhere in the Deep South, a place where sex, death, and disaster form the staples of conversation. When the play opens, it is winter, and death is ominously announced in the person of Jabe Torrance who has returned home to die of cancer after an unsuccessful operation in Memphis. His wife, "Myra" in *Battle of Angels*, "Lady" in *Orpheus Descending*, is Italian in ancestry and frustrated sexually. The two qualities are frequently related in Williams; another example is Serafina Delle Rose from *The Rose Tattoo*.

A-The Artist as God- Hero

Valentine Xavier, the play's wandering hero, is described as a young Dionysus symbol of primitive male sexuality: "he is about 25 years old. He has a fresh and primitive quality, a visible grace and freedom of body, and a strong physical appeal." (Williams, 1950:132) The snakeskin jacket that he carries also corresponds to one of Dionysus' epiphanies. Into this setting Williams introduces his hero, Val also known as Snakeskin, after the garment he wears. His axle has broken in the midst of a storm, and he has come to the South looking for

something whose exact nature is unclear even to him. In the first version, he is a somewhat naive young writer of twenty-five; in the second, he has aged to thirty years, and has become a knowledgeable, worldly-wise guitarist. He is a wanderer, an artist, and, as we find out from his conduct on the job as a clerk in the Torrance store, a daydreamer.

This trait of daydreaming is popularly and traditionally associated with a poetic temperament or poetic creativity. Williams has had many of his central characters display this penchant for daydreaming, among them Chance Wayne, Blanche Dubois, and Tom Wingfield. It is important for Williams because it is a short-cut to the description of a character who is to be perceived as perhaps more imaginative, sensitive, and creative than his actions might otherwise suggest to the audience. In this play, Val Xavier has more than just his daydreaming to recommend him to us as an artist.

Val's arrival disturbs the conservative Southern community and has the same effects as Dionysus' arrival in Kadmeia: the male townsfolk despise him while the deprived matrons are irresistibly attracted to him. Myra, Cassandra, and Vee represent different types of female characters whose attraction to Val emphasizes the general sexual appeal of the Dionysus figure. (Sandra, a Southern counterpart of the legendary Cassandra of Troy, speaks of the situation of the women: 'Don't you know what those women are suffering from: sexual malnutrition! They look with eyes that scream "Eureka"'. (Ibid, 136)

The epithet "Bacchantes" is appropriate for these women not only because of their sexual hunger, but also due to their love for ecstasy, music, dance and liquor – tastes that distinguished Dionysus' revels. The legendary Cassandra, Sandra's ancestor, was Apollo's priestess. As Sandra says, "The first (Cassandra) was a little Greek girl who slept in the shrine of Apollo." (Ibid: 135) This Cassandra had her doctrine contradicted and was advised to become Dionysian by dancing, getting drunk, and "raising hell at Moon Lake casino." The moon, Dionysian symbol, replaces the Apollonian sun as Semele his mother was symbolized

by the moon. All the women –Cassandra’s descendants—during the process of their emancipation replace the worship of the process of the Apollonian sun with that of the Dionysian moon. Not only Sandra , but also Myra , dreams of happiness in the orchard across from Moon Lake. There is a lunar allure over the decor dominated by moon colors – silver and white. Myra, enrapt with the music, exclaims:

Me out for? Silver and white! Music! Dancing! The orchard across from Moon Lake (...) I’m whirling; I’m dancing, faster and faster! (...) I’m surrounded by people.(Ibid:180)

The fact that Myra is “surrounded by people” is very important to her. The free contact with the others guarantees her emancipation, as it did in the case of the Maenads who escaped from the family hearth to dance amidst a crowd of revelers on the Grecian hills. Myra wishes to be liberated in this manner and be an active participant in the Dionysian revels. Her elation is interrupted by the reality of Jab’s presence, her old husband, who reminds her of her reluctant attachment to a marriage of convenience.

The women (Sandra, Myra, Dolly, Beulah) also reveal their Dionysian temperament during their conversation on Mardi Gras, a carnival originating from the Dionysian rites, during which the participants enjoyed, as in the primitive festivities, music, dance, and sexual liberty. The women’s dream for an everlasting “Mardi Gras situation” is put into words by Sandra:

Myra: How is Mardi this year?

Sandra: As marvelously as usual. If I were reframing the world I’d make it last forever.(Ibid:155)

It is not surprising that later Myra sees in Val the movements of a “carnival dancer.”(Ibid:165) He is the Dionysus who sets the town’s female population to dancing. Val has actually taken up a job as a shoe-fitter and his touch has, indeed, set the women in two Rivers County to a Maenadic dance.(Ibid,160)

Dionysus' escort consisted of minorities, primarily of the Maenads and then of the deformed little monsters of mythology: the goat-footed Pan, the Satyrs, the Silenoi. In this manner, Val, except for the infatuation that he causes in the other sex, has a positive attitude towards black men. Val's treatment of a gilded black guitarist irritates the sheriff and the other townsmen who express their possible fear that Val had come down to organize the negroes.(Ibid:185) At this point one of the men cries out:

You know what I do when I see snake? (...)
I get me a good stick to pin it down with. Then I scotch it under the
heel of my boot—scotch its god dam yellow gizzards out.(Ibid:186)

This threat as well as Vee's vision of Val at the lynching tree comment on his imminent sparagmos the Greek name for Dionysus' death by lynching. But in *Battle of Angels* Val's end comes somewhat abruptly; all that is left of him is the snakeskin jacket, "this lividly mottled object, which though inanimate, still keeps about it the hard, immaculate challenge of things untamed".(Ibid:186)The account of Val's lynching- "sparagmos" is given later in the Epilogue by the women who stare at the snakeskin jacket that has remained miraculously fresh and clean throughout time. It has been called "a souvenir of the jungle," a shameless flaunting symbol of the Beast untamed." The fact that the snakeskin jacket was placed in a museum and was not affected by time signifies that while Val himself died a human death his memory survived throughout time.(Graves,167:103)

Williams' early universe deals with man's primitive state of consciousness. In *Battle of Angels* the analogues of the mythological archetype give archetypal meaning to various drives of modern man. *Battle of Angels* uncovers the Dionysian consciousness in Modern America. In the southern city of the play, this consciousness is translated into the violence of lynching- "sparagmos".

The Dionysian symbolism becomes richer in the later version of the play,*Orpheus Descending* (1957).This title is more suggestive of the mythic element in the play.Val-

Orpheus is no longer a writer who tells the truth, but a musician like his legendary counterpart (Williams, 1950:194). In either case, he always remains an artist. Like Dionysus, Val represents both fertility and sexual power while at the same time he is intellectually and artistically gifted. The dance of the Maenads did not remain a mere exaltation of the new religion and the sexual liberty that Dionysus granted. It greatly contributed to art as the songs and the dances of the rites led to the making of tragedy.

Val's artistic inclinations reflect Williams' belief in the artist's abilities that shake and reform the world. Val brings salvation through both his male sexual identity and his art. His journey to the Southern town parallels that of Orpheus in the Underworld. Val brings music, enchantment, and fertility to the community. The violent reaction is inevitable; he will act as the "dying god" in the necessary primitive ritual.

The "dying god" and the ritual re-enactment of the dying process is probably the most popular rite of passage in world mythology. Williams' dying Dionysus seeks to expose the savagery still extant in the twentieth century man. The collective unconscious which governs the characters and the mob, in particular, recalls Jung's theories of a universal and impersonal nature, a nature, which is identical in all individuals.

B-Dionysian/Modern Man Myth and Ritual Pattern

In *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending*, Williams makes use of many symbols of mythical association which give archetypal meaning to the personal plight of modern man. The predominant myth of Dionysus' "Sparagmos" relates to most of the mythical symbol and ritual patterns that Williams uses to elaborate the plays' imagery.

There is the Dionysian idyllic wine garden in the orchard on Moon Lake. Its grape vines and fruit trees are as fertile as the youthful couples who frequent it. The passion of David for Lady bears fruit in her conceiving. When the Mystic Crew burns down this Dionysian grove, everything collapses. Lady's father, the creator of the wine garden, is burned alive in his

effort to save his property. His violent death is a ritual sacrifice that presages the similar fortune that awaits the protagonist. The importance of the Dionysian garden for Lady signifies the necessity of its existence for every individual. The holocaust of the garden and its owner is a Dionysian “sparagmos” which marks the end of the spring followed by a physical and moral wasteland. Lady has an abortion and marries death represented by Jabe Torrance, an old sterile man, one of those who set fire to the garden. Lady will keep on trying to recreate the vine garden. Val’s arrival, as a new Dionysian god, naturally concurs with Lady’s effort to turn the confectionery into a Dionysian grove:

Electric moon, cut out silver-paper stars and artificial vines? Why it’s her father’s wine garden on Moon-Lake she’s turned this room into!
(Ibid:124)

In this artificial grove, she tries to reenact with Val her Dionysian ritual, and their passion leads again to fertility and conception, but as the seasons change, the ritual of the “dying god” takes place. Val-Orpheus is burned alive like Lady’s father and Lady herself is murdered as she attempts to protect Val. Unfortunately technology cannot replace nature’s wilderness. As Carol, David’s sister, exclaims:

This country used to be wild, the men and women were wild and there was a wild sort of sweetness in their hearts, for each other, but now it’s sick with neon, it’s broken out sick, with neon, like most other places
(Ibid:127)

The stories that Lady has told are also allegories related to her dream of restoring the wine garden. The allegory of the barren fig-tree which suddenly bears fruit is a Dionysian symbol of Lady’s rebirth in her fertility. It is worth to remind that the fig tree is associated with Dionysus. The story of the monkey who was too old to dance and dropped dead is also an allegory of Lady herself trying in vain to revitalize her youthfulness. But “the show is over, the monkey is dead.”(Ibid:125)

Williams named the second version of the play *Orpheus Descending* and critics have invented several interpretations relating Val to the mythological Orpheus. Like his mythological prototype, Val is a wandering minstrel and his guitar correlative to the Orphic lyre. When he arrives at Two River County, Val's ideals are those of Apollonian orphism: civilized behavior, peace, and ascetism (Graves:114). However, the Dionysian Maenads who inhabit the town will not let an Apollonian Orpheus in peace among them. Cassandra, the ex-Apollonian priestess, who has herself become Dionysian, foresees Val's doom.

Val chooses Lady Torrance to be the play's Euridice. (Ibid:128) Their relationship is fatal for him. After impregnating the female, he will become the male sacrifice offered to the goddess of the underworld. Lady-Euridice remains permanently in the underworld while Val-Orpheus is executed by Jabe, Lady's husband, who is also the play's Pluto, Death King of the Underworld. Val is inevitably led to a violent analogue of Orphic "sparagmos": immolation by blowtorch administered by the males of the town.

The mythological Orpheus, priest of Apollo, refused to honor Dionysus and preached the evil of sacrificial murder. In vexation Dionysus set on him the Maenads who murdered Orpheus and tore him limb from limb. In Williams' collection of poems, *The Winter of Cities*, there is also a poem entitled, '*Orpheus Descending*' which starts with Orpheus's descent to the world of the dead and ends with Orpheus's dismemberment:

Now Orpheus, crawl, O shameful fugitive, crawl back under the crumbling broken wall of yourself, for you are not stars, sky-set in the shape of a lyre, but the dust of those who have been dismembered by Furies. (Otto,114)

From then on, Orpheus does not appear in mythology in conflict with the cult of Dionysus, but as the principal in Dionysian rites who suffers the same fate as the god. (Graves,1959:114) In this manner, Williams' Orpheus identifies with Dionysus. As Dionysus' artistic vocation was more human and less sublime, Val's guitar, in the same way, has both the power of an

ethereal orphic lyre and of an earth-bound phallic symbol. As an artist, Val has also a personal vision of freedom: a bird with legs that has to keep afloat in its wings but which, because of that, is protected from the hawks that can't see him when he flies against the sun. That winged serpent is another Dionysian symbol, which illustrates Val's Dionysian nature (Ibid:103): the artist who is fluctuating between heaven and earth. Naturally, when Val dies, he leaves behind him the snakeskin – concrete symbol of his own earthly nature.

The violence of the “death” created the primitive dithyramb during the Dionysian rite. In William's plays, art and violence are related in a particular way. Vee Talbott, the sheriff's wife, has become a painter as a result of her witnessing violence “from seats down front at the show”. Val's ability to charm women, which seems to border on hypnotism in the case of Vee Talbott, suggests Dionysus, rather than any other deity. It is in a scene with Vee Talbott, added in *Orpheus Descending*, that Williams emphasizes the exact parallel with Dionysus. Val is calming her by explaining that her art has come to her from the chaos by which she is surrounded. Val's words convey the saving; touch of a god who can make comprehensible the midst of chaos. That chaotic ethos is reminiscent of the violent celebrations of the rites of Dionysus:

Val: You live in Two River County, the wife of the county Sheriff. You saw awful things take place.

Vee: Awful! Things!

Val: Beatings!

Vee: Yes!

Val: Lynchings!

Vee: Yes!

Val: Runaway convicts torn to pieces by hounds!

Vee: Chain-gang dogs!

Val: Yeah!

Vee: Tear fugitives!

Val: Yeah!

Vee: -- To pieces...(Williams:85)

The symbolic rending to pieces of the god Dionysus in the frenzy of those celebrating his divinity is certainly evoked by this imagery of violent dismemberment, from which emerges the messianic portrayals which are Mrs. Talbot's art.

Only a few minutes later, Val will explain to Lady that he feels that he is the "brother" of the convict pursued by the dogs outside. (70) In *Battle of Angels*, Val tells Myra that he used to "live like a fox," and he again compares himself to a "fox pursued by hounds." (165) This symbolic linkage with the animal kingdom is extended by the close relationship between Val and the animal-like "cry," given by Uncle Pleasant, the aged mysterious Negro in *Orpheus Descending*. Carol Cutrer has asked Uncle Pleasant to give the cry, which is described as "a series of sharp barking sounds that rise to a sustained cry of great intensity and wildness." "Val sweeps back the alcove curtain and appears as if the cry were his cue." (103)

At his entrance, Carol Cutrer says, "Something is still wild in the country!" (103)

This savior is introduced into Two Rivers County (an echo here of Eden amidst the Tigris and Euphrates is possible) by Vee Talbott, who is a member of the Church of the Resurrection, and who includes him in her painting of the Last Supper as the central figure. (120) In *Battle of Angels*, Williams repeats a crude bit of business wherein Val's possibly acceptable expletive of "God, I-Lady, you..." is reinforced by the response, "God you an' lady me, huh." (149) This is a god who communes directly with Lady and, in the penultimate scene, brings life where all Lad had been dead, by making her conceive, thus bearing fruit. The spring succeeds the barrenness of winter, just as Lady's fruitfulness succeeds her winter of the hated marriage with Jabe.

As the genesis of tragedy originated in the Dionysian dithyramb, so the tragedy of the southern community originated in Val's primitive music. The Maenads, who accepted the newcomer and his life-giving force, became sacrificial victims themselves. In addition to Lady who is shot by Jabe (a convention-bound morality in the form of Death), Vee goes mad

and Cassandra crowns in the Sunflower river. They cannot live in the town any longer where the notion of sex as promiscuous release (Cassandra) or as religious ecstasy (Vee) violates community convention. Their deaths are part of the ritual 'holocaust' of the Dionysian Val.

C-Valentine Xavier as the Wandering Minstrel

Battle of Angels and *Orpheus Descending* trace Val's tragic progress as a young artist (writer/musician) who sets off the above chain reaction of human cruelties. Val's death is the climax of an entire complex of transgressions which, in the private and public consciousness of the community, required a victim. The need for a victim is an archaic drive which has not been left out of the civilized man. In private consciousness, it finds expression in murder (Jabe), while in the public consciousness in group violence (lynching for example). Val is depicted as an untamed creature. His ability to charm women, which seems to border on hypnotism in the case of Vee Talbott, suggests Dionysus, rather than any other deity. It is in a scene with Vee Talbott, added in *Orpheus Descending*, that Williams emphasizes the exact parallel with Dionysus. Val is calming her by explaining that her art has come to her from the chaos by which she is surrounded. Val's words convey the saving touch of a god who can make comprehensible the midst of chaos. That chaotic ethos is reminiscent of the violent celebrations of the rites of Dionysus. The symbolic rending to pieces of the god Dionysus in the frenzy of those celebrating his divinity is certainly evoked by this imagery of violent dismemberment, from which emerges the messianic portrayals which are Mrs. Talbot's art.

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series of sharp barking sounds that rise to a sustained cry of great intensity and wildness."

"Val sweeps back the alcove curtain and appears as if the cry were his cue." (103)

The sacrificial victim is usually an outsider and a newcomer. The "niggers" who suffered lynching as a common practice are outsiders from another continent. Papa Romero, Lady's father is also an immigrant, a "wop from the old country." It is interesting that the sacrificial victims are mainly life-giving forces and symbols of fertility; the blacks labored in the Deep South for the fertility of the land. Papa Romero worked to create a wine garden, also a symbol of life and fertility. In his turn, Val is the potent young male who revitalizes every female. At the end of the plays, Val leaves behind his snakeskin jacket. The serpent epiphany of Dionysus corresponds to winter in the calendar of the tripartite year, and in fact, with Val's "holocaust" spring ends and winter follows in the Southern town.

Battle of Angels and *Orpheus Descending* tell about the advent of Val-Dionysus symbolical of the American counterculture advocates. The revival that he brings to the Southern city ends with his death—"sparagmos" that is commemorated by the inclusion of the snakeskin jacket in the local museum. In these plays, spring-summer is followed by autumn -winter, and there is no continuation of the ritual, no god's resurrection and no coming of the following spring. *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending* could therefore be classified as Williams' archetypal plays in the sense that they opened the cyclical pattern of the Dionysian birth, death and rebirth.

D-The Hero's Romantic Quest

In both versions of the play, and even at the last moment before sentence, Val the Dionysian hero has options. He could compromise his principles, play along with Myra, and possibly fool Jabe, in *Battle of Angels*. But he deliberately maintains consistency of character, and insists on leaving, on driving west into the storm, without Myra. He has been warned of the consequences of his actions, as has Myra. Cassandra prophesied, "Whoever has too much

passion, we're going to be burned like witches because we know too much. My lips have been touched by prophetic fire. I have it on the very best authority that time is all used up. There isn't going to be any morning. There's no more time." (220)

Although in *Orpheus Descending*, the warning comes from Sheriff Talbott, and is more direct and less poetic, in that play the deliberate nature of Val's decision to stay is also accented. He changes his mind about leaving twice, once at the end of Act II when Lady pleads that she needs him to live, and again in the final scene when Lady tells him of her pregnancy (215) This decision to stay is synonymous to a declaration of the acceptance of his violent end. Sheriff Talbott has told him this. Jabe's melodramatic entrance and murder of Lady in both plays should not detract attention from the destruction of Val, engendered by his own decisions.

The question of Val's motivation throughout the play has been alluded to previously as a "romantic quest," and this concept deserves a further investigation. Val Xavier was known only as Snakeskin in his prior career, and Williams renames his female protagonist, "Lady," in *Orpheus Descending* to accentuate the atmosphere of Romance. But let us examine the origin of Val's quest. He came not from a court, nor even, indeed, out of a family, since he says he allowed his parents to desert him in a swamp. Thus he comes from an existential loneliness. The adventures which we learn he has had are hardly in the tradition of courtly love, but then Val is a modern knight. In this state of loneliness, he is eagerly awaiting something to come into him. Instead, he physically moves into an adventure, with the girl in the swamp. Several other adventures are alluded to, none of them fulfilling Val's sense of dissatisfaction. He constantly has sought some answer to that big issue. The mode of his attempts to find that answer seems to be somewhat confused, even though the disappointing outcome of every attempt is clear. At one point he says,

How do you get to know people? I used to think you did it by touching them with your hands. But later I found out that only

made you more of a stranger than ever. Now I know that nobody ever gets to know anybody....We're all of us locked up tight inside our own bodies. Sentenced-you might say-to solitary confinement inside our own skins(166)

Certainly if the knight is trapped inside himself, he cannot succeed in his quest to break out, to touch others. His quest then has taken him to a town submerged with death, almost hell above the ground. He is fated to conclude his quest in a violent death, the ultimate loneliness. If the structure of the play is focused on Val as the unsuccessful seeker after happiness, Williams has doubly reinforced that theme with the two women, Myra Torrance (Lady) and Cassandra Whiteside (Carol Cutrere). Williams has rewritten Myra Torrance's role in *Orpheus Descending* in order to make this parallel clearer. He has for instance, given us an explicit description of her past. Her father was the "Lago" who ran the Moon Lake Casino during prohibition. The Moon Lake Casino represents to Lady all that was good about youth and the past. Her father's name Romano, suggesting romance. She had her first affair at the Moon Lake Casino with David Cutrere, Carol's brother. Of that time before her marriage to Jabe, it was said, "Myra was Myra then. Since then she's just a woman who works in a mercantile store. In those days she was a romantic, looking for the same thing that Val has been searching for, "When I was a girl, I was always expecting something tremendous to happen. Maybe not this time but next time." (222) Romance, in the form of her father and his vine garden, the Moon Lake Casino, was consumed by fire, a fire which was "as red as Guinea red wine!"(8) Papa Romano was burned alive in the fire, and, indirectly, the fire ended Myra's love affair with David Cutrere. The fire had been deliberately set by a group of bigots, known as the Mystic Crew, led by Jabe Torrance. Although Lady did not know that Jabe was the leader of the death-dealing mob, she saw him at the time as closely resembling death, which is why she married him. "Of course," she says, after that, what I really wanted was

death. But Jabe was the next best thing." (181) Thus Myra embraces death, but it is a kind of living death, sterile and mercantile.

When we see her at the beginning of the play, her attitude reflects her awareness of the hollow nature of her existence, "Yes, I'm mean inside. You heard me cussing when I came downstairs? Inside I cuss like that all the time. I hate everybody; I wish this town would be bombarded tomorrow and everyone dead, because I got to live in it when I'd rather be dead in it an' buried." (148) She refers to herself as a "dead tree," and she feels that she is inexorably joined to death, personified in the cancer-wracked murderer to whom she is wed. When her husband knocks on the ceiling of the store to signal her, she describes him to Val, "Death's knocking for me! Don't you think I hear him, knock, knock, knock? It sounds like what it is! Bones knocking bones. Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you." (109)

Despite this death-like state, however, she has endured because of a commitment to finding a savior, of reaching what she anticipated as a girl. She continues the above speech, "But I endured it. I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I'm alive once more!" (109) She is alive in the same way that Val is alive, although the quest is not over at that point.

They are both unusual small town citizens since they have each always sought the life of the night. We see Lady in the first act complaining of an inability to sleep, and when Val remarks on the difference between day people and night people, she shows her kinship with him in that respect also, "There's something wild in the country that only the night people know." (73)

The convergence of the two parallel lines of Val and Lady represents life at its peak encountering death. It is significant, that in *Orpheus Descending* Val's attitude toward Lady's pregnancy is much more accepting, more paternal than in *Battle of Angels*. This reinforces

the role Lady plays as his parallel, since it makes their reaction to the annunciation more similar than in the earlier version.

E- Carol Cutrere (Cassandra Whiteside) Women as an Outcast of Conventions

Carol Cutrere (Cassandra Whiteside) is another night person, like Val, and a second reinforcing parallel for his role. She draws his attention to their similarities several times. "You savage. And me aristocrat. Both of us use things whose license has been revoked in the civilized world. Both of us equally damned and for the same good reason. Because we both want freedom. Of course, I knew you were really better than me. A whole lot better..." (161) Val is an outcast because he is an artist, a daydreamer, and a messiah of sorts. Myra is an outcast from the land of the living via her voluntary marriage with death. Carol Cutrere is an outcast because of her own convictions.

She is a more fully developed character in *Orpheus Descending*, and is able to communicate less oracularly with a more reticent, less flamboyant Val. In one conversation she draws him out, saying "I'm an exhibitionist! I want to be noticed, seen, heard, felt! I want them to know I'm alive! Don't you want them to know you're alive?" (164) Notwithstanding his seeming reticence, Carol knows that Val and she are travelling the same road for the same reasons.

She has tried to be a messiah, a savior for causes, civil rights, free clinics, equal justice for all. But now she has devoted her energy to following the advice of the dead, who she says speak to her and tell her to "Live, live, live, live, live!" (28) She interprets this message to mean that free voice should be given to passion, the fires of which will eventually destroy her, just as they will destroy Val and Lady.

Cassandra's passion is always close to death. She describes her habit of "joking" as usually winding up in Cypress Hill Cemetery, which is her favorite spot for copulation. She is very fond of the cemetery and often goes there alone to commune with the dead. She speaks casually of suicide and, in fact, has attempted it several times, succeeding only in cracking up

her car seven times and killing a mule, but not herself. In *Battle of Angels* we learn from the epilogue that she finally succeeds in killing herself after Val's death, drawing the three parallel lines together into a single point of lonely loss (her body was never recovered from the river). *Orpheus Descending* ends with her speech upon the reception of the snakeskin jacket, and in that speech she says the fugitive kind always follow their kind. We have just heard Val's death, and she exits, ignoring the Sheriff, supposedly to follow the road of the fugitive kind, Val's road.

She is freer than Val, because he refuses her solicitations, and therefore she has no lover except for an occasional pickup, or her black chauffeur. Thus she is even closer to the blue bird of freedom which epitomizes Val's desires. In fact, Val himself draws our attention to the resemblance between Carol and the blue bird. Her brother is on his way to pick his up in his "sky-blue Cadillac" and Carol is attempting once again to seduce Val, when he replies,

If we are meant to see Carol Cutrere as the blue bird of freedom, as a kind of ideal, then the linking of death and sex here is very significant. When Carol relieves her loneliness in the act of lovemaking, she risks her life, courts death. Thus freedom is purchased only at the price of a loneliness which is finally unbearable. Even death will be courted as a companion if it suggests, even momentarily, the communality of humanity. Williams thus shows us symbolically in Carol the fate of the perfect ideal of freedom for which Val and Lady strive. Their quest can only end in the embrace of death, which it does.

F-Of the Totemistic Nature of the Dionysian Hero

In both versions of the play, Carol is the heir to the snakeskin jacket which Val leaves behind she draws attention to its 'totemistic' importance in her final speech, "Wild things leave things behind them, they leave clean skins and teeth and white bones behind them, and these are tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their

kind...."(117) The snakeskin jacket is one of several symbols of mythic origin which Williams uses in the play to reinforce his dramatic structure.

With reference to the theoretical frame work of this thesis, Frazer points out that Dionysus would occasionally appear clad in the skin of various animals associated with him, among them the serpent and the goat (Frazer,1922:453) The preservation of the skin and the hacking to death of the wandering musician clearly seem to be reflected in the fate of Val Xavier, and the association with the pine tree is reminiscent of Dionysus.

If Carol Cutrere implies that the snake skin jacket has a life of its own in her final speech, she is associating it with a well established tradition in folk tales, that of the external soul. According to this tradition the soul can be separated from the body and treated as a physical object, even hidden from prying eyes. (Ibid:774) In *Battle of Angels*, we are reminded in the epilogue that the jacket never seems to get dusty, even though it hangs in the store museum where everything else is coated with the dust of disuse. This would suggest certainly that a connection between the totem and its owner still exists. Williams made the link even closer in *Orpheus Descending*, where he added the details of Val's stage career in the past when he was known as Snakeskin. Carol Cutrere calls him by that name throughout the play.

Val's leaving the snakeskin behind him emphasizes his connection with both Dionysus and Christ. The followers of Dionysus would wind themselves in symbols of the god after tearing him to pieces in their frenzied worship. The Christian notion of resurrection and rebirth is suggested by the snake's shedding of an old skin, which happens in nature when the animal has reached the limit of growth in one stage of development.

Another interesting symbol which occurs in this play as well as in many others of Williams' works is that of water. There is water aplenty in this play, and its symbolic ramifications are worth investigation. Jung has said that water is the most common symbol for man's unconscious mind,(Jung:253) Williams has identified his southern town only by saying it is

located in Two Hivers County. Spring comes in the course of the play, bringing rain and floods to the rivers, rivers which consume and carry away Cassandra Whiteside.

Of course, water does not always mean danger in Williams' work, just as it is not only found in a raging river. In both plays as well as in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Summer and Smoke*, he uses the name "Moon Lake" to indicate a place of license and pleasure removed in time from the present. The pleasures associated with the Moon Lake Casino are sensual ones; it is the place of assignations for the population, including the young Myra Romano, who has had her first love affair there. It is, however, an image which exists only in the past for Myra. The most she is able to do is to redecorate her confectionery to resemble orchard on Moon Lake where her father ran the garden of pleasure. It is in this redecorated confectionery that Myra keeps her dreams. (Williams,124) If water is a familiar Christian element of the baptismal ritual, then there is a suggestion here of an unreachable (because past) dream of salvation, a distant shimmering image of rebirth, always desired, never yielding to possession. There is no water in the confectionery; only "Death's in the orchard." (229) Myra's past is buried at Moon Lake with her father and her aborted child; her present and future, herself and her child, die in the confectionery's reconstruction of Moon Lake. It is almost as though she had never lived except in her unconscious, in a dream, as it were. She says, dying, "The show is over. (115)

G-The Dramatic Ritual on Stage

The characters live the ritual retelling of their story, a ritual that is openly stated by the structure of *Battle of Angels* and more cleverly implied by the stage directions of *Orpheus Descending*. *Battle of Angels* includes a prologue and an epilogue in which the Temple sisters guide tourists through the shrine of the store-museum. His totemistic snakeskin jacket hanging prominently in the dusky store, the celebration of the departed Xavier is presided over by the two Temple sisters, Eva and Blanche, whose names suggest their role as virgins

and guardians of the temple. It is Williams' ironic comment on the institution of the church that they charge a twenty-five cent admission to their sacred realm.

Orpheus Descending omits the epilogue and moves the prologue into the time of action of the remainder of the play, thus tightening the dramatic coherence and forcing Williams to indicate the ritual nature of the action in his directions to the players and producers. In describing the set, he repeatedly stresses that it should be "nonrealistic," that the merchandise should not be realistic, the confectionery should be "shadowy and poetic," and the two women the audience first see are to be dressed "in a somewhat bizarre fashion." (3) Beulah's initial monologue "should set the nonrealistic key for the whole production." (6) Approaching the climax of the play, Williams reminds the director that the ending of Act Three, Scene Two where Val confronts Sheriff Talbott and is ordered out of town "should be underplayed, played almost casually, like the performance of some familiar ritual." (96) The final scene of this last act of the play is to have lighting even "less realistic than the previous scenes of the play." (98) "A singing wind sweeps clouds before the moon so that the witchlike country brightens and dimes and brightens again." (98)

Williams uses music throughout the play to reinforce the action and mood, and employs only lighting changes to indicate changes in time. He thus suggests the timelessness of an often repeated ritual. The stage is a kind of sacred ground on which the play is played out always with the same players and the same ending. In both versions the playwright has presented a view of a hero who seems certainly to share the characteristics of Brustein's 'messianic hero', in the sense that he has come into the life of the world of the store and replaced in one sense the old god, Jabe, a god of death, and brought a change to the lives of those around him, Lady, Vee, and Carol. "Like most saviours, he suffers the fate of the scapegoat at the hands of the multitude; and the betrayal of the messianic hero provides the dramatic climax of the messianic play." (Burstein:29)

For a play to be a drama of messianic revolt, the messiah's doctrine must not be any more profound or derivative than Val's ideas about solitude, perfect legless blue birds, and deserts of loneliness. Williams continually reminds us of the animal nature of Val, through stage directions such as, "He is standing in the tense, frozen attitude of a wild animal listening to something that warns it of danger," (90) or more openly as when Val compares his temperature to that of a dog. (75) Val's sexual prowess and previous extravagance are immediate products of a kind of animalistic nature, not an idealized messianic one. Certainly this would explain the reflections of Dionysus which we see in Val's nature. It is thus necessary according to the romantic tradition as well as according to the basic myth that the artist must die. And, as we have seen, Val, accepting his fate, awaits the final resolution of his death. In 1957 producer Robert Whitehead called *Orpheus Descending*, "Williams' biggest play to date so far as philosophy, clarity, strength and social reference are concerned.... Its theme is that the poet's life blood is protest, even though when he does protest, he is destroyed" (Donahue,1970:88)

Although the majority of the play's critics have not cited this work of Williams for its clarity, it is most certainly a powerful play. Its power comes, not from the too numerous classical allusions such as its second titling, but rather from the basic conception of the play, which is a dramatization or ritual celebration of the immolation of the artist god on the altar of his own existential awareness of the separate nature of men's existences. By using this ancient root birth, death, resurrection myth, Williams has created an important work which transcends existing drama, because it is at once young and old, worshipful and cynical, myth and ritual. In 1957 Williams termed it a sort of bridge between his early years of playwriting and his "present state of existence as a playwright." (x) This is an accurate statement, since this play, in its first and its second version, embodies the central unified approach that we shall find in the remainder of the Williams canon, an approach which survives even in the latest works.

2- The Death of an Old World and the Birth of a New One in *Kingdom of Earth* or *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*

This play was first published as *Kingdom of Earth* in 1965 then republished as *The Seven Descents of Myrtle* (1968). Selecting the warring brothers' motif to express his theme, Williams combines it with the myth of the flood, the symbol of the destruction of the old world and the birth of the new. The flood theme is inverted to suggest the passing of the golden age in which the great mother, Miss Lottie, reigned from her gold and crystal parlor, and the birth of the new the "kingdom of earth." The two half-brothers, Chicken (dark complected and born of Negro blood) and Lot (Miss Lottie's exotic blond youth born of "pure" blood), are cast in roles similar to those of the mythological Cain and Abel, Osiris and Set. The Christian myth of the murder of Abel by his jealous brother and the race which Cain produced is well known, as is the treacherous rivalry between Osiris and Set. Osiris, son of Earth and Heaven, the Egyptian vegetation god beloved by the moon goddess Isis, was murdered by his twin brother, the jealous Set. Desiring Isis, Set disguised himself as a boar and castrated Osiris. Set then murdered Horus, son of Isis and Osiris, and set out in the hottest days of summer in pursuit of Isis. Horus, however, was revived and avenged the death of his father, but not until Osiris' death had come to signify the end of the bright half of the year and the rule of the evil Set, or, as Theodore Reike in *Myth and Guilt* expresses it, the "end to the Golden Age in which Osiris righteously reigned in both kingdoms of Egypt." (Reike, 1954:152) Neumann explains: "The great antagonist of Osiris was symbolized by Set, the black boar, whose emblem is the primeval flint knife, the instrument of dismemberment and death. This Set is the epitome of darkness, evil, destructiveness; being twin brother to Osiris, he is the archetypal 'antagonist'..." (Neumann, 1962, 86)

Williams has joined the Christian and pagan allegories of the warring elements in man's nature and created Lot and Chicken, half-brothers jealously competing for possession of the

kingdom of earth. A hard, crude, primitive man, "strange looking... but also remarkably good looking,"(Williams,1968:10) Chicken represents for Williams the dark, but strong side of human nature and of life. With his "darker than olive skin, and the power and male grace of his body," (Ibid:3)He is lined up with the physical versus the spiritual, the mortal versus the immortal, the destructive versus the creative. He is shadow versus light and evil versus good, whereas Lot, in his fairness, his delicacy, and his asexuality suggests all the traditional forces of light, goodness, and immortality. Chicken's symbol is his knife, and Chicken is the victor in the death struggle. Thus his philosophy stands endorsed:

I think that life just don't care for the weak. Or the soft. A man and his life. Like I said, a man and his life both got to be made out of the same stuff or one or the other will break and the one that breaks won't be life." (Ibid: 92)

With Lot dead in his mother's parlor, and Chicken and Myrtle climbing to the roof to sit out the flood after having made love and talked of children, the race of Cain(Myrtle's maiden name to which she implicitly reverts when she desires her marriage to Lot is Myrtle Kane) is about to be begun. Lot has fled the city of Sodom, but Sodom is not doomed.

The parallels in *Kingdom of Earth* to the stories of Cain and Abel and of Set, Osiris, and Horus are already clearly mythological, but it is important to recognize that the Set- Osiris- Horus myth is also clearly within the context of the great mother motif and that in dramatizing the end of the 'Golden Age' and the onset of the "bargaining" with "mist and mould," Williams continues to work within the goddess consort framework. In *Kingdom of Earth* the goddess is the dead Miss Lottie, a small blond woman "who liked violets and lace and mother of pearl and decorative fringes on things," (p. 37) whose little gold and crystal parlor is the mysterious center of her worship. It is this to which Lot who has begun to die in the spring, only a month after his mother's death withdraws in his death agony. The son of Miss Lottie and a Greek fruit dealer her lover Lot suggests an Attis to Miss Lottie's Kybele. Violets are the symbol of the castrated Attis from whose blood they sprang up, and Williams alludes to

the vegetation god and goddess in his reference to Lot's "violet lidded eyes" (p. 8) and Miss Lottie's love of violets. And just as the earth mother was originally a moon goddess, Miss Lottie is likewise connected with the moon. As Lot sits in the darkened bedroom the moonlight plays about him in "a faint and fitful streak," (p. 55) and "once in a while the moon comes out of those fast moving clouds, and it says things to me in the soft voice of my mother." (p. 67) in total submission, Lot has dedicated himself to her worship.

Lot's role as flower like youth is emphasized throughout the play. Williams describes him at his entrance: "He is a frail; delicately you might say exotically pretty youth of about twenty."

(p. 4) Lot points out that he resembles his mother, and Myrtle replies, "To me you resemble just **you**. The first, the most, the only refined man in my life. Skin, eyes, hair any girl would be jealous of. A mouth like a flower. Kiss me!" (p. 14) Later, Williams describes him again. He sits in a rocker, watching Myrtle at the rose bud printed washbowl (the rose is the symbol of Adonis and Christ), "and lot's fair head, delicately pretty as a girl's leans against a souvenir pillow from Biloxi." (p. 37).

But it is in his death scene that Lot is most clearly the beautiful young consort who, like Attis, Adonis, Dionysus, Osiris, and all the other delicate, effeminate young vegetation gods, devoted himself wholly as lover (spiritual in this play) and hand servant to the worship of the great mother:

Lot appears like an apparition in the pool of cool light at the stair top. He has put on the gauzy white dress to conjure an image of his mother in summer. As he stands above the stairs he puts on a translucent, wide "picture hat"; the crown is trimmed with faded flowers. The effect is both bizarre and beautiful... Then Lot starts his descent of the stairs. With each step his gasping for breath is louder. . . . As he staggers into the bizarre little parlor, the room is lighted with a delicate rose light. There he stands swaying for a few moments; then sinks into one of the little gold chairs, facing the window... Lot, in his transfiguration, stares blindly (Ibid 107-108.)

Unable to serve his mother goddess in life, he will serve her in death. In his total dedication to her worship, Lot has become like Dionysus and Attis, who assumed the raiment of their earth goddesses. Still further, he is like the priests of the great earth goddesses who, in an effort to become one with the goddess, commonly dressed in her image and even castrated themselves as a symbol of their worship.

A- Lot as the Homosexual Figure

In addition to his effeminate looks but masculine function, it is likewise notable that Lot, in his transvestic "transfiguration," (p. 108) is represented, much as the "androgynous" Hannah had been, as "sexless." He is impotent as a result of his illness, but he denies that he is a homosexual. He explains his attitude toward sex to Myrtle, declaring that she has married "someone to whom no kind of sex relation was ever as important as fighting sickness and trying with his mother to make, to create, little elegance in a corner of the earth we lived in that wasn't favorable to it." (p. 43) as representative of the immortal and spiritual, Lot is both asexual and bisexual; he is both sexes and neither sex. In his death "his agony is transfigured by the sexless passion of the transvestite... Even in death he has the ecstasy of the transvestite." (p. 108) a familiar figure in ancient religions, the transvestite was both priest and goddess. Through his exchange of masculine garb for feminine raiment and sometimes through the sacrifice of his own masculinity he could become more like the goddess, thereby achieving communion with her more readily. Through his communion he becomes the goddess, and thus, he himself becomes the center of worship. As Myrtle assures Lot, "I... understand. And I'm going to devote myself to you like a religion, mystery as you are, back of that ivory holder and Mona Lisa smile." (p. 43) Hermaphrodite, androgyne, transvestite all are familiar figures in ancient myth, many of them divine figures whose worship became the focal

point of whole Cultures. Symbols of completeness and harmony, they were looked upon as positive forces to be revered and emulated.

Lot, however, is not destined for this end. He must die in the ultimate sacrifice to the great mother, and there is little hope of resurrection. As the flood is about to sweep over the land, Chicken and Myrtle climb to the roof, Chicken crying exultantly: "Sing it out, frogs an' crickets, Chicken is king!" (p. 111) Chicken has become the sacred king of the new world, and the new world is a patriarchy. Lot had brought Myrtle home to take the place of his mother as mistress of the home and heiress of the land. She is the amiable, "fleshy ", dominating young woman (p. 4) named after the tree sacred to Aphrodite, and as she herself had understood, "I'm not just your wife, I'm also your mother, and I'm not daid, I'm livin'." (p. 8) Calling him "precious" and "baby" throughout the play, she promises to love and protect him and to thwart Chicken's plan to maintain possession of the farm. But Myrtle is weak and easily frightened, and she succumbs to Chicken's primitive power and his masculinity. Forgetting, in her fear, her resolve to act the mistress of the house, she makes way for the ascendancy of the patriarchy and the passing of the Golden Age and the beginning of a "second history," the "bargaining" with "mist and mould."

In spite of the goddess-consort pattern, Williams would appear to have avoided the dominance of the earth mother as a character. Miss Lottie is dead, and Myrtle shows little promise of succeeding her, leaving Lot and Chicken to struggle for the stage. Thematically, the play is the conflict of light and dark, spiritual and physical, etc., with Lot and Chicken as protagonist and antagonist. But in making Lot too exotic and bizarre to be accepted on the psychological level, Williams has made him unreal, leaving the stage to Myrtle and Chicken. Ultimately, Chicken should be the dominant force. Crude and primitive and distasteful, he is the victorious antagonist to Myrtle, whose descents to the kitchen and Chicken are an ironic rendering of the seven stages in achieving the oriental nirvana and whose loyalties determine

the outcome of the play. But just as Lot is too bizarre' Chicken is too primitive. He is too crude; too distasteful he is, in effect, unreal. It remains for Myrtle, her sometimes pathetic, often amusing, and totally human responses to her situation to capture our interest and sympathy and to emerge as the dominant character. Myrtle is an earth mother in a patriarchal society. In this she differs from Lady Torrance, the Princess Kosmonopolis, and Mrs. Goforth. But *Kingdom of Earth*, like *Orpheus Descending*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, nevertheless presents a mother goddess in this case a mother goddess substitute who dominates the action and the stage. Thematically, Myrtle is secondary to Chicken. Artistically, however, she is the protagonist. Perhaps this is what Williams intended it is difficult to tell.

Gods and goddesses, death and rebirth these are the primary materials of myth which have been, to varying degrees, a part of Williams' art since his first published story in 1928. Essential elements of his work from 1957, they have been for Williams a source of stories, symbols, and themes, although the last major play, *Kingdom of Earth*, is not the last play in which Williams makes use of the mythic materials. The combinations and variations are endless. Determining that they exist, of course, in whatever combinations or variations, is not the final goal, but it is the first step to that goal. The final goal determination of the ultimate meaning and function of the myth usage is in the final chapter of this thesis.

3- The Mother Goddess Consort in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1950)

In his only novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, Williams has delineated the self-destruction of a heroine who may clearly be seen to be of heroic stature. This is a novel drawn with bold, sometimes too obvious, strokes which has at its heart the same ironic connection between sex, birth, and death which is seen in the short stories.

The title itself is filled with Williams' puns, which are typical of his fondness for name symbolism. Instead of the novel taking place in the spring of her life, we see Mrs. Stone in the autumn of her days, her career and her marriage behind her, and the beauty of her physical attributes slipping away. The plot details her fall into progressively worsening degradation, but it also delineates her "spring," or predatory attack upon a younger man, even though she must now pay for his attention. The barren frigidity of stone is in deliberate connotative opposition to the warmth and burgeoning of life usually associated with the season of spring. Though physically barren, Mrs. Stone feels the awakening of previously dormant passions.

A- The 'Drift' of the Goddess Consort

Mrs. Stone's spring takes place in the city of Rome, but it is also a season of aimless wandering within her mind; Williams emphasizes this connotation in the title of the final section of the book, "The Drift." Mrs. Stone drifts geographically, spiritually, and amorously. Within her milieu, Mrs. Stone is a figure larger than life. She is famous, since she has had a long stage career and is still pursued for endorsements and interviews. She is rich, having married a very wealthy man, who has since died. She is powerful; Williams draws an analogy between the rise of her career and that of a successful politician. Although her youthful beauty is waning, she still is an impressive woman. "In Mrs. Stone there was a certain grandeur which had replaced her former beauty."(Williams, 1950:11)

Mrs. Karen Stone had once been an extremely beautiful young actress whose beauty, personality, and extremely good business sense had carried her quickly to the top of her profession. As she had passed through her thirties, her beauty began to fade, and her efforts to preserve her status as a star had culminated in the ill-advised casting of herself as Juliet in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. She had been well aware of the disastrous nature of this role for her, but she had gone through with the performance anyway. When the critics had

corroborated her premonitions, she used the ill-health of her husband as an excuse to announce her retirement from her career. Though she had never paid a great deal of attention to her husband previously, she then began to do so, and she realized that her maternal fondness for him masked a genuine fullness of affection. They embarked on a world cruise, which was interrupted by his heart attacks and eventual death, which came as an enormous shock to Mrs. Stone, in the light of her rediscovered love for her husband. In the same year, she lost her capacity to bear children through the onset of her menopause. She had been childless throughout her marriage because of a distaste for sexual activity, though she had not remained a virgin.

She has settled in Rome, when the novel opens, and has been drawn into the circle of a certain Contessa, who has introduced her to the impoverished nobility of Rome, all of whom exist on their charm and the generosity of rich foreigners. Paolo is one of the 'proteges' of the Contessa. He has already sold himself to several rich women and one rich German businessman. Mrs. Stone knows very well the game he has in mind and does not initially entertain Paolo's suggestions, although at last she succumbs to her newly awakened desires and employs Paolo. Their relationship is sustained by his indifference and her sensual desire.

Throughout her sojourn in Rome, a handsome young man who is too poor to own a shirt has followed Mrs. Stone wherever she has gone in the city, exposing himself to her in a blatant offer of sex. The ultimate nature of such an offer is suggested when Paolo reminds Mrs. Stone that recently several wealthy women have been killed in their beds after entertaining such gigolos of the streets.

The Contessa reveals her true contempt for Mrs. Stone in a conversation which Mrs. Stone and Paolo overhear. Mrs. Stone evicts both Paolo and the Contessa, and "ends the drift" by throwing her keys to the sidewalk and awaiting the young man and her fate in her bed.

Anais Nin, one of Williams' critics, sees this novel as making Williams an important novelist and emphasizes that the critics who have not liked his work in the medium have failed to note the mythological, symbolic, "larger than nature" quality of his characters(Nine,1969:189) Although her enthusiasm for Williams as a novelist may seem excessive, within the conventions of realistic fiction, we can accept the achievements and character of Mrs. Stone as giving her sufficient stature to be a hero, although flawed morally and sexually.

Williams does not want us to see her as merely a weak, dissipated widow, equal to those who surround her. From a position of strength, she can observe that the type of men of whom Paolo is the archetype are as weak as "a puff of meringue." "She had felt for them the sort of affection that is based on knowing you have the power to destroy and which is the warmer for being mixed with contempt."(Williams:30). Mrs. Stone is a woman who sees those around her and herself with a clarity born of intellectual acuity. She has chosen her life's course with great deliberation. She married exactly the kind of man with whom she could be happy. She conducted her artistic career with enormous efficiency. Even the role which ended her acting career was chosen with the foreknowledge that her assumption of the part of Juliet at her age was bound to be "an act of destruction." It was a deliberate act of artistic suicide, committed with full awareness on the part of Mrs. Stone(30)

Mrs. Stone's awareness of the structure of her life and the exact place into which every facet of that life should go gives her an extraordinary clarity of perception. She had known of the emptiness at the center of her theatrical life even at the height of her career. She saw her friends and associates as immersed in "a vast ritual of nothingness." Mrs. Stone knew of that ritual. She took part in it herself. She went to the parties; she pursued the little diversions. She moved in the great, empty circle. But Mrs. Stone glanced inward from the peripheries of that circle and saw the void enclosed there. She saw the emptiness. She knew that it was empty. But Mrs. Stone was always a busy woman. She had been continually occupied with more

things than a single existence seemed sufficient to hold, and for that reason, the way that centrifugal force prevents a whirling abject from falling inward from its orbit, Mrs. Stone was removed for a long time from the void she circled." (94-95)

At a time shortly before the plot of this novel begins, the vast busy ritual stopped for Mrs. Stone in several ways. Each of these ways is presented by Williams' language in terms which emphasize the resemblance of Mrs. Stone's state to death, "Three events of great importance and impact had occurred within a year of each other in Mrs. Stone's life. They were the abandonment of her profession and her husband's death and that interval of a woman's life when the ovarian cycle is cut off. Each event had been a severe shock in itself, and the three together had given her the impression that she was now leading an almost posthumous existence." (40)

Williams defines the detached, existential dividing line in which Mrs. Stone has found herself as "the drift." As he explains this term, it resembles a death-in-life, or withdrawal into some sort of dimly sensed chaos, "There are intervals when a life becomes clouded over by a sense of unreality, when definition is lost, when the rational will, or what passed for it before, has given up control, or the pretense of it. At such times there is a sense of drifting, if not of drowning, in a universe of turbulently rushing fluids or vapors." (12) Even within "the drift," however, there are currents along with which one can float, and floating is, if not an act of will, an act of the accession of will. Mrs. Stone speculates, "The drift had direction, if it did not have purpose, and sometimes direction is all that we know of purpose." (44) Thus her surrender of control to this existential state called "the drift" is an action whose consequences are clear to Mrs. Stone.

B- Mrs Stone as a Sexual Misfit

She becomes involved with the Contessa, knowing after a short time that the Contessa is nothing more than a bawd who supplies young men for the pleasure of aging women, but she chooses to remain in the circle of the Contessa. Even the Contessa sees the lack of any boundaries for Mrs. Stone's drift, or fall, "A woman falling like that will never strike bottom!" (41) Mrs. Stone is indeed "alone in a terrifying emptiness," (26) to use Brustein's phrase for the situation of the hero in the modern existential drama, and the emptiness draws its terror from her awareness of it and the unsettling clarity of her judgment.

Even when her lover Paolo says that if she continues to behave as she has, he will find an article in the paper describing her murder by some male prostitute of the street, her reply demonstrates cognizance of her situation, "Three or four years,' said Mrs. Stone, 'is all the time that I want. After that a cut throat would be a convenience.' "(105) With this last statement echoing, the final scene of the novel seems to indicate merely a change in Mrs. Stone's timetable, not in her intent. She has read the articles about the women who have been killed by the street 'gigolos'. She has been aware throughout the book of the young man who has followed her with some "secret signal." (211) When she throws her keys to the young man and waits for him in her bed, she is finally closing in on the center of the circle, approaching the end of the ritual of life, which she has simplified in these last moments of satisfaction of physical desire, even though it is concomitant with physical death.

Forecasting this denouement, Mrs. Stone invented a symbolically provocative story when she met an old friend unexpectedly. She explained tearfully that she had an incurable cancer which had begun in her womb and had spread throughout her body, and which must result in her imminent death. After having invented this story, Mrs. Stone felt curiously relieved, almost elated, for she knew at this point that she had understood and reached the center of the circle, the void, the end of the ritual. (95) Death is thus connected, even in this self-invented

fiction, with the womb, emphasizing Mrs. Stone's lifelong barrenness and distaste for sexual activity.

It is the final irony that after her sexual desire blossoms, she has lived enough of life to know the futility of its fulfillment. She chooses death in order to end the endless fall, the existential nothingness of the drift. The instrument of her death is the young man who has been following her throughout the play as a symbol of sexual indulgence. Her surrender is thus both sexual and fatal, and undertaken with a clear knowledge of the ritual and its end.

Chapter Four: The Myth of Sexual Resurrection

Introduction:

There is a certain redemptive quality lurk about the sexual scenes in Tennessee Williams' plays, almost a sort of celebration of the flesh. While this celebration of sex attempts to be fairly humorous, it hides darker commentaries on human isolation. *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Summer and Smoke* (1948) or *the Eccentricities of a Nightingale* (1964), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), and *Period of Adjustment* (1960), in particular, all feature characters who seem to believe that completion from their lonely lives will be achieved solely in sexual relationships. Williams does not put as much emphasis upon the spiritual as upon the sexual in his early works. Religion is mentioned only briefly in each play. It is almost as if the characters have tried spiritualism and found it lacking. Therefore they turn to sexual relationships to find completion. Williams tends to leave these plays open-ended; the audience is fully aware that these characters cannot continue in their current states. While celebrating the flesh, Williams is also acknowledging that redemption can also be fully realized through sexual relationships. The symbol of self-creation with the power and beauty of both male and female, the hermaphrodite or androgyny the terms are used interchangeably by most psychologists and myth theorists became a divine figure in most primitive cults, especially in those of the goddess and vegetation god. Discussing the concept at length, Jung considers the theory that divine hermaphroditism may have originated as the product of "primitive non differentiation" in which differences and contrasts were "either barely separated or completely merged." However,

If... the hermaphrodites were only a product of primitive non differentiation, we would have to expect that it would soon be eliminated with increasing civilization. This is by no means the case; on the contrary, man's imagination has been preoccupied with this idea over and over again on the high and even the highest levels of culture, as we can see from the late Greek and syncretic philosophy of Gnosticism. The hermaphrodite has an important part to play

in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, and in our own day we hear of Christ's androgyny in Catholic mysticism (Jung, 1963:92-93)

It will therefore be shown that in the above mentioned plays, Williams deals with homosexuality and hermaphroditism of his characters as redemptive from their actual state as sexual outcasts.

1-Williams' 'Broken Tower' in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

As we have mentioned it in the introduction to this research, one of the basic hypotheses of this thesis is that Tennessee Williams acknowledges his influence by American poet Hart Crane. In fact, Williams prefaces *Streetcar Named Desire* with a stanza from Hart Crane's poem, "*The Broken Tower*":

And so it was I entered the broken world
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
But not for long, to hold each desperate choice. (Williams, 1947:5)

The resonances of the opening lines of this poem suggest that, as he does in *Camino Real*, Williams is leading the audience into his own Inferno. At this time, he is, according to his own authority as Williams lied on his age and his *A Streetcar Named Desire* unfolds the mysteries, of a "dark wood where the straightway was lost". Williams' "dark wood," Hart Crane's "broken world," is a mixture of violence, destruction and sexual passion. Just as Crane uses imagery of violent physical destruction to thinly veil the explicit sexual content of '*The Broken Tower*,' Williams presents the sexual act as linked with death, with physical abuse, and brutal rape in streetcar, we see victims sacrificed on the altar of raw, carnal lust. As we will see with Stella, destruction in this manner is perhaps more horrible than an actual physical death, because they must burn on, eternally trapped in the inferno of their own bodies, "prisoners trapped inside our own skins. The purpose of the play lies in this attempt to expose what Williams senses as the inescapable and undeniable union of sex and violence.

At the center of this revelation spins Blanche Du Bois, the fallen patrician, the artist of the fantastic, the hopeless searcher for asylum, and a reflection of her author's own fears and feelings. "Her descent into the levels of a private inferno gives structure to the plot of the drama. Blanche appears onstage dressed as though she were arriving at a summer tea, or cocktail party in the fashionable "garden district." Her clothes suggest the incongruity of this setting and her background, which is the distinguished one which Stella abandoned. She was the last of the mistresses of Belle Reve, a mansion which had been in her family for many generations. Unlike Stella, Blanche did not reject Belle Reve and its traditions. She stayed and watched all of her old relatives die, struggling to hold the plantation in the family. It was a difficult struggle, and Blanche was deeply affected by the continuous parade of deaths. She describes it in terms which equate her tribulations with physical violence, "I stayed and fought for it, bled for it, almost died for it!..I took the blows in my face and my body. All of those deaths!

Her sensitivity to the continuing trips to the graveyard may have been the motivating force behind her subsequent indulgence in alcohol and nymphomania, according to one critic, "Blanche resorts to them only as a consequence of her tragic flaw—heightened sensibility of the horror of mortal existence."

A- Blanche du Bois: The Last Aristocrat of an Old Order

Blanche's solution to the horrors of mortal existence is to take refuge in the creation of fantasies. She goes through an astronomical number of lovers, including most of the nearby army base, and subsequently loses Belle Reve and her employment as a schoolteacher. She maintains, during this series of 'epic fornications' (Williams:43) totally within the family tradition, that she is creating happiness for others. Just as Chance Wayne asserted, she had given more than she had received, and is thus a creative artist of sensuality. "I don't wan

realism. I want magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned .for it!'(Ibid:117)

Blanche's insisting on the delicate illusion of the paper lantern shade illustrates the pervasive intensity of her illusion manufacturing. Elia Kazan sees this desperate need to be an artist of fantasy as stemming from Blanche's self-image:

Her problem has to do with her tradition. Her notion of what a woman should be. She is stuck with this "ideal." It is her. It is her ego. Unless she Mires by it, she cannot live; in fact, her whole life has been for nothing. Even the Allan Gray incident as she now tells it and believes it to have been, is a necessary piece of romanticism. Essentially, in outline, she tells what happened, but it also serves. The demands of her notion of herself, to make her special and different, out of the tradition of the romantic ladies of the past: Swinburne, William Morris, Pre-Raphaelites, etc. This way it serves as an excuse for a great deal of her behavior.

Because this image of herself cannot be accomplished in reality, certainly not in the South of our day and time, it is her effort and practice to accomplish it in fantasy.(Kazan,1961:297)

Signi Falk, one of Williams' most outstanding critics, also perceives Blanche as "the last aristocrat of an old order, an intellectual of sorts, something of a poet by nature."(Falk,1965:89) The poetic in Blanche's nature assumes the form of the creation of fictional realities or, more indirectly, lying. Signi Falk notes that Blanche does exercise her creative talent in this way, but she also notes that Blanche is as often the deceived as well as the deceiver, "Blanche in a number of ways resembles Amanda--her pretensions to gentility, her legend about her former suitors, and her habit of lying to herself and to others."(Ibid) Thus Blanche sometimes finds herself in the disconcerting role of a magician feeling himself with his own tricks.

One of such illusions which turned upon its perpetrator is her unfortunate marriage to the young poet Allan Grey. As his name indicates, his nature was not as bright and shining as Blanche had believed, but even when she has discovered him having sexual relations with

another man, she attempts to fantasize the situation away. All three of them go to the Moon Lake Casino, an often used Williams, symbol for the escape suggested by drink, dim lights, and fantasies of youth. Unfortunately, Allan is not a believer in his own or Blanche's magic, and he shoots himself. This failure of her illusion making apparatus is the beginning of Blanche's long journey. She has become the existential searcher for asylum who is visible in every Williams play.

B-The Loss of Illusions

The plantation's name, Belle Reve, suggests that she has only lost an illusion of an ancestry and a home. She has been made grey by her marriage, and has been set adrift from the Eden-like past by her school superintendent, Mr. Graves. Having left her Laurel behind, she arrives onstage via two streetcars, the first named "Desire" and the next named "Cemeteries."(Williams:15) We may say, therefore, that Williams intends her to be a soul adrift in hell but she is a soul who continues to have the attributes of her prior incarnation.

Despite her carnal lusts and sexual exploits, she does retain a fundamental innocence through her magic of forgetfulness, as Elie Kazan suggests, "Every once in a while, her resistance weakened by drink, she breaks down and seeks human warmth and contact where she can find it, not on her terms, on theirs: the merchant, the traveling salesman and the others....Since she cannot integrate these episodes, she rejects them, begins to forget them, begins to live in fantasy."(Kazan:297) In short she has found the formula for the waters of Lethe, and that discovery, when it works, provides her with the innocence of the blessed. The fatal problem is that her formula does not always work. The sun does shine half the day, and there is always the danger that someone will turn on an unshaded lamp.

At times her quest may have the futile mood of that of Don Quixote,(Ibid:296)but it is all times a "voyage of experience."(Quirino:59) One critic has suggested that Blanche is a moth-like human soul caged in the rattletrap streetcar of the body: "Caged in a body that attempts

to transcend, but cannot escape, the moth-soul yearns for the star (Stella) and for rest in the aisles of the happy dead; it finds instead the flame of the primal. ('Stone-lea') blacksmith (Kowalski is Polish for smith')."(Quirino:60) Blanche's search seems to have assumed the shape of a fall rather than a flight, although its ultimate course does take her through the primal furnace of Stanley Kowalski's, and her own, passion. It is a journey within the inferno; all possible exits have long ago been scaled for Blanche.

The ramifications of Williams' intense identification with Blanche suggest that the writing of this play is "an escape from a world of reality in which Williams felt acutely uncomfortable.(Falk:87) It is an escape, like Blanche, into a fantasy world which is in reality, a map of the mind of the author. Thus Blanche's anxieties, fantasies, and search are reflective of her creator.

Williams' own psychological and biographical involvement in the play may be seen from several sources. Richard Asselineau has reported Williams' explanation that the pervasive symbols of death in the play came from his own terror of cancer while he was writing it.(Falk:87)Williams has proclaimed his belief in the enduring quality of the play and added, "It was Blanche, this lascivious, demonic woman who possessed me."(Williams,1958:82)

The original title of *Streetcar Named Desire* was *The Poker Night* suggesting the ritual which Williams' own father used to play. (Dakin Williams,1965:37) Williams' identification with Blanche is combined, interestingly enough, with a similar sense of oneness with Stanley, "I can identify completely with Blanche....and even with Stanley."(Williams,1959:82) If such a dualistic psychological identity is supposed, then the stage is set for any violence visited upon one by the other to represent symbolic suicide. Since Stanley is obviously far removed from the ancestry of Blanche, sexual union with him, as we have seen in the case of Stella, would represent a total revocation of or emancipation from Blanche's identity, the identity bestowed upon a person by his line of descent. In precisely this condition of Williams'

admitted merger of psychological identities, Kenneth Burke suggests that the archetypal symbolic suicide might very well be a sexually ambivalent crime such as the rape of the alter ego, as Williams presents it:

You might put it this way: Rebirth would require a killing of the old self. Such symbolic suicide, to be complete, would require a snapping of the total ancestral line (as being an integral aspect of one's identity). Hence a tendency for the emancipatory crime to become sexually ambivalent.(Burke:235)

Blanche has not only snapped the ancestral line, as Williams had done by his estrangement from his father, but she has vitiated her ancestry through the change which she submits. Williams, in identifying with Blanche, is submitting to the rape, but in his dichotomous identification with Stanley, and thus with his father, he is the man who rapes and the woman who is raped, the man he hates and the woman whom he loves (his mother).

This duality of Williams' surrogate identity in the play is reflected in the bipolar extremes of the character of Blanche. She is rapacious and gentle. She is violent and brave, and simultaneously frightened of violence. She looks through the South for an Eden she has made in her mind, and which only exists within herself. Her lengthy fall, both before and within the play, alloys Williams to map his own psychological tensions in her sacrifice. By the act of ritually recreating this sacrifice in the ritual of the theatrical experience, Williams has found ex-prating or salvation both for Blanche and for himself.

It is worthwhile to attempt to delineate the descent of Blanche Du Bois, both that portion which takes place before the opening of the play and the portion which is played out in the Elysian Fields.

Blanche sees her past before her arrival in New Orleans as being a result of the opposition of death and desire. As she explains to Mitch after he has heard something of her past exploits in Mississippi, she was so upset by the continuing series of deaths at Belle Reve, that she sought solace in the temporary company of young soldiers, travelling salesmen, and finally

with one of her high-school students. (Williams,1947:120) However, the net result of both the deaths of her relatives and their and her own desires, which in both cases had led to "epic fornications," (Ibid:43) seemed to reinforce Blanche's course, just as it took both the streetcar named "Desire" and the one named "Cemeteries" to bring her to where we first see her. Thus death and desire are really complementary, not opposite, and it is both of these which have made Blanche what she is when the play begins.

C- Blanche, Desire and Violence

Within the play itself, Williams is careful to emphasize repeatedly the connection between sex, or desire, and violence, which might be seen as the light touch of death. The play is structured so that, as the audience becomes aware of Blanche's true nature, she descends progressively lower into her own maelstrom of sex and violence, finding no safe haven until she magically manufactures it herself in the final scene.

The commingling of violence and sensuality is pervasive in the play; it is not exclusive leitmotif of Blanche. The violence of the relationship between Stella and Stanley will be mentioned further. The connection between animalistic rage and sexual bliss is made clear through Stanley's exuberant destruction of the light bulbs on their wedding night and through his visible beating of Stella and then later bearing her off to bed. Even the supporting characters, Steve and Eunice, have a violent quarrel which is concluded in bed. In her first confrontation with Stanley, Blanche attempts to combine his rage with her flirtation. Stanley senses the sensual suggestion, possibly because her flirtatious gesture is made when he is violently angry about the loss of Belle Reve, "She sprays herself with her atomizer; then playfully sprays him with it. He seizes the atomizer and slams it down on the dresser. Stanley: if I didn't know that you were my wife's sister, I'd get ideas about you"(Ibid:41) Graphically, Blanche's stimulus is sexual, and Stanley's reaction is violent.

A moment later, Blanche's violent, virulent reaction astonishes Stanley when he has touched her husband's love letters. She swears that she will burn them because his touch has contaminated them. Her allusion to her marriage here is phrased only in terms of pain, not affection, "I hurt him the way that you would like to hurt me, but you can't. I'm not young and vulnerable anymore."(Ibid:42)

Williams endows even the cloddish Mitch with a symbolic connection with love and death. Though he suggests through most of the play an older, disillusioned Gentleman Caller from *The Glass Menagerie*, he does refer to a previous love affair when he shows Blanche his cigarette case. The girl whom he had loved and who had given him the cigarette case had known she was suffering from a terminal illness. The case's inscription is a quotation from Elizabeth Barrett Browning which is a reminder to Mitch of the girl's love and her death: "And if God choose/ I shall but love thee better-after-death."(Ibid:53)

Perhaps the reason that Blanche and Mitch do not immediately mesh is that there is a lack of violence in the combination. Blanche has correctly analyzed Mitch as being a man of peace, and she hopes that he will provide protection and a shield against the violence which she thinks is pervasive in the world. This supposition ignores, of course, the violence within herself. She says, "I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle-a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in!"(Ibid:118) But Blanche is hunting for protection, and her hunt suggests her own violent nature, which she compares to that of a tarantula.(Ibid) At the point when she meets Mitch, she is aware, as are so many of Williams' wanderers, that her youth and her chances are evaporating, and this adds to her desperation, "I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water-spout, and--I met you."(Ibid) However, it is not peace which Blanche really desires, but the violence which her nature requires. Thus it is Stanley's rape to which she submits, for he knows that her nature combines sex and violence in the same way as his own. When she threatens him with the

broken bottle, it is the gauntlet he needs to show him that their natures are the same. She wants "some rough-house" with her sex and it is Stanley, not Mitch, who recognizes this and agrees to supply it.(Ibid:130)

Blanche's innate perception of the identity of violence or death and sex may be seen even in her final, principally whimsical, fantasizing on her death as a result of eating an unwashed grape. In metaphor she connects her end with her first lover, "And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard--at noon-- in the blaze of summer--and into an ocean as blue as my first lover's eyes!"(Ibid:136)

When Blanche finally does find her asylum, there are certainly a number of clues given by Williams to assume that it is not a quiet place of refuge, but is, rather, destruction. When she sees the gentleman caller who has come for her, we hear the music associated with the suicide of her husband. "The 'Varsouviana' is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle." There are "mysterious voices behind the walls," and "threatening whispers."(Ibid:139) Stella's lament, "Oh God, what have I done to my sister?(Ibid) Suggests that Blanches fate is worse than merely a rest in the country. It also echoes the fate of Williams' own sister, Rose, whose commitment and subsequent less-than-successful lobotomy have never been forgotten. Williams recently termed his own commitment to a mental hospital, "nothing less than an attempt at legal assassination."(Ibid,1959:78)

L. S. Quirino sees Blanche's inevitable end as "annihilation," because of the conflict in which Williams has placed her:

There can be salvation for Blanche neither in the pretentious world of Belle Reve from which she has salvaged only a trunk full of artificial goods and a bead full of nightmares, nor in the sex-glutted death in-life of Elysian Fields, because in Streetcar Named Desire Williams has devised a conflict for her which only annihilation can resolve. As a symbol of the soul pitted against and in thrall to the body which fetters it, her natural state, like the moth's is frustration. (Quirino,1962:67)

The suicide of the moth certainly suggests that Blanche's asylum is the permanent one of the darker and colder regions. Although the focus of this play is clearly Blanche Du Bois, her sister Stella serves as a shadowy parallel in certain vital respects. There are many clues in the play to show us that it is concerned with the paths whose goals are the parallel ends, death and desire, than Blanche arrives; she has come to the Elysian Fields on the streetcar labeled Desire. She is searching for Stella, a star to use as a guide and a "shield against the brutality of existence.'(Williams,1947:10)

D- The Conflict between Flesh and Spirit

If Stella is to be Blanche's guide and shield, then what is her situation and history? She has come from the same upper-class, landowning family of decaying Southern aristocracy as Blanche, but she left sooner, before the times became so hard. Therefore, her departure to marry the landless, peasant, sensually stimulating Stanley Kowalski was a more sudden, jarring alteration in status. She sacrificed herself to the whirling colored lights of Stanley Kowalski bed, but she defends her course of action to Blanche, saying, "There are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark--that sort of make everything else seem--unimportant."(Williams,1947:70)

Thus Stella has sacrificed her higher moral nature and social status, symbolized by Blanche reminds that "Stella" means "star", to the man of the earth Stanley Kowalski, in name symbolically the "primal blacksmith," as one critic has suggested.(Quirino,1949:80) We know that she has arrived at her present situation by the same route that Blanche has just traversed, by the streetcars named "Desire" and "Cemeteries". Her tenure in the Elysian Fields requires her to live again and again her sacrifice to passion and her surrender of her prior elevation, for, as if the inhabitants of the Elysian Fields, "They are the souls whose

destiny it is a second time to live in the flesh and there by the waters of Lethe they drink the draught that sets them free from care and blots out memory."(Quirino:86)

Stella has chosen a prince of the flesh whose first night of marriage epitomized his dark nature, his unconscious blending of sex and violence. He smashed all the light bulbs in their apartment from sheer exuberance before consummating their marriage. We witness his beating and subsequently bedding her in the course of the play, so that we can see that her humiliation is constant. However, she-remains stoic, even in the face of Blanche's somewhat hysterical entreaties to escape. She explains that it is an inner peace, not some Eastern philosophy, which she has adopted. It is an awareness of exactly what she has sacrificed, and consequently exactly what she is with no illusions that give Stella this saintly equanimity. She surrenders herself anew regularly to the dark forces within herself, personified by Stanley. In this surrender, she achieves a satisfaction and a definition, without which she would not be able to exist and would destroy herself, mouth-like, as we see Blanche doing on the altar of her flaming passions.

Williams has himself solved his own conflict by the ritual of the sacrifice of his symbolic surrogates, Blanche and Stella. Thus he has succeeded in sublimating and resolving through these characters his preoccupation with death and sex. He has objectified "my long death wish"(Ibid:78) and shown that violence and desire are linked, that they lead to the same end, which is death. Thus through death, by the complete annihilation of all of his internal conflicts as externalized in these dramatic symbols, renewed life is possible.

2-Death as Freedom from Anxiety in *Summer and Smoke* (1948) and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*(1964)

The Eccentricities of a Nightingale(1964) is a rewriting of *Summer and Smoke*(1949) and it has been published with *Summer and Smoke* in a volume in 1964. Williams says in an introductory note to the volume that he feels it is a "substantially different play from *Summer and Smoke*" and he says that he prefers it because, "it is less conventional and melodramatic." (Williams, 1964) Although it is certainly less melodramatic, its conventionality is most assured, and, in terms of production values, it seems to be a more simple version of *Summer and Smoke* with a smaller cast and less surreal settings. It makes certain sexual involvements more explicit, and replaces the young doctor's mistress with his mother, but the motivations of the central character, Alma Winemiller, are not affected in the revision. Thus, since the changes may be considered peripheral to the primary character and thematic development of the play, it is reasonable to consider Miss Alma in one play as congruent and complementary to Miss Alma in the other version.

The primary effect of the later revision of the play is to place the focus more squarely on Alma Winemiller. Williams perhaps feared that the obvious melodramatic theatrical attraction of the band of drinking, gambling Mexicans known as the Gonzales family might detract the audience's eye from the actions of the spinster heroine. This focus may be seen most obviously in the, title change from the poetic, if vague, *Summer and Smoke* to a direct reference to the nervous young singer, *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. Alma is known, "perhaps sarcastically," as "the Nightingale of the Delta." (Williams: 124).

A- Alma Winemiller: The Artist and the Beat Generation

The first scene in each play displays Alma's singing talent, and it is generally agreed that she has a talent of justified local reputation. It is revealed later that she is the center of a small group

of poets and artistic intellectuals which considers itself a cultural elite in the town of, Glorious Hill, Mississippi. They meet together to read critical essays on the poets, although not all of the members are as intellectually astute as Alma Winemiller. This suggests references to the '**Beat generation**' already detailed in the historical background chapter of this thesis.

Alma's status as a typical Williams artistically inclined heroine is therefore based on more manifest evidence than in some of his other plays. She also has the hypersensitivity in manner, verging on affectation, which we have seen in Blanche Du Bois and will see in others, whose artistry is more manifest in manner than substance. Her hysteria is one of the characteristics which Williams says makes him able to completely identify with Alma.(Williams:77).

Her sensitivity is a characteristic which makes her worthy of extraordinary consideration, according to Dr. John Buchanan, "because you have a lot of feeling in your heart, and that's a rare thing. It makes you too easily hurt."(Williams:178). His feeling toward her is a respect for a sort of "gallantry,"(Ibid:56) which Williams elucidates in a stage direction, "In Alma's voice and manner there is a delicacy and elegance, a kind of 'airiness,' which is really natural to her as it is, in a less marked degree, to many Southern girls....She seems to belong to a more elegant age, such as the Eighteenth Century in France."(Ibid:131) Her unique qualities are apparent even when we see her in the prologue as a child of ten, "She already has the dignity of an adult; there is a quality of extraordinary delicacy and tenderness or spirituality in her, which must set her distinctly apart from other children."(Ibid:197)

Alma's tenderness extends also to her social sensibilities; for instance, she defies popular opinion and takes Nellie Ewell as a singing pupil even though her mother is a woman of notoriously easy virtue. Alma is sympathetic to Nellie's plight because, "I always say that life

is such a mysteriously complicated thing that no one should really presume to judge and condemn the behavior of anyone else!"(Ibid:140)

One reason for her suspension of judgment of others is that Alma does not know herself, and the drama we see unfolding is, in one sense, a story of her self-education. Williams directs that the actress should project this air of inner mystery early in the play, "Alma had an adult quality as a child and now, in her middle twenties, there is something prematurely spinsterish about her. An excessive propriety and self-consciousness is apparent....her true nature is still hidden even from herself."(Ibid:127) A part of this "true nature" is sensed by Dr. John Buchanan when he tells Alma, "Under the surface you have a lot of excitement, a great deal more than any other woman I have met. So much that you have to carry these sleeping pills with you. The question is why?"(Ibid:192).

Alma's father, the Reverend Winemiller, is concerned that her unusual qualities might portend a lifelong reputation as an eccentric, or, worse still, the madness demonstrated by his wife, Almas mother. He points out to her that hysteria was the beginning of her mother's condition, and it is true that we have seen Alma in a causeless panic attack after her performance at the Fourth of July concert (Ibid:128) Alma's explanation of these eccentricities is that she engages in them because of the pressures she had her father are made to suffer by the insane behavior of her mother. She wonders:

These people who call me affected and give these unkind imitations of me- I wonder if they stop to think that I have had certain difficulties and disadvantages to cope with--which may be partly the cause of these peculiarities of mine--which they find so offensive! My father and I have a certain-cross--to bear!"(Ibid:145)

Alma sees the value of the medical profession as being its opportunities to "relieve --human sufferings, of which there is always-so- much!"(Ibid:143)

It is logical to assume that Alma is here thinking of her own suffering both that which is self-induced and that brought about by her mother's madness. Another pressure which she feels

has inhibited her is that of her social position as the minister's daughter, whose conduct must be always above reproach.

When she finally arrives at an awareness of exactly what she wants, she offers her body to John Buchanan at a point when he is unwilling to accept it. She then sacrifices everything which she has, her social standing, her singing career, and her fold on reality by taking pills which make her feel "like a water lily on a Chinese lagoon,"(Ibid:247) and by seducing travelling salesmen beneath the same statue of Eternity under which she played as a child.

The crucial period of her decision to give up all the things for which she has lived in this new promiscuity is her interview with John Buchanan. After he leaves to continue his father's work in the fever clinic, Alma undergoes an extended period of withdrawal from daylight and from her family and acquaintances. When she is in an almost deathlike or invalid state, she makes her decision. It is more of a discovery of exactly what she is and what she wants than a decision. She explains the process in this conversation with John after he has returned:

Alma: And are you happy now, John?

John: I've settled with life on fairly acceptable terms. Isn't that all a reasonable person can ask for?

Alma: He can ask for much more than that. He can ask for the coming true of his most improbable dreams.

John: It's best not to ask for too much.

Alma: I disagree with you. I say, ask for all, but be prepared to get nothing!For a while I thought I was dying, that that was the change that was coming.

John: When did you have that feeling?

Alma: August. September. But now the Gulf wind has blown that feeling away like a cloud of smoke, and I know now I'm not dying, that it isn't going to turn out to be that simple....(Ibid:232-233)

Although she had wanted to die during the agony of the days of harvest, the days of the nurturing of her discovery, the only death open to Alma is a symbolic one. She puts to death her old self, sheds her skin like a serpent, and leaves her new self with a token, a totem in the form of a motto. She tells John Buchanan that the girl who she once was, the girl who was

shocked at the events taking place at the Moon Lake Casino and who spurned his advances there, is now dead, and her death has left Alma single-purposed, no longer the victim of a doppelganger:

But now I have changed my mind, or the girl who said "no," she doesn't exist anymore, she died last summer---suffocated in smoke from something on fire inside her. No, she doesn't live now, but she left me her ring---You see? This one you admired, the topaz ring set in pearls.... And she said to me when she slipped this ring on my finger---"Remember I died empty-handed, and so make sure that your hands have something in them! I said, "But what about pride?"---She said, "Forget about pride whenever it stands between you and what you must have!" And then I said, "But what if he doesn't want me?" I don't know what she said then. I'm not sure whether she said anything or not--- her lips stopped moving---yes, I think she stopped breathing! (He Gently removes her craving hands from his face.) No? (shakes his head in dumb suffering.)

Then the answer is "now"!(Ibid:235)

This is Alma's vision of herself which has brought her to this offering, and it is a vision whose opportunistic romanticizing of the glories of the moment cannot conceal the inevitable sense of loss and death which is innate in such a philosophy.

B- On Passion Doom to Die

In *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, Williams has made John Buchanan less sophisticated and removed his fiancé and his mistress from the play, thus allowing Buchanan to agree to Alma's proposition. Alma's honesty is stressed in this play, and she speaks to John as a man saying she knows that he does not love her. He says that their assignation is an experiment and that it may turn out badly, but in any case, it can be for no more than this one night, New Year's Eve. Alma's comments show that in this play she is even more explicitly aware of the illusion of her commitment:

Alma: I expect a great deal. But for tonight only. Afterwards nothing, nothing! Nothing at all.

John: Afterwards would come quickly in a room that you rent for an hour.

Alma: An hour is the lifetime of some creatures.

John: Generations of some creatures can be fitted into an hour, the sort of creatures I see through my microscope. But you're not one of those creatures. You're a complex being. You have that mysterious something, as thin as smoke, that makes the difference between the human and all other beings! An hour isn't a lifetime for you, Miss Alma.

Alma: Give me the hour, and I'll make a lifetime of it.

John: For you, Miss Alma, the name of the atone angel is barely long enough and nothing less than that could be!(Ibid:94)

Despite this disclaimer, John does take Alma to a nameless hotel in "Tiger Town" (not the Moon Lake Casino of *Summer and Smoke*), and the room is as cold as death. There is a folding screen which John says is "of the sort they put around patients about to expire."(Ibid:97) John attempts to light a fire, and when it fades, Alma starts to throw her "Cavalier's Plume," the symbol of her honesty and the title of this act, into the fire, saying, "The plume will burn! Something has to be sacrificed to a fire."(Ibid:99)

John stops her, and says that not even such a genuine Romantic determination can stir life into a passion doomed to die, "Miss Alma. Miss Alma. The fire has gone out and nothing will revive it. Take my word for it, nothing! It never was much of a fire, it never really got started, and now it's out....Sometimes things say things for people...The fire is out, it's gone out, and you feel how the room is now, it's deathly chill."(Ibid)

Alma accepts John's statement, "How gently a failure can happen! The way that some people die, lightly, unconsciously, losing themselves with their breath..."(Ibid:100) It is her acceptance of this intimacy with death which completely enables her to be free to realize herself in ritual reenactments of this sexual surrender, which is, in a symbolic mode, deadly.

One of Williams' play's critics, Jack Brooking, sees John and Alma pursuing parallel paths of liberation through surrender to the idea of death. Although addressed to *Summer and Smoke*, the observations clearly preserve their validity for both plays:

Alma and John's initial fear of death, subsequent surrender to the idea of death, and final acceptance and release from the terror of death, directly parallel their character change.

In the early scenes, Alma is haunted by the premonition that she will not live through the summer. John hates the medical profession because "a doctor's life is walled in with misery and sickness and death." This death fear contributes to the characters' anxieties, for, "...being which degrades itself, being for death, in the mediocrity of daily life, is a perpetual flight in the face of death."(Brooking: 1948)

Both characters reach a point where they stop running and turn to look death squarely in the face. This occurs for Alma when John leaves town and she becomes strangely ill. She cries out, "I want to die. I want to die." John meets death face to face when he plunges into the fever clinic work which his murdered father left unfinished. According to French philosopher Albert Camus:

This should be the beginning of freedom from anxiety, the beginning of the balanced personality. Likewise, completely turned toward death...[one] feels released from everything outside that passionate attention crystallizing in him. He enjoys a freedom with regard to common rules...death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: That which a heart can experience and live."(Camus,1956:59)

We have seen how Alma realizes her liberation, through the ritually recurrent invocation of the death in sexual passion. John Buchanan's liberation does indeed come when he faces death in the midst of the fever epidemic, for Williams loses interest in him after this, marrying him to Nellie in *Summer and Smoke*, and simply having him move away to the East in *Eccentricities of Nightingale*. But within a certain scope, John Buchanan's dilemma is a similar one to Alma's. Alma sees him in the beginning of the play as being gloriously religious in his pursuit of medical mysteries, "more religious than a priest.(Williams:104) Williams directs that John appears as a hero of suitably elevated stature, a "Promethean figure...The excess of his power has not yet found a channel. If it remains without one, it will burn him up....He has the fresh and shining look of an epic hero."(Ibid:125)

In the original play, Williams graphically presents the results of John Buchanan's "excess of power." He debauches and is debauched, all with a clear knowledge of his state. He contemplates his future as the husband of Rosa Gonzales, the daughter of the owner of the Moon Lake Casino, who has forced him into the engagement because of his gambling debts.

Not long ago, the idea would have disgusted me, but not now. Rosa! Rosa Gonzales! Did anyone ever slide downhill as fast as I have this summer? Ha-ha! Like a greased pig. And yet every evening I put on a clean white suit. I have a dozen. Six in the closet and six in the wash. And there isn't a sign of depravity in my face. And yet all summer I've sat around here like this, remembering last night, anticipating the next one! The trouble with me is, I should have been castrated!"(Ibid:204)

When Papa Gonzales shoots his own father, John makes his decision, and abandons Rosa to plunge into the proximity of death in the fever ridden clinic. He thus makes his own sacrifice, and it is to choose the company of death over the life he has been leading. The fact that he lives through his experiences in the fever epidemics is material in the structure of the play only to Alma, not to him. As has been seen, his life after this experience is one of accommodation and mediocrity. There is little adventure left once one has chosen to look at death face to face. Thus the play and the drama lie finally with Alma Winemiller, not with John Buchanan. In the initial stage directions, Williams stipulates that the 'Statue of Eternity' should be visible in the background of every scene of the play, thus suggesting that one of his purposes in this drama is to show the path of the soul in eternity. There are repeated reminders that "Alma" is the Spanish word for "soul."(Ibid:122) But Alma has more symbolic significance than merely a sort of aimless being in the eternal waste.

Her second name, Winemiller, "connotes a relationship to Dionysus, the patron of wine, in his incarnation of Bacchus. The passage of time in the play is carefully delineated to accentuate the underlying myth of the fertility deity. The play begins in mid-summer, on the Fourth of July holiday. It ends at the end of the year, in the midst of winter. The parallel with

the vegetation deity's flowering, harvesting, and death is this strongly suggested. We see Alma flower at the concert, where she is the star, the "Nightingale of the Delta. Then, ripened, she gives herself up to Doctor John Buchanan, but is refused. Finally, she attempts to renew her life cycle with the warmth purveyed by a travelling salesman, who will harvest the second harvest of her fruition, the first having been rejected.

C- Of the Dionysian Duality and Body/Spirit Quest for Resurrection

There are very evident symbols of religiosity in *Summer and Smoke* and in *The Eccentricities of Nightingale*. Williams takes care to relate that the sky is of great importance and should resemble "religious paintings of the Renaissance" (Author's Production Notes). The presence of the stone angel named "Eternity" is felt throughout the entire play. Then there is Alma herself—the very picture of spirituality. "My name is Alma and Alma is Spanish for soul," she constantly reminds the audience (I, Prologue). Williams describes her as nervous, a girl who has grown up to feel older than she really is. Not quite sure how to talk to people her own age, she comes across as "affected" or arrogant (8). Her attraction to John, the embodiment of the flesh with his "fresh and shining look of an epic hero," is her attempt to reconnect with the world that she has been so cut off from (28). Williams reinforces the earthly qualities of John when Dr. Buchanan, Sr., calls his own son a "drunkard" and a "lecher" (43). The fact that Alma is the daughter of a preacher and John is in the medical profession further separates the two. She ingrains herself to think on spiritual issues, always relating matters of the flesh back to religious experience. John, however, does just the opposite. While this may seem an excellent juxtaposition of the two opposing views, Williams fails to unite the flesh and spirit. He seems to present Alma only as one or the other—the embodiment of only the spirit or—at the end of the play—only the flesh. It is not quite that she views sexual matters as irreligious; it is that she does not wish to view

sexual matters at all. John warns her that there is another person within her; he tells her, “You have a *doppelganger* and the *doppelganger* is badly irritated” (96). Alma, of course, does not understand his connotation, much less what a *doppelganger* is. John exemplifies the exact opposite; he doesn’t care with spirituality, but he only matters of his earthy needs like sex. Even after setting up a date with Alma, he takes Rosa Gonzales “roughly in his arms” by the anatomy chart in his father’s office (114).

The chart is an obvious symbol of John’s physicality, his focus on matters of the flesh. The constant attraction between the two characters never reaches consummation. John teases Alma and leads her on, always hinting that he has cared very much for her but frequently gets distracted by more worldly women, as embodied by Rosa Gonzales. John and Alma’s differences lie in the fact that they are both trying to reach out to each other, to feel some sort of completion from their lonely lives but with unsuccessful attempts. When John tells Alma he is thinking of travelling to South America for a more exciting life, she tells him, “I think you’re confused, just awfully, awfully confused, as confused as I am—but in a different way...” (125). It is the truest line she has in the entire play. Both characters are completely lost; one might say that they deserve each other, need each other even, but they can never quite meet on the same plane. Even after an intimate moment in which they finally kiss, Alma begins to decipher the situation through religious views while John focuses mainly on sex:

John: There’s other things between a man and woman besides respect.

Did you know that, Miss Alma? (128)

Alma: Some people bring just their bodies. But there are some people, there are some women, John—who can bring their hearts to it, also—who can bring their souls to it!

John: Souls again, huh?—those Gothic cathedrals you dream of! Your name is Alma and Alma is Spanish for soul. Some time I’d like to show you a chart of the human anatomy that I have in the office. It shows what our insides are like, and maybe you can show me where the beautiful soul is located on the chart. (145)

They cannot find a common ground between their two worldviews. The date is essentially Alma's sexual awakening. She may run out on John that night when he offers to take her to a hotel room, but the night changes her. She further perpetuates this change when John tells her on the night his father is shot, "I wouldn't have made love to you. Even if you had consented to go upstairs....I'm more afraid of your soul than you're afraid of my body....I wouldn't feel *decent* enough to touch you..." (162). Alma understands that John views her as above him because she is so spiritual. She seeks completion in her life and sees its culmination in the doctor, so she changes her outlook. Her father asks her, "What am I going to tell people who ask about you?," to which she replies: "Tell them I've changed and you're waiting to see in what way" (168). John's outlook changes as well after his father's death. He attributes his change to Alma's influence on his life. Nellie, John's fiancée and Alma's former student, exclaims to Alma, "He told me about the wonderful talks he'd had with you last summer when he was so mixed up and how you inspired him and you more than anyone else was responsible for his pulling himself together"(198). This information causes Alma to visit the doctor. He explains to her, "We seemed to be trying to find something in each other without knowing what it was that we wanted to find" (Ibid). He recognizes the urge to find some sort of redemption with Alma; however, he cannot find it any longer because his attention to her sexual attributes has changed her.

Alma ends the play beside the 'Eternity' statue that Williams insisted to put on stage, carelessly flirting with a travelling salesman as they make their way to the local casino. She is completely transformed to John's original state while he has completely converted to her religious state of mind. There is no in between space for the characters, no common ground. John M. Clum writes in his article **"The Sacrificial Stud and the Fugitive Female in *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *Sweet Bird of Youth*,"** "Her [Alma's]

liberation is her triumph, her cavalier's plume. It is her beloved John, who moves from wildness to conventional marriage, who is crying when we last see him" (34-35).

While Alma may be liberated and John may seem to be caged, they are still so alone. Alma will only descend into John's original emptiness, and John will transcend into Alma's lonely conservative past despite his marriage. It becomes clear that the post war American as depicted in Williams' *Summer and Smoke* remained confused as to quest for rebirth either through religiosity or through sexuality.

3-*The Rose Tattoo*: Translating Sex as a Liberating Force in the 1950s

The Rose Tattoo (1951) celebrates the complete circle of the Dionysian rite. Rosario dell Rose, the dominant figure in the play, follows the cyclical pattern of a god who, after his death, is resurrected in the Mediterranean setting of a Sicilian village near New Orleans. He is the play's initial representation of an archetypal Dionysian spirit. He is strong and handsome and, as depicted by his wife, Serafina, he resembles an eternally youthful god: 'My husband with a body like a young boy and hair on his head as thick and black as mine is and skin on him smooth and sweet as a yellow rose petal.' (Williams, 1976:172)

Serafina sees her sexual union with Rosario like an ecstatic ritual: 'To me the bed was beautiful like a religion... each night for twelve years. Four thousand three hundred and eighty'. (Ibid) Through his mistress, Estelle, we also learn that "this man (Rosario) is wild as a gypsy." (Ibid:150)

Rosario's sexual image is associated with an abundance of floral Dionysian symbols. Rosario dell Rose means "rosary of the roses", there is actually a rose tattooed on his chest while he has become for Serafina 'the rose of her world!' (Ibid). Sir James Frazer writes that the rose is related to the worship of Adonis, the Syrian equivalent of the sacrificial god Dionysus. The 'red rose' is said to owe his hue to this occasion to Aphrodite, hasting her wounded lover. (Frazer, 1957:9-11).

A- The Sacrificial God and the Dionysian Rites

The fruitfulness of Rosa dell Rose's and Rosario's union is marked by an identical rose that Serafina feels appearing on her chest when she conceives. The product of this union is a daughter who is beautiful as a rose and consequently named Rosa dell Rose. In her turn, Estelle, Rosario's mistress, has a rose made on her chest. The act of tattooing, like the rose, was also related to the Dionysian rites. The Maenads who had participated in Orpheus's "sparagmos" were tattooed by their husbands to demonstrate, in this manner, the women's permanent identification with Dionysus.(Frazer:511) There is a similar use of tattoos by the modern maenads of Williams' play, Serafina and Estelle, on whose body the appearance of the rose tattoo signifies their permanent infatuation with Rosario.

The rose itself, as well as the rosy color, are recurrent erotic symbols throughout the play. In the first act, Serafina waits for Rosario's return. She appears with "a rose held in place by glittering hair pins" and "her voluptuous figure is covered in pale rose silk." She holds a paper fan on which a rose is painted. There is wine on the table and a great bowl of roses. This is Serafina's ritual preparation for the coming of her flower-god.

When she is informed that her husband is dead, she plunges herself into a barren winter season that lasts for three years; and , as it happens with Myra-Lady in *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending*, the death of the male Dionysian figure is followed by the end of the spring season and the sterility of the other sex. Then, against the custom of her church, she orders her husband's body to be cremated and the ashes to be placed in a marble vase. From this point on real problems start to arise for Serafina. Her 'mythicization' of the Dionysian spirit in Rosario is not in tune either with the true nature of Dionysian or with her own natural instincts. She sees Rosario as an ideal Dionysian spirit in a monogamous relationship and refuses to take seriously the insinuations of the townspeople about Estelle, his mistress.

At the same time, Serafina tries to confine her own orgiastic impulses by isolating herself from the community and by living like a nun in a cloister. Even before Rosario's death, she had refused to acknowledge any of her libidinous sexuality. When Estelle visits her to order a pink silk shirt for Rosario, Serafina reacts by saying, "I don't know nothing about wild men and wild women".(Williams,1976:150) Appropriately, it is the Strega's goat of which she is most afraid. As the objective correlative of Dionysian lust, the black goat represents Serafina's unconscious desires. (Otto:168-9)

Originally the goat was the embodiment of the god himself; later, when Dionysus tended to become purely god- man, the myth developed to tell that goats were sacrificed to the god because of the injuries that they caused on the vine. Otto reports that in Athens, Dionysus was worshiped as the God

Serafina is alarmed by the sight of the black goat which threatens to attack her vines. It is the "Maloccio", the evil eye that appears to remind her of the wildness of the Dionysian lust, the animal part of the flower-god. When Estelle visits Serafina to order Rosario's silk shirt, she still chooses to ignore her husband's infidelity. The moment, though, that Rosario's mistress pronounces her name, the Strega's goat appears to reveal for the first time in the play the animal aspect of the floral god's nature:

My name is Estelle Hohengarten (A little boy races excitedly into the yard).
The Boy: Rosa, Rosa, the black goat's in your yard!
Rosa (calling): Mama, the goat's in the yard!
Serafina (furiously, forgetting her visitors): Il becco della Strega! – Scusi (she runs out onto the porch). Catch him, catch him before he gets at the vines. (Williams,1967:151)

Whenever an event of "wild nature" takes place, the Strega or her goat are omnipresent, creeping in, listening as it happens, for example, during the arguments of Serafina with her daughter Rose. Serafina springs up and crosses to slam the porch door. Rose runs despairingly around the side of the house and leans exhausted with closed eyes, against the

trunk of a palm tree. The Strega creeps into the yard, listening .Serafina: You see what I got. A wild thing in the house.(Ibid:161)

Rose dell Rose equally shares the floral and the animal traits of Dionysus. She is fresh and innocent, young and lively, “a twig off the old rosebush”; she defies her mother’s moral conventions and tries to pursue her relationship with Jack Hunter, the sailor, in the most human terms possible. Rose’s image is precisely defined by her name; she is “the rose of the roses”.

There are no connotations of Christian Puritanism, as the case with her parents’ names: Sarefina dell Rose is the “seraphim of the roses”, her puritan self always opposing the pagan reality of her natural instincts. Rosario dell Rose is the “rosary” that Serafina tries to idealize before having accepted his Dionysian sexuality and his breaking of the marriage vow.

Later on, in the second act, while Serafina is agonizing to suppress her natural impulses, the Strega and her goat appear again, the constant reminder of her earth-bound sexuality. Serafina tells the priest she will not go into the house because she is unable to breathe under its tin roof:

Serafina: No, I can’t breathe in the house. The house has a tin roof on it and I...

(The Strega has been creeping through the canebrake pretending to search for a chicken.)

Serafina: What’s that? Is that the...? Yes, the Strega! (She picks up a flower pot containing a dead plant and crosses the yard!) Strega! Strega!...Getta hell out of my yard. (the Strega retreats, viciously muttering, back into the canebrake. Serafina makes the protective sign of the horn with her fingers. The goat bleats).(Ibid169)

Rose’s instinctual sexuality makes Serafina feel like Maggie in a *Cat on Hot Tin Roof*. With the sign that she makes, she tries, in vain, to evict the Dionysian spirit that possesses her. (Graves:107) According to Graves, Dionysus was called the ‘Horned Child’ in order to particularize the horns which were the goat’s, the bull’s or the stag’s according to the place of his worship.(Ibid)

Eventually, Serafina's liberation from false idols and convictions is attained with the appearance of Alvaro, the young and virile spirit-god: "he is one of those Mediterranean types that resemble glossy young bulls". (Williams1976:201) From the moment that his voice is being heard, the sound of timpani builds up to a vibrant climax until he approaches Serafina. Alvaro is, indeed, the new Dionysus who is going to revitalize Serafina and drag her out of her long-lasting winter. He is an amalgam of diverse Dionysian symbols. Compared to a bull, one of Dionysus' epiphanies, he also drives, like Rosario, a banana truck, symbol of the Dionysian fertility tree. Serafina immediately recognizes the Rosario-Dionysus element in Alvaro: "My husband's body, with the head of a clown." (Ibid:205)

Alvaro's last name, Mangiacavallo (eat-a-horse), is also very Dionysian; it is a pun on the animal-god Dionysus represented as "eater" of bulls or goats.(Frazer:391-92) The intimacy that grows between Alvaro and Serafina illustrates one of Williams' favorite Dionysian propositions—that physical love is life's supreme gift. During their first courtship scene there occurs the interlude of the goat chase with "a quality of crazed exaltation." At that moment Serafina is at the peak of suffering from denying her human limitation. She imitates the bleating of the goat identifying with the animal-goat in herself:

Alvaro runs out the front door and joins in the chase. The little boy is clapping together a pair of tin pan lids which sound like cymbals. The effect is weird and beautiful with the wild cries of the children and the goat's bleating. Serafina remains anxiously halfway between the shutters and the protecting Madonna. She gives a furious imitation of the bleating goat, contorting her face with loathing. It is the fury of a woman at the desire she suffers.(Williams,1976:217)

This entire scene greatly resembles the grotesqueness of a Dionysian rite; at last the goat is very appropriately captured by Alvaro who is about to release Serafina from the restraints of her sexual taboos. He helps her to confirm Rosario's infidelity, which frees her from her constrictive role as a widow. Serafina's liberation is marked through the ritual of breakage of the marble urn filled with Rosario's ashes. Catholic Puritanism cannot exert anymore

influence on her ,and her so far cherished Madona seems to be “a poor little doll with paint peeling off”. Upon this realization Serafina becomes a “true Maenad;” as Williams puts it in the stage directions:

(She looks about her, seeming to gather a fierce strength in her body. Her voice is hoarse, her body trembling with violence, eyes narrow and flashing, her fists clenched). Now I show you how wild and strong like a man a woman can be.(Ibid:37-38)

Upon hearing the goat bleat again Serafina declares her animal-self in the open: “Sono una bestia, una bestia feroce.”(Ibid:238) The second act concludes with Serafina’s yielding to her private desire as she happily becomes intimate with Alvaro.

B- The Rebirth of the Hero

The final act is the culmination of both Serafina and Rosa’s emancipation. The latter, suitcase, in hand, no longer restrained by her mother, supposedly joins her own lover. As for Serafina, she is ready to accept fully the animal aspect of Alvaro as a reborn Dionysus. This aspect is emphasized in the scene of Alvaro’s spying on the sleeping Rosa. His cries, “Che Bella,” echoed by the antiphonal responses of the goat’s bleating, “Baaa,” reaffirm his libidinous and indiscriminate sexuality.(Ibid:247) However, this time Serafina is very content to accept Alvaro’s predominant animal-self as well as she had received his floral nature, marked with the rose tattoo inflicted on his chest, that he assumed in order to please her.

The play ends with Serafina’s discovery of a rose on her chest, symbol of her restored fertility. The regenerative cycle of the Dionysian spirit is completed in a spectacular rite as the stage directions show it:

The Sicilian women, like true Maenads, toss to each other Rosario’s silk shirt, now Serafina’s gift to Alvaro!With a soft cry, Serafina drops the shirt, which is immediately snatched up by Peppina. At this point the music begins again, with a crash of percussion, and continues to the end of the play. Peppina flourishes the shirt in the air like a banner and tosses it to Giuseppina, who is now on the embankment. Giuseppina tosses it on to

Mariella, and she in her turn to Violette, who is above her, so that the brilliantly colored shirt moves in a zigzag course through the pampas grass to the very top of the embankment, like a streak of flame shooting up a dry drill. The women call out as they pass the shirt along:

Peppina :Guardate questa camicia ! Coloro di rose(...) (Bursts of laughter are mingled with cries of the women. Then they sweep away like a flock of screaming birds...) (Ibid:252)

The tossing of the shirt by the Maenad's dance represents Serafina's acceptance of Dionysism as a communal religion opposed to Apollonian individualism. She relinquishes her exalted social status as "Baronessa" and, a happy, pregnant woman rejoined with her lover she is also united with the community. "In this play, the annual rebirth of the Dionysian spirit is a ritual successfully reenacted in a fully human version."(Thompson,1977:99).

C- *The Rose Tattoo*: "Flower power," and The Pacifist Credo

The flower power," as a pacifist credo was a sentimentalized, Neo-Romantic version of earth cult, which underlay the ancient worship of Dionysus (Paglia,200:56) *The Rose Tattoo* opened in New York in 1951. Williams wrote it as a form of thanks to Italy and Sicily for rejuvenating him. The play transmits the poetic vitality that the author himself had experienced in the warm and bright Mediterranean setting.

The Rose Tattoo is the Dionysian element in human life, its mystery, its beauty, its significance. It is that glittering quicksilver... It is the dissatisfaction with empirical evidence that makes the poet and mystic, for it is the lyric as well as the Bacchantic impulse and although the goat is one of its most immemorial symbols, it must not be confused with mere sexuality. The element is higher and more distilled than that. Its purest form is probably manifested by children and birds in their rhapsodic moments of flight and play, the limitless world of drama. It is the 'rosa mystica' (Williams,1978:55-56)

Williams' lyrical preoccupation with sexuality is obvious in the play. He writes that "the element is higher and more distilled than that". His Dionysian approach views sex as a

liberating force of creation and reproduction “manifested by children and birds.” The “rosa mystica” is not only a symbol of the sexual act but a revelation of the mystery of life. And Williams continues : “ Dionysus ,being mystery , is never seen clearly. He cannot be confined to memory nor was an urn...the blood of the wild young daughter better, as a memorial, than ashes kept in a crematory urn.”(Ibid)

In *The Rose Tattoo* Williams chose the myth of death and rebirth on order to illustrate the fleeting quality of the Dionysian mystery of life. In the preface, *‘The Timeless World of a Play,’* he explains his effort to snatch “the eternal out of the desperately fleeting,” which is “the great magic trick of human existence”. (Williams,1976:131) The use of myth offers the means to capture “a world without time.” The Dionysian myth, in particular, seems more appropriate to suit the image of the common man as hero in modern tragedy. In the preface, Williams also refers to Arthur Miller’s *The Death of a Salesman*. In his plays and essays *‘Tragedy and the Common Man’* and *‘The Nature of Tragedy’* the latter demonstrates the universality of the common twentieth century man .Williams’ protagonists in *The Rose Tattoo* are also simple people, a seamstress, a truck driver, a sailor. Whenever they try to exalt their social status as in the case of Serafina, they are unhappily alienated from their community.

The Dionysian myth and its ritual reenactments represented also for ancient Greece religion of every man, who shared equal joy with the nobility in dance, music, wine, and love. And the tragedy as a genre which sprang from the rites is either “the song of the goat” or “the song of the grain,” concrete symbols of Dionysus ’fertility that ensured the multiplication of animals and the regeneration of plants. In *The Rose Tattoo* the floral and animal reincarnations of the god serve as archetypes of the everyday modern man whose drama faithfully follows the same cyclical pattern of death and rebirth of his ancestral prototypes.

Where *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending* are classified among Williams' "dark plays", *The Rose Tattoo* is written in the form of a 'satyr-play', which together with three tragedies was part of the tetralogy that each playwright had to submit at the festival of the Great Dionysia in classical Greece. The emphasis on the presence of the goat in *The Rose Tattoo* corresponds not only to Dionysus' animal epiphany, but also to the physical appearance of the goat-footed satyrs, who were the god's initial dithyrambic chorus. Moreover, *The Rose Tattoo* has a happy ending that follows the plot structure of the satyr-plays, which always ended with a lover's reunion or a wedding.

However, Williams' joyful moments in Italy do not seem to permeate his other plays the majority of which are 'dark tragedies' *Camino Real* (1953) is one of the few exceptions that, in spite of the tragic mood of the wasted world that it portrays, definitely ends with a personal as well as social rebirth as it will be shown in the discussion that follows. Alluding to the root meaning of the word tragedy as "Goat Song," Williams suggests the presence of the Dionysian in the play through the image of a wild goat breaking into the yard of Serafina's home immediately after she seems to rule out the presence of exaltation in her life. At the end of the play, Williams celebrates his heroine's return to life. Indeed, in his essay on the play, Williams connects the heroine's sudden rebirth not only with Dionysus, but with the creative process itself: "I prefer a play to be not a noose but a net with fairly wide meshes, so many of its instants of revelation are wayward flashes, not part of the plan of an author, but accidentally struck off, and perhaps these are closest to being a true celebration of the inebriate god" (Williams, 1978: 57).

D- Love and Spiritual Rebirth

Ernest Hemingway reminds the reader in *A Farewell to Arms*, love can be a religion (263). *The Rose Tattoo* is the story of an Italian widow finding a new love. On the surface,

this play simply amuses, showing the descent and then reawakening of a woman completely enamored of her cheating husband. Serafina delle Rose believes that her life is complete before the death of her husband. She is intensely religious one might say superstitious and is proud of her sexual experiences with Rosario, saying, "Each time is the first time with him. Time doesn't pass..." (95). The death of her husband shatters her confidence. The sad truth reveals that Serafina was never complete; her husband openly had an affair with a blackjack dealer at a casino. His death brings her to a broken state, completely lost without

her physical equivalent of love. To compensate for the loss of her sexual life, Serafina reaches her spirituality. Even this connection is not fully truthful, however. Serafina's religion relies on ruins and artifacts. She has her husband's body cremated against the will of the church so that she can keep him near as a sort of shrine. She constantly bows beneath a statue of the Virgin Mary, keeping a light lit at all times and asking for a "sign." Her religion is not one of spiritual fulfillment but rather that of physicality. Serafina's relationship with her daughter suffers severely after the death of Rosario. Rosa experiences the grief of her mother in extreme circumstances. Serafina hides her daughter's clothing so that Rosa cannot go to her own graduation and even forces Rosa's boyfriend to kneel before the Mary statue and make a vow of chastity. Leland Starnes writes in "*The Grotesque Children of The Rose Tattoo*" that Serafina's passionate condemnation of her daughter's passion for the young sailor is in ironic and laughable contrast to her own concern with sexuality. We soon realize, of course, that this comes about because of the fact that in her own world of intense sexuality she is led to see the same exaggeration in her daughter's world. So Serafina forces the young man to pledge chastity while kneeling before the shrine of the Virgin, a shrine which she herself has dedicated to sexual love.(103)

Serafina does not find her salvation within these empty symbols, however, or in her daughter. In fact, most of the play she is completely unconscious to her daughter's actual virtue. Starnes writes that Serafina experiences a "spiritual rebirth" at the end of the play when she rediscovers a sense of love with Alvaro (105), but one must wonder if she regards this "love" as spiritual at all. She runs to Alvaro because of his resemblance to her dead husband. She does not adore his personality, constantly calling him a "clown." She succumbs to him once her daughter has left her, possibly for good, but one has a sense that this new relationship cannot last. It is built upon the past, no matter that Serafina has ruined the vase which held Rosario's ashes. The remains may have been scattered by the wind, but she still holds them, no matter how Williams tries to assert that the past has gone. In any case, if she does truly love Alvaro, it is not a spiritual fulfillment. She rejects all spirituality and clings to her flesh, forsaking the Virgin Mary statue for good. For all her hopes, this will not create in her a sense of completion. She celebrates her rebirth at the end of the play, giving in to her sexual desires. From the above, it is clear that Williams was not only conversant with the specific components (unities of time and place, catharsis, etc.) of Greek mythology and therefore classical tragedy, but that he intended to apply them quite consciously to his own creative process.

Chapter Five: Myth, Psychoanalysis and the ‘Universal Human Consciousness’

Introduction: This chapter of our thesis explores the psycho-mythical dimension of selected plays by Tennessee Williams. It investigates Williams’ influence and celebration of Carl Gustav Jung’s ‘universal human consciousness’

1- *Camino Real*(1953): The Romantic Nonconformist in Modern Society: America as a ‘Waste Land’

Camino Real is Williams’ most elaborate play. Its mythic structure is that of a dream- vision, an old device linked with the development of ritual drama; both are composed largely of a series of archetypal dream images.(Frye:154-59) In the forward , Williams says that “we all have in our conscious and unconscious minds a great vocabulary of images”, and that “all human communication is based on these images as our dreams”. (Williams,1970:viii) In nature, the process of movement is death and rebirth, which finds its mythic adaptation in the “sparagmos” and resurrection of the “dying god.” Parallel to nature’s cyclical process is the imaginative cycle of dreaming and waking life.

A- Don Quixote’s Pageant Dream

Camino Real is Don Quixote’s dream which unfolds in the sixteen Blocks of the play: 'And my dream will be a pageant, a masque in which old meanings will be remembered and possibly new ones discovered'(Ibid:7)

“Camino Real,” the “royal way” or the “real way” is the setting where the action of the pageant takes place. It is by no means a linear way. The wall against which Don Quixote dreams is “the end of the Camino Real and the beginning of Camino Real”. (Ibid:5) This road

motif is a fitting environment for the cyclical nature of the Dionysian rites of passage , the fertility celebration , and the sacrificial death.

The plaza of the Camino Real is located on an unspecified seaport which could be “Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca, Shangai, New Orleans;”(Ibid:1) It is surrounded by ‘Terra Incognita’, a vast wasteland guarded by two sinister porters (armed and uniformed guards). The dry fountain in the center of the stage reinforces the sterility of the landscape.

This strange setting is inhabited by a series of archetypes rather than idiosyncratic individuals. Their names, --Camilla, Casanova, Lord Byron - do not simply denote specific historical and literary personages. They have become symbols. Many others, less famous, also live a hopeless existence among “ ‘mendicants, prostitutes, thieves and petty vendors in a bazaar where the human heart is part of the bargain’. (Ibid:22)

Jacques Casanova and Marguerite Gautier appear from the two first blocks of the play. They are a pitiful couple. In their middle years, they have lost their past glamour as a once-splendid lover and a once- legendary courtesan in Alexandre Dumas’s *La Dame aux Camélias*. Kilroy, the Camino’s principal Dionysian figure, appears at the end of the second Block:

He is a young American vagrant about twenty seven. He wears dungarees and a skivy shirt, the pants faded nearly white from long wear and much washing , fitting him as closely as the clothes of sculpture. He has a pair of golden boxing gloves slung about his neck and he carries a small duffle bag. His belt is ruby-and-emerald- studded with the word **CHAMP** in bold letters.(Ibid:24)

His name, except for the legendary World War II character, demotes the “killing of the god-king” during the fertility rites. The metamorphoses of kilroy (scapegoat-ritual lover, dying and reborn hero) proceed by phases and correspond to the typical stages involved in a rite of passage.

B- Kilroy as the God of Anarchy

Kilroy's wild innocence becomes an easy target for the cruelty on Camino Real. He is robbed, beaten by the police, and forced to wear a Patsy's outfit: a rag wig, a bulbous nose that can be lighted, and a big footprint on the seat of his pants. Kilroy is degraded because he is a stranger who refuses to give into the nightmare forces of the Camino: "You have a spark of anarchy in your spirit and that's not to be tolerated. Nothing wild or honest is tolerated around here: It has to be extinguished"(Ibid:57)

Like Dionysus, Kilroy has something "wild" and "honest" about him. But in Camino Real, the revolutionary spirit is oppressed and the word "hermano" is banned: "The most dangerous word in any human tongue is the word for brother. It's inflammatory".(Ibid:21)

In Greek mythology, Dionysus was a stranger from Asia Minor who came to Greece to establish himself in the dodecatheon, he was considered to be a god of "anarchy" kilroyeece to unite the individuals under a religion befitting human nature. Prior to him, derived from the same spirit, is deprived of every right to breath freely in the world of Camino Real:

Have you arrived at a point of the Camino Real where the walls converge in front of your nose? Does further progress seem impossible to you? Are you afraid of anything at all? Do you wish that things could be straight and simple again as they were in your childhood? Would you like to go back to Kinder Garten?(Ibid:28)

The way to rebirth, the return to childhood, can be found only through the sacrificial rites. Kilroy's phase as a 'scapegoat' is the first step toward his rebirth. Kilroy had arrived as an "ex-champ" in Camino Real. In the ancient world, it was not unusual that the winners at the games became kings. The sacrifice of the "dying king", identified with the god, was also a common ritual securing the fertility of the land restoration of order respectively in the rural and urban worlds. Kilroy loses his paraphernalia (golden gloves, bejeweled belt) during each state of the initiation. As for his fasting and abstinence, these also marked stages of the

initiation. By means of those stages, the candidate evacuated his former selfhood, preparatory to merging in the corporate personality of the group.

The fertility rite takes place in the eleventh Block; the first event is the Coronation of Casanova as the King of Cuckolds. The mythic meaning of the crown of horns is very old .It represents fertility; the Satyrs and Silenoi had natural horns while the Maenads wore crowns of horns during the festivities; Dionysus himself was known as the “horned-child”. The Fiesta that follows is a sort of “serio-comic, grotesque-lyric rite of fertility with roots in various pagan cultures.”(Ibid:103) Kilroy is going to be seduced by Esmeralda. She is the daughter of a gypsy and the sister of the Hunchback, all literary escapees from Victor Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris*. Gypsy’s magic has a ritual significance as she is the medieval offspring of the ancient rites. The Hunchback resembles the ugly goat-footed followers of Dionysus; and Esmeralda herself is the priestess of Dionysus whose virginity is restored with every full moon. Her name means “fruitful”. The moon, incarnated by Semele (moon), Dionysus’s mother, is the age-old emblem of cyclic time; its purity can never be permanent. Thus the two primary facets of the mother cult, fertility and renewal, unite in the figure of Esmeralda. When the moon is in its plenitude, Esmeralda returns to her pristine state and chooses a hero so that the cycle can start again:

Esmeralda: Yankee!

He : (Kilroy) has no sooner entered the plaza than the riotous women strip off everything but the dungarees and skivvy which he first appeared in.(Ibid:104)

The female celebrants have become Maenads who strip the Dionysian figure of his scape-goat attire. Kilroy’s transfiguration is complete. He is no longer a Patsy but the Chosen Hero: ‘Kilroy surrounded by cheering Street people goes into a triumphant eccentric dance, which reviews his history as fighter, traveler and lover’. (Ibid:106).To herald Kilroy’s renewal, Esmeralda tosses a bunch of red roses to him – a symbol of fertility and eternally resurrected

life. It is an act similar to the women's tossing Rosario's pink shirt in the last scene of *The Rose Tattoo*.

C- The Hero as "Kill-roi".or the "Dying king"

In the twelfth and sixteenth Blocks, kilroy assumes the characteristics of the "kill-roi". In mythology, the "dying king", "the king who must be killed," was supposed to be of unknown origin (kilroy's parents are both unknown), young and beautiful, beloved by a goddess and victim of an untimely death. In *Camino Real*, kilroy is the beloved of Esmeralda who appears in the twelfth Block with a pair of emerald snakes coiled over her breasts (symbols of the reincarnation of the dead). Otto reports that snakes were also symbol of fertility. Esmeralda affirms also verbally the cyclical nature of the rites on the Camino, which, as Gypsy has said, "is a funny paper read backward.(Ibid:106) She points out that every fiesta is the first one and that she never remembers what has happened before the moonrise makes her a virgin. Kilroy, in his turn , speaking of his "real true woman" who resembles Jeans Harlow, envisions a new woman springing from the sprinkled ashes of the Hollywoodian archetype. His vision is similar to the actual scattering of Rosario's ashes by Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo*, an act that confirmed Alvaro's acceptance as the new born god succeeding Rosario. Thus, in accordance with established custom, kilroy yields to sacrifice in the sixteenth Block. Prior to it, he experiences "loneliness," which is the victim's final stage before his "sparagmos". By the end of the block, kilroy is ready, and as the gong sounds he swings towards the Street cleaners:

"They circle about him out of reach, turning him by each of their movements. The swings brows wilder like a boxer. He falls to his knees still swinging and finally collapses flat on his face".(Ibid:145)

Kilroy's death follows a double scene in the fifteenth Block. La Madrecita holds the body of kilroy across her knees while the medical students perform a postmortem on "an identified

vagrant". The Pieta image of the Christian art has probably, as an archetype, the mourning goddess with her dying lover-son in her arms .(Frazer:345) La Madrecita evokes kilroy's heroic past:

You should have seen the lovely monogrammed robe in which he strode the aisles of the coliseums'!

At the same time the Medical Instructor confirms that "there are no marks of violence" and "there is no external evidence of disease."(Williams,1953:148-49)

Those remarks are important because "freedom from deformity" was necessary for the divine Kingship of the victim. The custom was also that the public pretends complete ignorance of the ritual murder. As the Instructor says, "his death was apparently due to natural causes."(Ibid:14)

The actual dismemberment which follows death was a necessary part of all fertility sacrifices. The course of the traditional Orphic hero is likewise a journey of sixteen stages – the last of which, depicted on the Sacramental Orphic bowl, shows the rebirth of the hero into a realm of light."(Turner,1985:250)

At the end of the Block, La Madrecita effects kolroy's resurrection with a touch of flowers.

La Madrecita: Rise, ghost! Go! Go bird! Humankind cannot bear very much reality.

(At the touch of her flowers, kilroy stirs and pushes himself up slowly from her lap.)(Williams,1953:150)

In this way, kilroy, like the new god who died annually in the rotation of seasons, is restored from the land of the dead by the mother figure. By doing so, Madrecita brings about the revival of life in nature and in mankind.

Kilroy's revival follows a dream-like experience. He grabs his golden heart from the medics and a chase commences, "a dream-like reenactment of the chase that took place at the end of the sixth Block"(Ibid:152)The processes of birth and dreaming are psychologically similar; bound up with both is kilroy's sense of loss in a new environment:

Gee, I'm lost! I don't know where I am! I'm all turned around, I'm confused, I don't understand – what's happened, it's like a dream, it's – just like a dream.(Ibid)

Kilroy thinks that he has found his true woman in Esmeralda, but he is soon disillusioned and rejected ; for every year there is a new Chosen Hero, and she never recalls the past.

Here the dream myth ends – with the awakening of Don Quixote and the flowing of the fountain that has until now been dry. The rebirth of the hero has resulted in both the revival of life in nature and the renaissance of society. Don Quixote's words and actions bring an optimistic note. He always moves on—this time taking kilroy in the place of Sancho – philosophizing that he wounds of the vanity, the many offenses our egos have to endure, being housed in bodies that age and hearts that grow tired, are better accepted with a tolerant smile.(Ibid:5)

Having fulfilled the regenerative cycle, kilroy can move forward with Don Quixote. And the play closes on a strongly optimistic scene: Marguerite's kindness reunites her with Casanova before Don Quixote delivers the final symbolic line: The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks.(Frazer:389).

D- Lord Byron: A Williamsian Archetype of the Artist in Decline

Along with kilroy there has been another figure fighting against the destructive world of the Camino. Lord Byron, appears as a Williamsian archetype that is an artist in decline. Byron wants to escape the “passion of declivity in this world” and make a departure from his present self to what he used to be.(Williams:73) He envisions the poet's vocation as influencing people's heart not through the violence of “sparagmos” but in a “gentler fashion”. An artist ought to purify the heart and lift it above its ordinary level so that it can translate “noise into music, chaos into order.”(Ibid:77) This vocation has been obscured by worldliness:

Little by little it was lost among gondolas and palazzo! – masked balls, glittering salons, (...) baroque façades, canopies and carpets, candelabra and gold plate among snowy damask (...) all these provided agreeable distractions from the rather frightening solitude of a poet. (...) And lately I've found myself listening to hired musicians behind a row of artificial palm trees of the pure-stringed instrument of my heart(Ibid:78)

Byron's idea of salvation, his "way out," is sailing to Athens. The ancient glory of the Acropolis is the symbol of purity in art and, "if not purity, at least its recollection." (Ibid:52) On the other hand, the Greek War of Independence in 1821 represents for the poet the struggle for material as well as transcendental freedom:

Gutman: .. I guess you're sailing to Athens? There's another war there and like all wars since beginning of time it can be interpreted as struggle for what?

Byron: -- For freedom! You laugh at it , but it still means something to me!

Gutman: of course it does! I'm laughing a bit, I'm beaming with admiration(Ibid:59)

Carrying his luggage of caged birds, Byron crosses toward the steep Alleyway out. Marguerite whispers, "Maybe he knows a way that we haven't found out." (Ibid) In fact, Byron, has followed the artist's way which is different from that of nature (fountain, violets) or society (Marguerite and Casanova) in the sense that it does not follow a cyclical pattern. Byron does not await kilroy's death in order to be saved. He escapes the cyclical time of the Camino by plunging into the transcendent, eternally sacred time of the artist. Byron, like kilroy, Marguerite and Casanova is another romantic hero rewarded by the playwright within the frame of the optimism of the Camino Real.

Williams claimed that *Camino Real* was his favorite play. It was for him a picture of the state of the romantic nonconformist in modern society. It stresses honor and man's own sense of inner dignity which the Bohemian must re-achieve after each period of degradation he is bound to run into. The romantic should have the spirit of anarchy and not let the world drag

him down to its level. Don Quixote is the supreme example of the obstinate knight, gallant and unashamed at being the victim of his own romantic follies.”(Williams,1955:4)

The play presents the victory of the romantic spirit through time as transmitted from Quixote to the European romantics and finally to the modern American so-romantic. In one of the last speeches in the play, Esmeralda embraces the romantic spirit in *Camino Real*:

God bless all con men and hustlers and pitch men who hawk their hearts on the street, all time losers who’ve likely to lose once, the courtesan who made the mistake of love, the greatest of lovers crowned with the longest horns, the poet who wandered far from his heart’s green country and possibly will and possibly won’t be able to find his way back , look down with a smile tonight on the last cavaliers ,the ones with the rusty armor and soiled white plumes, and visit with understanding and something that’s almost tender those fading legends that come and go in this plaza like songs not clearly remembered , oh, sometime and somewhere let there be something to mean the word honor again.(Ibid:89)

However, the honorable revolt of the play’s romantics seems to be more existential than realistic. As for the aim of the revolt, it is achieved in its very act. The existentialism of Williams’ aesthetic rebellion against realism is part of his personal beliefs as an artist.

Camino Real, as a spectacle, undoubtedly makes a definite break with the realist tradition. It has been described by critics as “anti-drama,” “anti –theatre” and “grotesque mime”. Eric Bentley describes the form of the play as magic theatre, drama which seeks to be more than theatre.”(Bently,1975) Williams realizes his vision through the objective language of symbols. The entire play is articulated in the synthetic language of the plastic theatre, which is gesture, sound, music, dance, light, and color. In the preface to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Williams thinks of writing as something more organic than words, something closer to being and action. He continues: “I want to work more and more with a more plastic theatre than the one I have worked with before.”(Williams,1953:viii)

E- Williams, Artaud and Ritual Theatre

Camino Real, both thematically analyzed and technically examined, agrees with the Artaudian concept of drama. Artaud argues that the theatre should be a reflection of magic and rites: “ C’est l’objet de la magie et des rites dont le théâtre n’est qu’un reflet.” (Artaud:63) The interplay of illusion and reality, the dream motif, the erotic obsession, and the ritual violence in *Camino Real* are all applicable to Artaud’s description of “technique” in *le Théâtre de la cruauté*

Le théâtre ne pourra redevenir lui-même, c’est-à-dire constituer un moyen d’illusion vraie, qu’en fournissant au spectateur des précipités véridique de rêves, ou son gout du crime, ses obsessions érotiques, sa sauvagerie, ses chimères, son sens utopique de la vie et des choses, son cannibalisme même ; illusoire, mais intérieur.(Ibid :66)

As in Artaud’s theater, *Camino Real* is a “retour aux vieux Mythes primitives” that Williams applied, in the Artaudian manner, not only to the content but to the staging and the different theatrical devices: the sounds, the music contribute to a “shocking effect,” in order to attain “catharsis” through violence and cruelty. As for the costumes, they also have for Williams, as for Artaud, a “destination rituelle.”(Ibid)*Camino Real* is less to be exhilarating in its form and color motion. Williams said that of all the plays he has written:

This one was meant most for the vulgarity of performance... The color, the grace and the levitation, the structural pattern in motion, the quick interplay of live beings, suspended like fitful lighting in a cloud, these things are the play, not words on paper, nor thoughts and ideas of an author...(Williams,1965:viii)

Elia Kazan was attracted to the play for its freedom and mobility of form: The continuous flowing of the action relates to the theme of fleeting existence which is more intensified with the ever-present bird imagery. As the curtain rises, the audience sees a phoenix softly lighted now and then in the play “since resurrections are so much part of its meaning.”(Kazan,1965) The significance of the recurrent caged-bird image is made more explicit in Madrecita’s

song: "All of us have a desperate bird in our hearts, a memory of – some distant mother – with wings..." (Williams:84)

Williams attempts to bring into focus new implications affecting the present condition of man. He interprets the contemporary epoch as a time of acute crisis. *Camino Real* is a mythic projection of a moment of decision which engages man-kind in the mid-twentieth century.

The ultimate question of being and action is not twentieth century novelty. Williams, with his literary archetypes, demonstrates how it has puzzled almost every era in Modern Western History. Gutman, who functions like a chorus-voice in a modern tragedy, comments on the universality of man's existential problem: 'it is like the fall of capital city, the destruction of Carthage, the sack of Rome ... when I observe this change, I say to myself: could it happen to me? The answer is yes'. (Ibid:152)

Gypsy's loudspeaker expresses the anxiety and the fear of every man:

Are you perplexed by something? Are you tired out and confused ?

Do you have a fever?

Do you feel yourself to be spiritually unprepared for the age of exploding atoms? Do you distrust the newspapers? Are you suspicious of governments?

(Ibid:185)

The threat of an atomic war, the class struggle, the suppressed revolution, and the distrust in the press are recurrent themes in *Camino Real*. The play chronicles the material destruction and the psychological ordeal that they cause in the common man of the twentieth century.

However, *Camino Real* is not one of Williams' dark plays. The "rise of the phoenix," kilroy's resurrection in the sixteenth Block, presents a possibility of hope for the common man, who is not able to escape through the artist's way like Lord Byron in the eighth Block.

Nevertheless, *Camino Real* is a significant example of Williams' synthetic myth and developing form. Many of its essential characteristics have reappeared since 1953 in the drama of other playwrights in American and continental theater, especially in the works of Samuel Becket, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, and Edward Albee.

Williams has sought in the setting of the play to suggest deliberately an ethos allowing him to freely exercise his own notions of the symbols underlying his philosophy of life. He states this in his foreword to the play, "It is nothing more nor less than my conception of the time and world that I live in, and its people are mostly archetypes. Of certain basic attitudes and qualities with those mutations that would occur if they had continued along the road to this hypothetical terminal point in it."(Williams,1953:viii)

Northrop Frye has described the vocabulary of romantic symbolism in a passage from *Fables of Identity* which is strongly suggestive of many of the symbolic structures assembled by Williams in *Camino Real*:

The language of early romantic symbolism is a Kantian language, by which I do not mean that it is founded on Kant, but that it implies a popularized metaphysic with predominantly Kantian features. The romantic poet splits reality into a world of experience and a world of perception, the former world; Kant's noumenon, being interpreted by poetry and the latter or phenomenal world being the only object of rational knowledge. The gap between rational and poetic knowledge accounts for the importance of suggestion and evocation in romantic art, and for the distrust of didactic qualities. For the poet as well as the reasoner, however, nature is the vehicle of interpretation, hence nature to the poet is, as in Baudelaire's 'Correspondances,' a shrine of mysterious oracles; and in the darkness of the nominal world, where there must yet be direct contact with nature, we depend less on the expanded pupils of vision than on the twitching whiskers of feeling.(Frye,1958:227)

Williams has used just this sort of romantic vocabulary in an attempt to unite the worlds of being and feeling, of the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. It is a play which proclaims itself the dream of an archetypal literary romantic, Don Quixote. Williams uses symbols which are evocative, even oracular at times and often imbued with romantic agony. He places himself in Frye's second category of romantic artists with his introductory statement that, "We all have in our conscious and unconscious minds a great vocabulary of images, and I think all human communication is based on these images as are our dreams; and

a symbol in a play has only one legitimate purpose which is to say a thing more directly and simply and beautifully that it could be said in words."(Williams,1957:322)

Of course the symbols within this common vocabulary of images, which Williams says that we all have in our unconscious minds, consist of the archetypal images discussed at length in Section I of this work. In fact, Jung numbers three basic archetypes and closely derived images of all of these three archetypes are present in *Camino Real*.

F- Williams, Jung and the 'Shadow'

Jung speaks of "the shadow"; Williams gives us a mysterious unscheduled airplane, The Fugitive, which no one can comprehend or predict. Jung postulates a life-force which he calls "the Anima." Williams gives us Esmeralda, the Gypsy's daughter, whose ever-renewed virginity and ever-new ingenuousness incorporate the life-spirit. Jung's third universal archetype is "the wise old man."(Ibid,1953:x) Williams sets the entire play as a dream of Don Quixote, and casts an aged Don Juan as one of the characters in the dream.

Jung has suggested the wind as an archetypal symbol of the spirit of life,(Jung,1950:301) and Williams' first stage directions emphasize the importance of this symbol: "As the curtain rises, on an almost lightless stage, there is a loud singing of wind, accompanied by distant, measured reverberations like pounding surf or distant shellfire."(Williams,1953:1-2) The wind then is introducing the dawn which brings life to the plaza, life of a peculiar sort, as we shall see, but nonetheless life.

Details throughout the initial description of the set show that Williams has attempted to imbue the setting itself with enough visual impact of make a symbolic statement with the set alone, before a word is spoken.

Above the ancient walls that backs the set and the perimeter of mountains visible above the wall, are flickers of a white radiance as though daybreak were a white bird caught in a net and struggling to rise. The plaza is seen fitfully by this light. It belongs to a tropical seaport that bears a confusing,

but somehow harmonious, resemblance to such widely scattered ports as Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca, Shanghai, New Orleans....Upstairs [in the Siete Mares hotel] is a small balcony and behind it a large window exposing a wall on which is hung a phoenix painted on silk: this should be softly lighted now and then in the play, since resurrections are so much a part of its meaning....Upstage is a great flight of stairs that mount the ancient wall to a sort of archway that leads out Into "Terra Incognita," as it is called In the play, a wasteland between the Walled town and the distant perimeter of the snow-topped mountains....immediately after the curtain rises a shaft of blue light is thrown down a central aisle of the theater.(Ibid)

In the center of the plaza is a fountain beside which Don Quixote will sleep and dream the play. Throughout his sleep and his dream, the fountain is dry, and the townspeople mourn this drought. When Don Quixote arises at the end of the drama, the fountain sprouts again and the villagers are joyous. Jung has spoken of water in a pool as the secret of life and living, the "maker of fear" in myths and dreams, and also as the most common symbol for the unconscious mind itself.(Jung,1950:301) Thus Williams has used this element of the setting to reinforce on several levels the structure of the play. The play is a dream, a collection of symbols from the unconscious, but it is also an attempt to unravel the often frightening secret of life itself.

Not only is the setting an embodiment of the romantic's world, but the philosophy of the play as embodied in its primary advocate, Kilroy, is of a piece with Robert Burstein's suggested declaration of his "messianic drama":

The significant thing about messianic drama is not so much its philosophical content as its posture of revolt, its restless search for coherence in a world of abandoned gods.

The messianic play, in short, is a dramatization of the Romantic quest for faith; as such, it is the most personal mode in the theatre of revolt, and functions as the dramatist's religious testament. This is flat to say the material is autobiographical (though it sometimes is), but rather that the messianic dramatist always has strong affinities with his protagonist (Burstein,1965:21-22)

Williams, while less articulate than Brustein, clearly senses in his foreword to *Camino Real* that this was indeed a personal dramatization of the Romantic quest for faith, "It is almost as if you were frantically constructing another world while the world that you live in dissolves beneath your feet, and that your survival depends on completing this construction at least one second before the old habitation collapses."(Williams,1953:viii) He also emphasizes that the setting of the play is unlocalized, "A convention of the play is existence outside of time in a place of no specific locality."(Ibid) Williams also admits that many of the members of the initial audiences have been so disturbed as to leave the theater and to his as the play progresses, suggesting that *Camino Real* is indeed, in Brustein's term, "almost unstageable." The sixteen blocks on the Camino Real of which the play is made are the "short, episodic scenes" of the messianic drama. It should be remembered that his fragmentation of the play was a part of its original design, even when it was a one-act play in 1948 called *Ten Blocks on the Camino Real*.

The dark reflections from Dante's *Inferno* are appropriate when we examine *Camino Real*. Williams himself points this out when he prefaces the play with the first line from Canto I. It is in the middle of Kilroy's life that he arrives in this strange locality that is no locality. His career as a boxer has been ended because of his enlarged heart. With Williams' obvious fondness for puns, this affliction is meant to display Kilroy's generosity; in fact, since the big heart is a fatal flaw, Kilroy is generous to a fault. The heart is "as big as the head of a baby," suggesting Kilroy's innocence and purity. As Kilroy enters, the populace has just been agitated by the pronouncements of a character known only as "a dreamer." His most disturbing announcement consisted of the single word "brotherhood." Guttmann, the representative of the authority of the Establishment, is very disturbed by the utterance of this threatening word in public, because the people do not know how to handle such ideas. He orders a carnival as a diversion for the people of the plaza. The dreamer dies, and Kilroy

arrives, discovering an inscription on a wall, "Kilroy is coming." He crosses out the word "coming" and substitutes it by "here."(Ibid:24)

It is thus that Williams introduces his savior, his embodiment of brotherhood, who has been preached about and whose coming was predicted. But Gutman's first words both acknowledge Kilroy's mythic quality (by calling him "eternal") and ridicule it, "Ho ho! A clown! The Eternal Punchinello That's exactly what's needed in a time of crisis!"(Ibid)

Kilroy has given up all his vices because of his enlarged heart. His generosity has gone beyond the usual as shown by his leaving his wife rather than asking her to live without sexual satisfaction. He left the ship on which he had been sailing because "I was burning up with Christ knows how much fever."(Ibid:25) He is unable to discover the name of the town, and has his pocket picked. To emphasize his Christian charity, Williams then has Kilroy scatter his remaining coins to the poor.

Although he is willing to pawn his champion slip belt, which is studded with rubies and emeralds, he absolutely refuses to pawn his golden gloves. Kilroy thus does not have a greedy soul, but is determined to hold on to the symbol of his triumph in conflict. The symbol is more valuable to him (and, curiously, to the pawnbroker) than the belt of considerable monetary worth. This is a world of symbols, and so, when Kilroy is finally forced to pawn his golden gloves, the money attained thereby is used to finance his final search for faith, his interview with the gypsy's daughter.

One of Kilroy's first acquaintances in his search is the Baron de Charlus, an aging homosexual followed into the square by a beautiful young man named Lobo. The Baron is a sketch of another romantic searcher, one who has committed himself to a search outside the bounds of polite behavior. He searches for relief by submitting to physical tortures, one of the symbols of the romantic agony predicted by Frye. He is seeking "atonement," in his own word, for his sins. He speaks to Kilroy and explains that, "Nothing in this community does

much good," and continues with a self-directed irony, serious questions are referred to the Gypsy: "Once upon a time. Oh, once upon a time I used to wonder. Now I simply wander. I stroll about the fountain and hope to be followed. Some people call it corruption. I call it simplification..."(Ibid:39)

The Baron de Charlus is a prototype of other characters of both or indeterminate sexes who may be seen in many inter plays of Tennessee Williams. The type is a searcher whose youthful romanticism has faded, and for whom only the ironies of existentialism interrupt their occasionally found refuges of physical ecstasy. Burstein describes the type vividly as the archetype of the existential dramatist, "To the nothingness of life, he responds with the dry mock, even though this irony is sometimes expended on himself."(Burstein:31)

The Baron develops the imagery of birds further in the play by describing the night life of the town as being conducted in a chain of bars and clubs known as the "Bird Circuit." We have already been told by Don Quixote's map that "there are no birds in the country except wild birds that are tamed and kept in cages."(Williams:5) The dawn light on the stage is described as "a white bird caught in a net and struggling to rise."(Ibid:1) The phoenix in a window of the hotel sums up the ornithological references and also forecasts Kilroy's death and subsequent resurrection.

The Baron himself, however, explains that he no longer frequents the "Bird Circuit," but rather finds resort in the "Bucket of Blood," located below the "Ritz Men Only" flop house. Immediately after telling Kilroy that his eyes indicate that his soul is "too gentle for someone who has as much as I have to atone for,"(Williams:40) the Baron de Charles achieves his final atonement in death. He walks through the archway leading to the "Terra Incognita," an action which is symbolic suicide, since no one has ever been known to have survived in that vast desert. There is no doubt about his fate; his corpse is carried offstage in the Trashmen's barrel, a barrel which haunts all the residents of the plaza.

The next step in the pilgrim's education is his conversation with Jacques Casanova, who is travelling a path with many similarities to Kilroy's, as the following colloquy illustrates:

Jacques: ...And romance is important. Don't you think?

Kilroy: nobody thinks romance is more important than me:

Jacques: except possibly me:

Kilroy: maybe that's why fate has brought us together: we're buddies under the skin:

Jacques: travelers born?

Kilroy: Always looking for something:

Jacques: satisfied by nothing!

Kilroy: hopeful?

Jacques: always! (Ibid:43-44)

Although they are in many ways parallel victims, Casanova is participating in a different mode of sacrifice, a mode in which he and Marguerite Gautier escape reality and live in a world of drug supplemented illusion. At this point, his function in the play is merely to point out to Kilroy another feature of the landscape. It is what the travel brochures might call a "magnificent arch of triumph," and is the most notable exit to the plaza. Of course, "the way out" leads to death, to the vast waste called "terra incognita?" from which none ever return. But going through the arch is a heroic decision, the ultimate sacrifice. Casanova asks Kilroy if he would like to go through the arch. Kilroy says that he is not yet ready. Later in the play, Lord Byron deliberately will enter the arch, clearly cutting himself off from the living. At that time again, Kilroy's courage will fail again to take him through the arch, for his fate does not belong to the path of the bold faultless adventurer. He is a modern romantic hero, a hero with a flaw as big as the head of a baby.

There is no physical exit from the plaza, except the archway into the desert. All the other exits are dead ends. The one mode of transport, for those with the money and proper papers, is a mysterious nonscheduled airplane known as "The Fugitive." Although it lands and picks up passengers in one scene of the play, we find out later that it has crashed, thus killing all those who had thought that they had found a way out of the dead end of the Camino Real.

Therefore, it is properly there in the plaza that kilroy acts the climax of his role. Gutman has assigned him the role of "patsy" and given him an electric nose to blink on off, but it is a different role which leads to the culmination of the play and of kilroy's life. As the fiesta begins, kilroy has thrown off his fright wig and flashing nose; he pawns his golden gloves. He has suggested to Jacques Casanova that they should then go through the archway together; Casanova refuses because he cannot leave marguerite Gautier, his lover, behind. Kilroy resolutely mounts the stairs to the arch, but is stopped by the enticing cries of the gypsy's daughter, whose virginity the moon will restore that night. He decides to return.

This action takes place in the midst of the Carnival, which Williams says should suggest "a sort of grotesque-lyric 'Rites of Fertility' with roots in various cultures."(Ibid:103) When kilroy has turned from the fateful archway to rejoin the Fiesta, he further emphasizes the ritualistic nature of the occasion by going "into a triumphant eccentric dance which reviews his history as fighter, traveler and lover"(Ibid:106).

Kilroy then has an interview with the Gypsy, to which consultation the Chosen Hero is entitled. This scene is an instance of Williams' talent for bitter comedy. The Gypsy tells kilroy, "you got nothing to lose that won't be lost,"(Ibid:111) and, "the Camino real is a funny paper read backwards."(Ibid:114). This statement suggests that on the Camino Real, the Gypsy knows real the resolution to their dilemma before they realize the full extent of their problem, and thus forecasts the coming doom of kilroy. Her forecasts become less cryptic. She tells him his luck has run out, he does not have the choice of staying or leaving town, and after he has picked, a card, the ace of spades of course, that the street cleaners have his name at the top of their list and are waiting for him outside the door of her shop. The only good news she has to offer is that love is in store for him, in the person of her daughter, Esmeralda. Of course kilroy has announced early in the drama that it would be fatal for him to engage in sexual activity. So the destruction of Esmeralda's newly minted virginity is an act of suicide

for kilroy. He knows the streetcleaners are waiting. He engages in the fatal act of love. The Gypsy's daughter's virginity can only be proved by its destruction. Kilroy's being the ultimate champ can only be proved by his destruction. Thus the familiar Williams' theme of the unity of procreation and death is again manifest.

Just as he willingly fulfills the duties of the Chosen Hero, Kilroy refuses sanctuary with Jacques Casanova in the Ritz-Men only. He is on his feet when the Street cleaners come, and he is fully aware of his condition and the consequence of his action, "Finished! That ain't a word a man can't look at. There ain't no words in the language a man can't look at and know just what they mean. And be. And act. And go! (He turns to the waiting Street cleaners.) Come on! Come on! COME ON, YOU SONS OF BITCHES! KILROY IS HERE! HE'S READY!"(Ibid:146-147)

Kilroy's valiant death is rewarded. The Chosen Hero, "the only one who was really sincere" does not fall into the hands of the Street cleaners. Although his mortal body is theirs to cart away and dissect, his spirit is resurrected.(Ibid:150-151)

La Madrecita has a paean to the departed hero which emphasizes his stature, his fame, and his real flaw:

Everyone must see clearly!...He had clear eyes and the body of a champion boxer....He had the soft voice of the South and a pair of golden gloves....Yes, blow wind where night thins! He had so many admirers! He stood as a planet among the moons of their longing, haughty with youth, a champion of the prize-ring!...You should have seen the lovely monogrammed robe in which he strode the aisles of the Colosseums!...Yes, blow wind where night thins for laurel is not everlasting....This was thy son, and now mine....Keen for him, all maimed creatures, deformed and mutilated his homeless ghost is your own!....Rise, ghost! Go! Go bird! Humankind cannot bear very much reality!(Ibid:148-149)

Kilroy therefore is a proper modern romantic hero, who is disillusioned at the ephemeral nature of fame and of love. He has fought the good fight, and his heart is big d pure gold. He

is generous and a searcher for love. His search yields only death, and, in the comic epilogue, baptism of his spirit by the contents of a slop jar.

But the final victory of his sacrifice is dramatically symbolized by the coming to life of fountain, and by the announcement of the awakened Don Quixote "The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks!"(Ibid:161) Kilroy's sacrifice has finally been truly that of a messiah for the Street People, whose fountain flows once more, for Jacques Casanova and Marguerite Gautier, whose love renews itself, and perhaps even for the Don, who awakes Kilroy's baptism.

garden which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. The colours of this jungle garden are violent, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain.

There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature.(Williams,1959:29)

In short, Williams presents us with the primeval chaos, bloody, unformed, and violently the nest of life and death.

2- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955): The Death of the Aging Father-God King

Published in 1955, the play centers around Brick Pollitt an aging athlete, a possible heir to a rich Delta plantation, the reluctant husband of Maggie the Cat, and the son of Big Daddy Pollitt. His response to the pressures of each of these situations is to withdraw from reality via alcohol. It is Brick's series of conflicts which is the center of the play, despite the popular journalists' concern with Maggie the Cat. Brick is the protagonist to Maggie's antagonist, but that conflict is not the central one of the play. The primary agon lies between Brick and Big Daddy Pollitt, and it is within this father-son axis that the deep mythic undertones may be

seen to give the play its power. Williams uses the familiar device of the epigraph to suggest that the focus of the play will be the dying of the father:

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray,
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light!(Williams,1955:iii)

Williams' mother, Edwina Dakin Williams, has discussed the terrible fear of death which haunted Cornelius Williams, his father.(Edwina Williams:85). Williams himself seems also to have reflected this paternal obsession, as has often been remarked by many of his friends and acquaintances.(Maxwell,1958:52) Thus when Williams draws a dying father in this drama, he is writing from a biographical and a personal intimacy which gives the character enormous internal import for Williams himself.

If it is true, as one of Williams' critics has suggested, that *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is based on Williams' relationship with his father,(Steen,1969:210) then the confrontation scene between Brick and Big Daddy is indeed the center of the drama. Big Daddy has been seen throughout the first act as lord of his Delta kingdom. Everyone views him with fear, with awe, even though he may be deathly ill. Everyone feels awe for Big Daddy except Brick, who, as his oldest son, would ritually be the rival of the father. Big Daddy seems to be the invincible king who has never feared anything, but he explains to Brick, that he has been afraid, even terrified, of the possibility of his own mortality:

The human animal is a beast that dies and if he's got money he buys and buys and buys and I think the reason he buys everything he can buy is that in the back of his mind he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life everlasting!--Which it can never be... Have you ever been scared? I mean have you ever felt downright terror of something?... Brick... Son, I thought I had it! Cancer!... I thought the old man made out of bones had laid his cold and heavy hand on my shoulder!

Brick: Well, Big Daddy, you kept a tight mouth about it.

Big Daddy: A pig squeals. A man keeps a tight mouth about it, in spite of a man not having a pig's advantage.

Brick: What advantage is that?

Big Daddy: Ignorance-- of mortality --is a comfort. A man don't have that comfort, he's the only living thing that conceives of death, that knows what it is. The others go without knowing which is the way that anything living - should go, go without knowing, without any knowledge of it, and yet a pig squeals, but a man sometimes, he can keep a tight mouth about it.(Williams,1955:66-67)

A- Big Daddy as the King Aging

Big Daddy is established as the king aging, fearing the mortality which his sickness signifies. As we have seen in the mythic outlines, the father figure, or the aging tribal head who sees the weakening of his powers is obligated for the welfare of the family to abdicate his position through the ritual of suicide, or, more recently, through the selection of his oldest son as a surrogate. This man-to-man conflict is not merely one of the younger generation versus the older. Frazer has recounted the numerous Phrygian, Grecian, and other variations of the Attis myth wherein the oldest son may be condemned by the father to serve as a surrogate sacrifice for the father.(Frazer,1900:126)

There are several reasons for which a god-man might be forced to put himself to death. One obvious cause might be an infraction of the religious or social rules of a society. As Sir James George Frazer said, "But while in the case of ordinary men the observance of the rules (of a social system) is left to the choice of the individual, in the case of the god-man it is enforced under penalty of dismissal from his high station, or even of death." (Frazer,1969:306)As we find the impulses of the human mind become more violent as we approach the unconscious more closely, the violence in the myth becomes more pronounced as the myth becomes more primitive. The modern example of a governmental official forced to resign for failure to observe the rules of his social system is a shadow far removed from the violent death awaiting the primitive leader of a tribe upon his failure to conduct himself as his office required.

Another and far more basic motive for the death of a king as the embodiment of divine authority, however, is the salvation of his people. This motivation suggests a far more psychological identification with the collective unconscious life wish of the tribe. "We must not forget that, as the case of the Shilluk kings clearly shows, the king is slain in his character of a god or a demigod, his death and resurrection, as the only means of perpetuating the divine life unimpaired, being deemed necessary for the salvation of his people and his word." (Ibid:329) Thus this ceremony assures the existence of the system of divinities which is the keystone of the primitive civilization. Thus the sacrificial victim dies so that the men of the tribe might live on and worship the new incarnations of their god.

These ceremonies of perpetuation of the divinity via a periodic sacrifice of his human representative are not limited in geographic or cultural scope. Indeed, Frazer has found them in both Italy and Mexico:

Readers of the first edition may remember that I explained the priest of Aricia- the King of the Wood- as an embodiment of a tree spirit, and inferred from a variety of considerations that at an earlier period one of these priests had probably been slain every year in his character of an incarnate deity. it is practically certain that in ancient Italy itself a human representative of Saturn-the old god of the seed-was put to death every year at his festival of the Saturnalia, and that though in Rome itself the custom had probably fallen into disuse before the classical era, it still lingered on in remote places down at least to the fourth century after Christ. (Frazer,1900:xiv)

As this passage suggests, the particular divinity involved in this sacrificial rite was generally an agricultural god, especially a god of grain.

The specific deities with whom Frazer suggests this ritual is most intimately linked are Adonis, Attis, and Dionysus. These names are only the most familiar names for grain spirits, many of whose names have been forgotten, but whose myths and the rituals celebrating them have many points of similarity. Their rites emphasized the essential demand that in order to

live, the god must die. The agricultural origin of this identity is obvious. In order to have seed for the next season, the grain must be harvested or killed this season. In dying and being eaten, the grain gives life to those who harvest or kill it, as well as renewing its own life in the seed left over for the following cycle.

Thus in William's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, death hangs over both the father and the great son. When Big Daddy announces that he believes himself to be cured of all but a spastic colon, the threat to Brick as the oldest son still remains. However, as shall be seen, Brick has already voluntarily committed himself to the role of sacrificial victim. Williams has also provided that Big Daddy's sacrifice is suicidal in a symbolic sense; he is careful to explain that the illness which afflicts Big Daddy is causing uremia, a death by poisons generated by the body itself.(Williams,1955:113)

Brick is intentionally established as the apotheosis of "Truth" in order that his sacrifice and fall may allow Williams to make a dramatic statement of sufficient tragic structure. Williams concludes his introduction, "Person-To-Person," with a provocative quotation of the Emily Dickinson poem, "*I died for beauty, but was scarce*."(Williams,1955:x) This poem describes the close relationship of one person who died for beauty and was shortly followed by one who died for truth; their conversation links their fates just as the causes of their deaths are the same. If Skipper, Brick's dead friend, did indeed take his life for love of Brick, then the presence of the poem suggests that Brick's position as the follower of truth will be one which will entail a similar fatal sacrifice.

B- Brick Pollit: The Son as a Noble Tragic Hero

In order to represent such a noble figure as the embodiment of "Truth," of course, Brick must be elevated above the norm as a tragic hero. Reinforcing this intention, we are told Brick has never lied to Big Daddy, unlike everyone else in the play, including Maggie.(Ibid:82)

Williams describes Brick in a stage direction as he speaks the hard words of the truth of Big Daddy's condition as "a broken, 'tragically elegant,' figure telling simply as much as he knows of 'the Truth.'"(Ibid:90).

Brick has been an extraordinary sports hero, starring not only in college football, but actually founding his own professional football team. Thus his career had followed the ascendant on a material plane until the crisis with his friend and teammate Skipper. Maggie sums up the prior public and her present personal opinion of Brick, when she exclaims, in addressing him "Your--superior creature!--you godlike being!"(Ibid:43)

Maggie's comment is particularly relevant in the light of the stage directions Williams gives regarding her presence, which is clearly meant to suggest that of an acolyte to Brick's divinity, "She has the vocal tricks of a priest delivering a liturgical chant, the lines are almost sung..."(Ibid:15) Indeed, Williams has described the set in terms which might suggest a surrealistic vision of a cathedral, or at least which direct the attention to the cosmic significance of the action on the stage, "The set should be far less realistic than I have so far implied in this description of it. I think the walls below the ceiling should dissolve mysteriously into air; the set should be roofed by the sky..."(Ibid:xiv)

Within a veritable cathedral of lying, Brick is doomed to be a sacrificial saint of the truth; his mode of sacrifice is that of escape from the reality of the philosophy of mendacity via the drug of alcohol. As he explains to Big Daddy, "Mendacity is a system that we live in. Liquor is one way out and death's the other."(Ibid:94) His friend Skipper chose death; Brick has selected liquor as his exit from reality.

The name of the whiskey Brick uses as a panacea, as a tool to take him away to the quiet place where nothing else matters, is "Echo Spring," itself a mythological allusion to the water nymph who pursued Narcissus. This use of water imagery to indicate an escape into dreams of the past is consistent with the frequent references we have seen in previous plays to Moon

Lake, which occupied a similar symbolic position in *Orpheus Descending*, *Summer and Smoke* and *Battle of Angels*.

His Echo Spring allows Brick to reach a place of religiously serene withdrawal from the harsh realities,

This click in my head that makes me peaceful. I got to drink till I get it. It's just a mechanical thing, something like a--.... switch clicking off in my head, turning the hot light off and the cool night on and-- all of a sudden there's peace!(Ibid:73)

Jung has suggested that the recurrent images of Spring in literature suggest a "sacrifice of power as previously exercised."(Jung:412) Brick's overindulgence in his Echo Spring may thus logically be interpreted as the sacrifice of all the powers, hereditary, physical, and sexual, which he had possessed. As we first see him he has, under the influence of alcohol, crippled himself physically by attempting to jump the hurdles on a track. He has abandoned his sexual potency as a consequence of his drinking; that is one reason why Maggie is a cat on a hot tin roof. His role as Big Daddy's favorite son and heir is also in question, because of Brick's surrender to the debilitating influence of Echo Spring.

At the climax of his flight from reality, Brick begs to be sent to "Rainbow Rill," an asylum for alcoholics, whose name suggests a withdrawal from the realm of the living.(Williams:127) We have seen Brick from his entrance as one who is resigned, distant from reality. Williams says of him, "He has the additional charm of that cool air of detachment that people have who have given up the struggle."(Williams,1955:17) Indeed there are strong suggestions that the fate which Brick has chosen is symbolic death. At one point, he explains that his goal is the silence which is heard in the grave.(Ibid:67) He explains to Big Daddy that it is the close resemblance of his condition to death which allows him the luxury of honesty:

"I'm sorry, Big Daddy. My head don't work anymore and it's hard for me to understand how anybody could care if he lived or died or was dying or cared about anything but whether or not there was liquor left in the bottle and so I said what I said without thinking. In some ways I'm no better than

the others, in some ways worse because I'm less alive. Maybe it's being alive that makes them lie, and being almost not alive makes me sort of accidentally truthful."(Ibid:94)

Even Maggie sees death as the sole solution to the problem of corruption from life in the world. She explains to Brick that it was the only solution to the relationship of Brick and Skipper, a relationship which she saw as extraordinary, "You two had something that had to be kept on ice, yes, incorruptible, yes!--and death was the only icebox where you could keep it."(Ibid:44)

Brick's sacrifice is carried out with full awareness of its logical outcome; he knows that death is its analogue, and he is well aware of the impotent powerlessness of the role he assumes.(Ibid:74)

The reasons for the sacrifice of Brick Pollitt are the ancient ones associated with the myth of the aging king. He has been the lionized sports hero, the Narcissus pursued by the wood nymph Echo's incarnation, Maggie the Cat. Maggie asserts that both she And Brick "are goin' deer-hunting' on Moon Lake as soon as the season starts,"(Ibid,29) thus claiming her right to pursue her narcissus through the mists of memory in the hope that his attention might again stray outside himself.

However, it is time, not Maggie the Cat, which has caught up with the hero. It is time which has so slowed his reflexes that he cannot leap the hurdles on the track and thus breaks his leg. He says to Big Daddy, when he is asked about his faded sports career, "Time Just outran me, Big Daddy--got there first."(Ibid:84) Brick even explains that it is the elapsed time which has taken away his youth which has driven him to the withdrawal of bourbon. Big Daddy says, "You say that you drink to kill your disgust with lying.... Is liquor the only thing that'll kill this disgust?" Brick replies, "Now. Yes... But not when I was still young an' believing. A drinking man's someone who wants to forget he isn't still young an' believing."(Ibid:83)

Brick explains that his desire to extend his football career was Gray a desire to keep throwing "those long, long!--high, high!--passes that--couldn't be intercepted except by time." (Ibid:90)

But just as time inevitably slowed and intercepted the passes, time has also brought Brick to the central scene of the drama, and of his life, his confrontation with Big Daddy.

The audience has been prepared for the discussion of Brick's relationship with Skipper by Maggie's description of it when she explains her perceptions of the circumstances. Maggie has always seen the relationship as being supra-human, partaking of what she sees as Brick's divine nature:

It was one of those beautiful, ideal things they tell about in the Greek legends, it couldn't be anything else, you being you, end that's what made it so sad, that's what made it so awful, because it was love that never could be carried through to anything satisfying or even talked about plainly. . . . Brick, I do understand all about it! I--I Think it was--noble!" (Ibid:43-44)

Maggie continues saying that if there were any impulses toward impurity on Skipper's part, they must have been "unconscious" ones. It was, however, Maggie who brought the light of truth to Skipper by attempting to sleep with him one night when Brick had been hospitalized. Maggie acknowledges that her administration of the truth resulted in the immediate disintegration of Skipper, but she still sees hers as a mission of mercy, which released Skipper both from life and from the web of ignorance which he had himself woven, "I destroyed him, by telling him truth that he and his world which he was born and raised in, yours and his world, had told him could not be told? --From then on Skipper was nothing at all but a receptacle for liquor and drugs....--who shot cock-robin? I with my--merciful arrow!" (Ibid:45)

When Brick and Big Daddy meet to talk over the two modes of death each is entertaining, Big Daddy answers Brick's revelation of his true condition with a statement of affection which introduces his concert for Brick's condition. Big Daddy says, 'YOU I do like for some reason, did always have some kind of real feeling for--affection--respect--yes, always. You and being

a success as a planter is all I ever had any devotion to in my whole life!--and that's the truth."(Ibid:81) Brick and Big Daddy are standing in the bedroom of the two previous owners of the plantation, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, the two homosexuals who had been so in love that when one died, the other refused to eat until he also perished.

Brick draws Big Daddy's attention to the central victim in the play, Skipper, whom he sees as having been sacrificed immediately by Maggie, but ultimately by the complex system of mores and moralities which are the reality he rejects by his drinking.

She took this time to work on poor dumb Skipper. He was a less than average student at Ole Miss, you know that, don't you?-- Poured in his mind the dirty, false idea that what we were, him and me, was a frustrated case of that ole pair of sisters that lived in this room, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello!--He, poor Skipper, went to bed with Maggie to prove it wasn't true, and when it didn't work out, he thought it was true!--Skipper broke in two like a rotten stick--nobody ever turned so fast to a lush--or died of it so quick.(Ibid:91)

Big Daddy responds to Brick's attempt to place the blame for Skipper's death on Maggie with a valid bit of psychoanalysis, when he explains that it is not Maggie's fault, nor the fault of a mendacious system of things, but Brick's fault for his failure, for once, to deal with the truth in a straightforward manner. When Skipper had called Brick and drunkenly professed the nature of his affection for Brick, Brick could not cope with the truth, and therefore had concealed the telephone call. Big Daddy says that it is Brick who has killed Skipper by failing to face Skipper's truth with him:

Anyhow now!--we have tracked down the lie with which you're disgusted and which you are drinking to kill your disgust with, Brick. You been passing the buck. This disgust with mendacity is disgust with yourself. You!--dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it!--before you'd face truth with him!(Ibid:92)

Williams speaks of his conversation with Big Daddy as a "virtual vivisection" for Brick.(Ibid:124) It certainly does seem to preclude the possible optimism of the still

ambiguous "Elia Kazan dictated" ending of the Broadway production of the play. Williams did write the alternate ending, but it was under his persistent protest that it violated the spirit of the play itself, whose original ending offers a much more consistent and more pessimistic vision of Brick's situation. Williams, in his "Note of Explanation" for the Broadway version's third act, explains, "I felt that the moral paralysis of Brick was a root thing in his tragedy, and to show a dramatic progression would obscure that meaning of that tragedy in him and because I don't believe that a conversation, however, revelatory, ever effects so immediate a change in the heart or even conduct of a person in Brick's state of spiritual disrepair.(Ibid:125) Thus although in the Broadway third act Brick is more optimistically reborn in the final scene with Maggie, where she says that she will "hand your life back to you," the original intent of the playwright seems to be best observed in his own final act.

In that original version, the mendacity of Maggie's annunciation is much more pronounced and not contradicted. As the curtain falls, Brick withdraws, following his "click" into his alcoholic fog. Big Daddy is in his final dying spasms, and Brick's curtain line is identical to the words Big Daddy responded to Big Mams when she declared her love for him, "Wouldn't it be funny if that was true?" Thus Brick is finally seen as an extension of Big Daddy, and it would be illogical to expect that his fate might be any better. His relationship with Maggie is now based on the line of her annunciation. The bed in which Maggie sleeps is the same one in which the two homosexual previous owners of the plantation slept. Thus Brick's withdrawal from reality seems to be intended by Williams to be a permanent one, not redeemed by any sentimental possibilities.

Brick Pollitt is the god crushed by age and by his own violation of his basic principle. He has defined himself as the disciple of "Truth," and his life at this point is built upon a tissue of lies which have been made clear to him. Thus his sole solution is the solace of withdrawal into the

sacrifice of his masculinity, his patrimony, his definition as the Apollonian representative of "Truth," and, eventually his life.

3-The Poet as a Scapegoat God in *Suddenly Last Summer*(1958)

In the Summer and fall of 1958, the anxieties and oppressions that had plagued Tennessee Williams for a lifetime became stifling and unbearable. He turned to psychoanalysis for help, but his writing never ceased to be his major outlet. *Suddenly Last Summer* was written amidst a "mental sparagmos"; as the playwright has since stated, 'it was a kind of personal "catharsis," a final fling at violence'.

The universe of the play is presented on three organic levels: the plant world, the animal world, and the human world. These levels were explored by Williams in his previous plays. *The Rose Tattoo*, for example, manifested the same organic totality formed by the rose, the black goat, and the human element in the play. But what makes *Suddenly Last Summer* unique among Williams' plays is the clear and direct presentation of these levels.

A- Sebastian Venable as a Bohemian Poet: Tribute to Ginsberg and the Beat

The play is an account of the life and death of a young poet, the spectacularly decadent Sebastian. Sebastian is a true Dionysian figure. *Suddenly last Summer* may be read as a tribute Allen Ginsberg, whose poem '*The Howl*' (1956) stands as one of the best known examples of *Beat literature*. Our supposition is made on the ground of the striking similarities between Beat poet Ginsberg and Williams' bohemian hero Sebastian Venable. Among these similarities are the two's drug addiction, their profanation of religious conventions and their homosexuality. The dilemma of the three artists namely Ginsberg, Williams and his creation Sebastian resides in their being artists in a conformist world in

which their art goes counter to cultural and religious norms. Jung explains the dilemma of the artist who sees himself caught between chaos and creation, between madness and art:

The "mystery" he [the artist] beholds represents the stock of primordial images which everybody brings with him as his human birthright, the sum total of inborn forms peculiar to the instincts. I have called this 'potential' psyche the collective unconscious. If this layer is activated by the regressive libido, there is a possibility of life being renewed, and also of its being destroyed. Regression carried to its logical conclusion means a linking back with the world of natural instincts, which in its formal or ideal aspect is a kind of *prima materia*. If this *prima materia* can be assimilated by the conscious mind it will bring about a reactivation and reorganization of its contents. But if the conscious mind proves incapable of assimilating the new contents pouring in from the unconscious, then a dangerous situation arises in which they keep their original, chaotic, and archaic form and consequently disrupt the unity of consciousness. The resultant mental disturbance is therefore advisedly called schizophrenia, since it is a madness due to the splitting of the mind. (Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 408)

Suddenly last Summer presents a case study of an artist's disturbance between chaos and order, madness and sanity. In the play, the main character Sebastian and his mother had a special relationship. Mrs. Venable describes herself and her son as a famous couple who were distinguished by the grandeur of their appearance. "People didn't speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said, "Sebastian and Violet are staying at the Lido, they're at the Ritz in Madrid." (Williams: 98)

Their attitude to life, Mrs. Venable continues, resembled the legend of "the great Renaissance Princes" and they constructed each day of their life "like a gallery of sculpture." (Williams, 1958: 05)

Sebastian is a poet whose life cannot be separated from his work. His poetry had become a ritual. After a nine-month gestation, he delivered a single poem annually for twenty-five summers. The appearance of Sebastian's creation every summer corresponds to the annual rebirth of the "dying Dionysus" and the fertility ritual that symbolized, in Greek mythology, the annual rotation of the seasons. The whole play is a tribute to American poet Hart Crane

too. St. Sebastian was a Roman martyr traditionally considered Diocletian's lover; in the poem Williams refers to him as "the emperor's concubine." After his conversion to Christianity, St. Sebastian was delivered to be pierced with arrows by archers. He survived this death and continued to plead the cause of Christianity. He is also the popular saint of women. He was credited with the cessation of the plague in 680 A.D and a powerful cult spread rapidly under his name.

One summer, however, Sebastian does not write his annual poem. At the age of forty, the time has come for him to participate in the annual ritual by not offering his usual sacrifice of the intellect (a poem), but a corporeal one, a sacrifice of his very own body. The account of Sebastian's "sparagmos" is given by his cousin, Catharine Holly. It occurred during the summer that Sebastian took Catharine along, since Violet was physically unable to accompany her son. The latter acted as his mother had done in the previous years – as a procuress that attracted young boys in order for Sebastian to satisfy his sexual desires. But at Cabeza de Lobo things turned out to be very different than in the past years. One day that "was one of those white blazing days, "Sebastian ate lunch at one of the open-air restaurants: he was "white as the weather"; he was dressed in a "spotless white silk Shantung shirt and a white silk tie and a white panama and white shoes, white-white lizard skin-pants!"(Williams,1958:39)

Sebastian, like the sacrificial victims, is dressed in white sacrificial garments, the color of purity that symbolizes chastity before the final stage of the sacrifice. He is soon surrounded by his executioners, "a band of frightfully thin dark naked children that looked like a flock of plucked birds, who as if blown there by the wind, the hot white wind from the sea were crying out pan, pan, pan."(Ibid 54) The children are beaten away by the waiters, but they soon return to serenade Sebastian on percussion instruments. They use primitive drum and cymbals, instruments principally related to the rituals of Dionysus. In a setting reminiscent of

a burning sacrifice, everything looked “as if a huge white bone has caught on fire in the sky and blazed so bright it was white and turned the sky and everything under the sky white with it.(Ibid)

Sebastian is very soon pursued up the steep white streets by the band of naked children. He screams when they overtake him. When the waiters, police, and others arrive at last, they find a mutilated corpse. Catherine describes the scene:

When we got back to where my cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little black sparrows, he—was lying naked as they had been naked against a white wall, and this you won’t believe (...) they had devoured parts of him. Torn or cut parts of him away with their hands or knives or maybe those jagged tin cans they made music with, they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouth of theirs. There wasn’t a sound any more, there was nothing to see but Sabastian, what was left of him, that looked like a big white-paper-wrapped bunch of red roses had been torn, thrown, crushed-against that blazing white wall...(Ibid:96)

B- The Ritual Sacrifice of the Savage God

The ritualistic, sacrificial “sparagmos” of Sebastian is the climax of the play. Every word and symbol throughout the play builds towards this climax of anthropomorphic “sparagmos”. Williams does not, however, wish solely to present a human image, but a universe of three organic levels. Sebastian’s Sparagmos has already been linked in the play to the other two three organic levels corresponds to their natural order of appearance on earth .The play opens with Sebastian’s garden:

A fantastic garden, which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. The colors of this jungle-garden are violet, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree flowers that suggest organs of a body; torn out, still glistening with undried blood;there are harsh cries and sibilant hissing and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature...(Ibid:115).

One of the rarest plants in the garden is the Venus flytrap—which Ms. Venable points out to the Doctor.

Sebastian's obsession with carnivorous "sparagmos" in the plant world continued on the Galapagos Islands, where he witnessed a terrible "sparagmos" on the second organic level, the animal world. Sebastian remained off-shore in a four-mastered boat and watched the spectacle of the giant sea turtles crawling out of the sea to play their eggs on the beach:

Once a year the female of the sea-turtle crawls up out of the equatorial sea onto the blazing sand beach of a volcanic island to dig a pit in the sand and deposit her eggs there ... She never sees her offspring but we did. ... Terrible Encantadas, those heaps of extinct volcanoes, in time to witness the hatching of the sea-turtles and their desperate flight to sea ! (...)The narrow beach, the color of caviar, was all in motion! But the sky was in motion too (...) Full of flesh-eating birds and the noise of the birds, the horrible savage cries of the (...) they were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles turning them over to expose their soft under-sides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh. (Ibid)

The annual "sparagmos" of the tortoises makes Sebastian realize a higher truth which Ms. Venable calls "God," while the Doctor defines it as "a spectacle equated with a good deal of experience , existence! – but not with God!"(Ibid:122)

The account of Sebastian's "sparagmos" related by Catherine in the final scene, presents the third organic level, the human world. Williams links this third level to the image of the "sparagmos" on the Encantadas by likening Sebastian's executioners to rapacious, carnivorous birds in the white hot sky: "Sebastian started to run and they all screamed at once and seemed to fly in the air." (Ibid)

Sebastian's "sparagmos" explores the implication of voraciousness inherent in mankind. Throughout the play, Ms. Venable is trying to convince the Doctor to perform a lobotomy, a "mental sparagmos", on Catherine so that she will stop describing the terrible events on the Encantadas. If he refuses, she threatens to ruin his career, in which case, the Doctor will also be subject to a material "sparagmos" imposed by Ms. Venable. On the other hand, Violet

Venable views her role and Sebastian's as Catherine's benefactors as equal to that of a sacrificial victim:

The role of the benefactors is worse than thankless, it's the role of a victim, Doctor, a sacrificial victim, yes, they want your blood, Doctor, they want your blood on the altar steps of their outrages, outrageous ego.(Ibid:128)

Consequently, in Ms. Venable's opinion, Catherine destroys his image with her testimony about Sebastian's death and, in so doing, performs a metaphoric "sparagmos" on his immaculate memory. But it is not only Ms. Venable who enacts the theme of voraciousness of mankind. The Hollies, Catherine's fatuous mother and her weak brother, try to manipulate Catherine so that they can obtain the money left to them in Sebastian's will. As for Sebastian himself, he appears in Catherine's description to have been a voracious being that lived off others, his mother and all those with whom he came into contact: 'That's how he talked about people, as if they were items on a menu. "That one's delicious-looking, that one is appetizing" or "that one is not appetizing."(Ibid:88)

But, suddenly one summer, he is not young anymore. He can no longer conceal from himself or anyone else the corruption and perversity in himself. The fact that Ms. Venable, unable to travel, is replaced by Catherine reveals his real self to Sebastian. The "string of pearls" Catherine's term for the umbilical cord, is broken beyond repair. Sebastian's cousin, unlike his mother, is a person who loves people and the truth. She probably inspires him to "complete" himself through an act of self-destruction, to seek the ultimate truth in the face of a savage god:

Doctor: From what? Save him from what?

Catherine: Completing – a sort of! – image! – he had of himself as a sort of! – sacrifice to a! – terrible sort of a –

Doctor: God!

Catherine: Yes, a cruel one, Doctor.(Ibid:132)

As Ms. Venable had stated, the poet's vocation is his work and his work his life:

Sebastian was a poet! That's what I meant when I said his life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet, I mean you can't separate them. (Ibid)

Consequently, Sebastian's final work of attaining the higher truth of mankind "which he had already sought in the plant and animal world is a poem of personal "katharsis" that was carried out by means of a ritual "sparagmos." He is an embodiment of what Northrop Frye calls "the creative force,"

The imaginative or creative force in the mind is what has produced everything that we call culture and civilization. It is the power of transforming a sub-human physical world into a world with a human shape and meaning, a world not of rocks and trees but of cities and gardens, not an environment but a home. The drive behind it we may call desire, a desire which has nothing to do with the biological needs and wants of psychological theory, but is rather the impulse toward what Aristotle calls 'telos' realizing the form that one potentially has.(Frye:152)

C- The Death and Rebirth of the God Hero

After his death, which predates the play, only the memory of an artist survived Sebastian. Ms.Venable ritually presents his works to the Doctor. She lifts the elegant gilt-edged volume Poem of Summer "as of elevating the Host before the altar" and "her face suddenly has a different look, the look of a visionary, an exalted religious." For Ms.Venable, the memory of Sebastian's poems contributes to spiritual rebirth that is reflected in her momentary restoration of youthfulness: "At the same instant a bird sings clearly and purely in the garden and the old lady seems to be young for a moment."(Williams:125)

During the spring-summer rite of Dionysus' rebirth, the Maenads fell into an exalted state of ecstasy that caused the forgetfulness of everyday reality and restored the youthfulness of the celebrants, so that they could actively participate in nature's rebirth. In a similar manner, Sebastian has also survived through Catharine's repetitive recitation of his final poem – his

own “sparagmos”. However, when the account of Sebastian’s ritual poem travels with Catharine from Cabeza de Lobo to the civilized Garden District of New Orleans, it utterly shocks the pretentious people symbolized by Ms. Venable. “Williams poses in this drama an extremely serious question for civilization; it involves the threat that the humanity symbolized by Ms. Venable may come to control society itself.”(Kazan,1965). People like Violet Venable fail to comprehend the final choice of an artist and try by all means to selfishly preserve their own favorite image of his work. In order to achieve this, Ms. Venable does not hesitate to order a lobotomy, another person’s destruction through the agents of society. She thus addresses the Doctor:

Name it that – I don’t care. There’s just two things to remember. She’s a destroyer. My son was a creator! Now if my honesty’s shocked you – pick up your little black bag without the subsidy in it, and run away from this garden! Nobody’s heard our conversation but you and I, Doctor Sugar!(Williams:124)

Williams uses the question of the prefrontal lobotomy to explore such major establishments of civilized society as organized medicine, the family, and the church. Both the Hollys, Catharine’s family, and Sister Felicity, representing the church, stand for indifferent humanity. While the Hollys would rather use Catharine to satisfy their personal needs, Sister Felicity is only momentarily sympathetic and essentially removed from the human problem.

On the contrary, the Doctor appears to be the only responsible person who throughout the play weighs the truth of Catharine’s story. His role does not only reveal a sense of commitment to moral principle. It also defends, in an optimistic way, Williams’ existentialist position. It is the Doctor who has to make the decision as to whether Catharine should be deprived of the human ability to suffer for her recognition of “sparagmos” inherent in human relations.

Ms. Venable – refusing to admit Sebastian’s “sparagmos” – is also unaware of the savageness of her attempt to devour Catharine and the Doctor who seem to question the legitimacy of the

operation. The latter is the one who considered the savageness of the ritual on the Cabeza de Lobo as “a spectacle equated with good deal of experience – existence – but not with God. “ Sebastian’s ritual of “sparagmos” affirmed the artist’s recognition of the savage god in man. Catharine, on the other hand, is the person who is capable of confronting Sebastian’s tragedy, which is the tragedy of every man. On the contrary, Ms. Venable’s refusal to admit Sebastian’s “sparagmos”, as well as her attempt to devour Catharine and the Doctor demonstrate the state of any individual who defies the harshness of everyday reality unaware of his own savageness.

Suddenly Last Summer ends with the optimistic note that there is a possibility of goodness springing from self-realization in mankind. The Doctor pronounces the final line of the play: “I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl’s story could be true”(Ibid). Earlier in the play Catharine tells her mother:

But, mother, I didn’t invent it. I know it’s a hideous story, it’s a true story but of our time and the world we live in and what did truly happen to Cousin Sebastian in Cabeza de Lobo.(Ibid:10)

The Doctor and Catharine have had the courage to face reality. As Catharine says, there were other witnesses but they cowardly ran away, shrinking like Ms. Venable and the Hollys from the savage truth:

George: You were the only witness to it, Catharine.
Catharine: No, there were others. That ran.(Ibid)

Suddenly Last Summer is a tragedy that deals with man’s failure to recognize the reality of human limitations. At the peak of his creative power, the playwright controls every word and symbol that relates to Sebastian’s “sparagmos” and “anagnorisis”, and applies every image to the personal, mythic, and scientific worlds.

The play incorporates Williams’ personal life as man and artist. The question of the prefrontal lobotomy was at the time that the play was written part of Williams’ mental

“sparagmos”, as he was subjected to psychoanalysis in order to suppress his claustrophobia and annihilating fears. His mental disturbances were also caused by his affection for his sister Rose, who, like Catharine Holly, resided in a private sanitarium in Westchester.

The sign of Catharine’s imminent lobotomy lingers throughout *Last Summer*, i.e. an operation that Williams’ sister went through and to which the playwright reacted with intense depression and suicidal moods. Besides Williams’ love for Rose, *Suddenly Last Summer* also testifies to the relationship with his mother.

D- The Hero and the Oedipus Complex

The eternal struggle of Williams to cut the umbilical cord, what Catharine calls “the string of pearls’ is apparent throughout the play. Sebastian’s separation from the domineering Ms. Venable bears similar consequences with the story of the mythic Oedipus.

As the Greek King’s separation from his mother Iocosta and his discovery of the truth ended with his self-“sparagmos” in Thebes (he plucked out his eyes with his own hands), Sebastian’s release from the mother figure and his acknowledgement of the truth ended in the same manner with the “sparagmos” on the Cabeza de Lobo. In many plays, like *The Glass Menagerie* or *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*, the mother rules the son. The deliverance from maternal influence is also equated in Williams’ play with defying of traditional society and its values. As Amanda, in *the Glass Menagerie*, represents the meaningless conformity of the old South, Ms. Venable also stands for the hypocritical façade of society in New Orleans.

Moreover, Sebastian is depicted as a homosexual poet. Both homosexuality and the artist’s relation to art were dominant struggles in Williams’ life and became consuming themes in his plays. It was not until 1970 that Williams spoke overtly about his homosexuality. In 1975, he published a novel, *Moses and the World of Reason*, and his *Memoirs*, in both of which he writes openly about homosexuality. Because the subject was unmentionable in the forties and

the fifties, he had to mask his plays. It is almost always concealed in the mid-fifties in plays like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; and it is not until *Small-Craft Warnings* (1979) and *Vieux Carré* (1977) that he presents homosexual relationships and gay life. But gays in Williams' plays are also supremely sensitive artists. Like Sebastian, they are eccentrically refined aesthetes. Like the unseen protagonist of *Suddenly Last Summer*, Williams was an ultimate voluptuary, and like Sebastian, he had a taste for exquisite things. In an interview with Williams, Rex Reed commented that he lived in

A world that was girl-edged invitation to decadence... with constantly recurring vision in a mad house (...) laced with the beckoning insinuation of champagne and flaming foods, or oriental rugs and dimly lit brothels, surrounds by exotic friends like Anais Nin and Anna Magnani. He has gathered his years slowly, savoring the lusty taste of living, taking swooning delight in extravagances of brocade crêpe suzettes, and a mild scent of orrisroot.(Reed,1970)

On the other hand, Williams' sensitive artists live in an intolerable agony in their effort to attain artistic perfection. The agony that frequently overwhelmed the author's life is manifested in plays like *I Rise in Flame Cried the Phoenix*, and *The Night of the Iguana*.

So, in *Suddenly Last Summer*, Williams succeeds in combining in a single tale personal element with scientific doctrine and archetypal myth. As the existence psychoanalysis proves, the limitation of the human mind, the Dionysian myth and ritual suggest a comparable vision of human nature. As Dionysism links the three organic levels, the description of Sebastian's garden also contains the evolution from the animal to the human world: "living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin."

It is not insignificant that Charles Darwin – on the famous voyage of the Beagle—obtained from the Galapagos Islands the data for his "*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*". The description of the "sparagmos" on the Galapagos Islands is thus based on scientific data. In fact, Darwin in

his research observed the “sparagmos” of the tortoises, which had evolved there and gave their name to the islands from the Spanish “Galapagos” meaning “tortoise”.

Williams seems to favor science over religion in his plays. In *The Rose Tattoo*, it is the Doctor who tells the priest: “People find God in each other, and when they lose each other, they lose God and they’re lost.”(Williams,1959:48) Science seems to speak for the existentialist attitude that man is his own god who prescribes a personal destiny in Sartre’s words.

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, the Doctor is a psychiatrist. Williams was well acquainted with psychiatry and psychologies due to his sister’s insanity and the many episodes of his own mental breakdowns. A great amount of his time was divided between his writing and frequent visits to psychologists who seemed to console the artist’s agony. In the play, the psychiatrist’s role appears to be as important for the development of the action as it was for Williams himself in real life. It is the Doctor who will decide whether Catharine’s story is true or not, whether she will undergo a lobotomy or continue to be granted with the human ability to suffer. Sebastian’s or the artist’s, agony and “sparagmos” find a hopeful outer of recognition in the Doctor’s statement that ends the play.

From the time that Williams was very young, he alternated between psychoanalysis and writing as forms of therapy and “purification” of his sickness. However, Williams’ ritualization of ordinary experience in drama does not remain restricted in the author’s private world; on the contrary the synthetic myth – thematic or technical – that he created, bears immediate relevance to the major concerns of our time. Through the rite of his theater, Williams universalizes man’s existential struggle from the American point of view. His choice of the Dionysian myth reveals the playwright’s optimism in a world where violence and death should be always followed by the hope of rebirth.

A similar ritualization of the life of modern man appears in the structure of most of Williams' plays. *In A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) Blanche "dies", and there is promise of a rebirth in Stella's unborn child. In *Cat on a Hot Roof* (1955), Maggie's opening soliloquy prepares for the ritualistic approach in the play:

Williams' 'mythicization' of themes and stage ritualization demonstrate his belief in the Shakespearean perception of "the world as a stage", where universal truths could be revealed. Williams deals with the Dionysian double – that dominated the first theatrical stage – as it is mirrored in modern man's dilemma: his choice between life and death, body and soul, and all the dichotomies that American arts and letters reflected after World War II.

Chapter Six: Williams, Myth and American Counterculture

Introduction:

This chapter investigates Tennessee Williams use of myth within the realm of the American counterculture in three selected plays namely *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), *The Night of the Iguana* (1961) and *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969). This chapter is concerned with the way Tennessee Williams handles Greek myth and ritual of death and resurrection to give meaning to the American counterculture of the late 50s and the 60s. The period was characterized with 'vice' as coined by most conservatives. If we assume that a "vice" is "a serious fault of character, depravity and corruption," (Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary) then it assumes some of the characteristics of the dark chaos of the collective unconscious of which we have previously spoken while analyzing some of Williams' plays. The feelings associated with that area are, as we have seen, frightening. They might be described, if they could be, as "immoral" or "corrupt." They would certainly be shocking if they were presented directly. Sachs refers to the transfer of these feelings as a communication or sharing of guilt. (Sachs, 1969:35) "The acclaim and appreciation which the poet receives eventually from his contemporaries mean to him not only that every human being likes to get success, honors, flattery, fame, and ease-but also something more precious and essential: the proof that his work had succeeded in making his brothers-in guilt and passion confess by their emotional response what could not be told in any other way." (Ibid:38)

The sharing of guilt then adds a new dimension to this communicative process of the ritual of the plays under discussion in this chapter. Through the analysis of *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *The Night of the Iguana* and *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* reveals that the terrifying nature of the material to be shared also determines somewhat the nature of the symbolic networks constructed by the playwright. Instead of the pleasant wish-fulfillments of the daydreamer, the playwright will usually deal with violence, suffering, and unhappiness. He will concern

himself with the materials we find in almost every Williams play. The result of the analysis of the three plays is that we should not be surprised to find that modern drama in general and Williams' in particular is but "a cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human," (Williams,1972) But the question of the shape of the cry is still to be answered. We know that we are dealing with a myth of birth, death and rebirth answering certain psychological needs of the author and the audience.

1-The Primitive and the Civilized in *Sweet Bird of Youth*(1959)

Sweet Bird of Youth (1959) is another of Williams' effective dramas which opened to rave reviews from the New York critics and ran well over two hundred performances. When the play was first written as a one act play, the title was '*The Enemy Time*', which emphasizes Williams' concern with this battle between youth and age. The primary focus, however, is not the external battle between Boss Finley and Chance, but the struggle within Chance.

Chance Wayne the hero is clearly a god of sexual love, in the tradition of Dionysus and Attis. Although Williams has supplied him with ambitions for a career as an actor (a logical modern equivalent for the young Dionysus whose skill in changing forms was an essential part of his myth), Chance Wayne finds that taking and giving pleasure in sex is the ultimate pleasure, almost the only valuable thing in life. Williams admits in the foreword to the play that he has concerned himself here with the most primitive of savage impulses of human nature, "We are all civilized people, which means that we are all savages at heart but observing a few amenities of civilized behavior." (Williams,1975:3) Chance Wayne is a character drawn more simply, with fewer amenities of the veneer of civilization than the usual character with whom Williams chooses to embody his myth and ritual. He, therefore, provides an excellent opportunity for studying the underlying structure of the myth of death and resurrection.

In his youth, he was celebrated for his beauty, not for his acting talent, and whatever steps his career took were because of his prowess in sleeping his way through the rich and powerful. However, he is careful to note that his was not a parasitical role; he even sees himself as a benefactor to those whom he touched, "I gave people more than I took. Middle-aged people I gave back a feeling of youth. Lonely girls? Understanding, appreciation! An absolutely convincing show of affection. Sad people, lost people? Something light and uplifting! Eccentrics? Tolerance, even odd things they long for...." (Ibid:47) His gifts did not go unappreciated; he was, in fact, the hero crowned with a laurel wreath on your forehead, given too early, without enough effort to earn it..." (Ibid:43)

Chance has always seen his talents as constituting a kind of divine inspiration, a calling. In fact, he contrasts himself to the predatory Boss Finley in terms suggesting the eternal conflict of the powers of light versus those of darkness. Confronting a threatening mob, he proclaims, "This is my town. I was born here not him. He was just called here. He was just called down from the hills to preach hate. I was born here to make love." (Ibid:101)

As the play opens, Chance Wayne has returned to his home, St. Cloud, in the company of his latest conquest, the aging actress Alexandra Del Lago, known as the Princess Kosmonopolis for the purposes of her travels. She is fleeing what she feels is the ugly reality of her failure in her last film role, and she has picked Chance up at a hotel in Florida, where he had been working as a beach boy. Chance has touched her heart in an unusual way, and she attempts to extend their relationship from the merely physical to a more extensive psychological interdependence. Chance, however, is preoccupied and tells her frankly that he has come to St. Cloud because of his true love, Heavenly, the daughter of the racist politician, Boss Finley. Chance explains that he and Heavenly have loved since they had both been teenagers, and he has never really abandoned his dedication to Heavenly. He attempts to enlist the aid of Alexandra Del Lago in a scheme to use her prestige to gain a film career for Heavenly and

himself, so that he could rescue Heavenly from St. Cloud. This plan is so ill-advised and badly designed as to emphasize that Chance's skills do not lie in the cerebral management of his career.

In fact, he has always lived by his beauty, and, as one would expect in a Williams' hero, by his youth, which is slipping from his grasp. Henry Popkin calls these heroes, such as Chance, Val Xavier, Kilroy, Blanche Dubois, and Brick Pollitt, the "martyrs of love." (Ibid:51) As Chance does, they suffer unjustly and combat their enemies, chief of which is time, from a status of fundamental innocence. Just as Sebastian Venable was, Chance Wayne is threatened by his youth slipping away. Although he is not old, he just isn't young anymore, (Ibid:33) and this is a threat felt to his core.

His immediate reaction to this threat to his youth and his beauty is to seek escape from the reality of the time continuum. He invokes the distorted dimensions of the world of drugs so that temporarily, at least, neither time nor anything else can reach him. The kindly Aunt Nonnie notices the changes wrought in him and says, "Oh, Chance, why have you changed like you've changed? Why do you live on nothing but wild dreams, now, and have no address where anybody can reach you in time to reach you?" (29)

Chance's reply is to take yet another pill and some more liquor and to say, "Wild dreams! Yes. Isn't life a wild dream? I never heard a better description of it.... Yes, I took a wild dream and- washed it down with another wild dream, Aunt Nonnie, that's my life now." (30)

A- The Sacrificial God and the Enemy Time

Chance understands in his way that time is his enemy, although he seems to be unconscious of the complexities of what his fate has come to be. He explains simplistically to the Princess, that the problem is an interference with the pacing of his career development, "In a life like mine, you just can't stop, you know, can't take time out between steps, you've got to keep

going right on up from one thing to the other, once you drop out, it leaves you and goes on without you and you're washed up." (48) Chance has instinctively sensed that the rush of time has in some way stopped of this still point in St. Cloud, but he cannot see yet that this pause is the mechanism which will allow him his final confrontation with his opposing forces.

He explains, as well as he can, to the Princess why he is here in St. Cloud on this Easter Sunday, "I didn't stop here...I was stopped....I was arrested by something." (Ibid:28) The inevitable confrontation between the forces of good, personified in this play by Chance, and the forces of evil, represented here by Boss Finley, is described by Henry Popkin as the constant focus of any Williams play, "Truth, love, and the bold non-conformism of the poet and the Bohemian must actively oppose the destructive forces that threaten them: The dead hand of the past and its stultifying products: convention, repression, and illusion; time and what it inevitably brings—loss of strength, loss of beauty, and envy of youth...." (Ibid:53)

There is a complexity in the power of this hero, however, which brings about his sacrifice. His power, his ability to make love, is a flawed power, and it is the nature of that flaw which provides the crucial deciding factor which makes him take the path of violent sacrifice. The direction of his lasting love is the first part of that fault. Although he has slept with many, his heart's abject has remained fixed; it is Heavenly Finley. He has always returned to St. Cloud and to her, no matter what the cost. Always, when he has been on the brink of success in his career, there has been a block, "I've had more chances than I could count on my fingers, and made the grade almost, but not quite every time. Something always blocks me...." (Williams:39) The terror of this block has sent him to Heavenly in each case, "But always just at the point when I might get something back that would solve my own need, which was great, to rise to their level, the memory of my girl would pull me back home to her." (Ibid:37) Williams has explained the inevitable outcome of such an obsession in personal terms in the Foreword. After admitting that, "I can't expose a human weakness on the stage unless I know

it through having it myself," he explains that he has always had to cope with "this adversary of fear, which was sometimes terror." He continues, acknowledging that it is probably a neurotic interpretation, but, "All my life I have been haunted by the obsession that to desire a thing or to love a thing intensely is to place yourself in a vulnerable position, to be a possible, if not a probable, loser of what you most want." (Ibid:4-6)

There are no moderate courses, no compromises possible for Chance Wayne at his cross roads. "I goes back to Heavenly, or I don't. I live or die. There's nothing in between for me." (Ibid:83) The return to Heavenly is difficult, however. The Princess does not present a physical obstacle to Chance's return; she has been similarly used before. Boss Finley and his son Tom Junior, and their employees and supporters form an effective physical barrier around Heavenly, but Chance has penetrated that physical fence before. The new obstacle is, ironically, of his own making. It is a product of his own gift of love to Heavenly on his previous visit. He has given her disease along with love, and the disease has caused her to have an operation which resulted in the death of her ability to give life. He resists the information, hoping that his "magic," his embrace can restore her.(Ibid:83) But his discovery of this chain of events brings about a profound re-definition of his are.

If his art is not love-making, but life-suppressing, then truly the art is not anything worth living for. He sees himself as even worse than the aging gigolo the Princes tells him about who committed suicide only because of the destruction time had wreaked upon him.(Ibid:115) Chance has not only been ravaged by time, had his beauty erode and his powers weaken, but the very essence of his being is questioned by this revelation. He has, in a figurative sense killed the object of his adoration, and he has done this not physically, but in the sphere of his own self-definition.

His choice is deliberate and unambiguous. He decides to be destroyed, as he has destroyed, in the realm of sex. The threatened castration is certainly a symbolic and perhaps actual physical

destruction. The Princess offers him her love as a salvation; "There's no one but me to hold you back from destruction in this place." his reply is clear, "I don't want to be held." (Ibid:104) At every opportunity to retreat, to flee with the Princess, Chance presses on-ward, deliberately invoking his fate, with full awareness of the reasons for it. Finally the Princess shows that they are not similar "monsters" after all, that she is an artist of life, and his art has turned to an art of destruction:

We are two monsters, but with this difference between us. Out of the passion and torment of my existence I have created a thing that I can unveil, a sculpture, almost heroic, that I can unveil, which is true. But you? You've come back to the town you were born in, to a girl that won't see you because you put such rot in her body she had to be gutted and hung on a butcher's hook, like a chicken dressed for Sunday.... (he wheels about to strike at her, but his raised fist chances its course and strikes down at his own belly and he bends double with a sick cry. (Ibid:120)

Throughout the final scenes, Chance is depicted by Williams as a fully aware tragic figure, as this note inserted in the stage directions indicates, "Note: In this area it is very important that Chance's attitude should be self-recognition but not self-pity--a sort of deathbed dignity and honesty apparent in it." (Ibid:122)

B- Chance Wayne : The Mythic Sacrificial Hero

We suppose that there are at least superficial parallels to be drawn between Chance and Christ, while the Easter Sunday Hallelujah Chorus is used as another device to emphasize the triumphant resurrection of the dying god. It is also noteworthy that Williams seems to be aware of the possible misunderstanding of and objection to such a usage, and that he appears to make a distinction in the usage of such symbolism by introducing it in a blasphemous context in Boss Finley's campaign speech. Finley declares that his Good Friday took place Friday when he was burned in effigy on the campus of the state university, but that "today is

Easter Sunday and I am in St. Cloud." (Ibid:125) It is clear, however, that Finley is no Christ figure. In contrast, Chance Wayne's identification regardless of conventional morality and even, at times, the author's own ambivalence, is not to be overlooked.

Part of the difficulty of the play is that while the audience demands probability that finely be given a motive for ordering Chance castrated the thematic pattern demands that Chance still be given sufficient dignity and essential goodness to enact the role of the Christ like sacrificial victim. Chance's eligibility for such a role depends to a great extent on Heavenly, whose purity in spite of her previous relationship with Chance is unquestionable as Williams presents it. She pleads Chance's innocence, telling her father that Chance had been driven from St. Cloud by him, her own father, and that when he "tried to compete, make himself big as these big shots you wanted to use me for a bond with," he failed. "The right doors wouldn't open, and so he went in the wrong ones..." (Ibid: 136) nor does she appear to blame Chance for the disease which required a hysterectomy, and Chance himself is apparently exonerated because he didn't know until he had left that he had the disease. The lack of credibility here is obvious, yet if the Christ identification does not hold up, the resurrection theme cannot exist, for the vegetation god archetype is not familiar enough for the audience to assume the rebirth. But despite the lack of audience familiarity with the myth, Chance Wayne is nevertheless clearly a vegetation deity, and the Princess is no less clearly a mother goddess in the same basic pattern that informs *Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. Unique in his exceptional good looks, his "gold hair... wreathed with laurels," (Ibid: 136) Chance was born with "some kind of quantity 'X' in [his] blood, a wish or a need to be different." (Ibid:137) Chance, like Sebastian and Val, plays the role of the divine child. He is both orphan (only his dead mother is mentioned) and wanderer, alienated from his hometown by his sense of being different (both inferior and superior) and by his awareness of his unusual beauty. His love having been awakened on the beach with Heavenly, he returns to the ocean to regain it. But

lovemaking, net love, is his "vocation," "maybe the only one I was truly meant for."
(Ibid:142)

Coupled with his introduction against the background of Easter Sunday, Chance Wayne is the incarnation of the powers of spring, the agent of fertility. He is a phallic good fulfilling a phallic function, pleasing the demanding princess Kosmonopolis, Goddess of the Earth, with his sexual prowess and acting as her sexual savior. Already castrated by her demands (Ibid:148) he is Attis to her Kybele. Led by "that invisible loving steel chain," (Ibid:142) he is the beautiful, submissive consort of the imperious matriarch who, in spite of her dominance, is dependent on him for her life: "

I have only one way to forget these things I don't want to remember and that's through the act of love making. That's the only dependable distraction so when I say now, because I need that distraction, it has to be now..."
(Ibid:143)

Like all fertility goddesses, she must have her demands satisfied, and when she no longer needs her boy god, when he has fulfilled his function, however temporary, she discards him. Thus when the Princess learns that her comeback was not a failure, chance is dismissed despite the fact that the Princess knows it will be only a short time before she will need him, or another like him, again.

Essentially, Chance Wayne, like Val and Sebastian, is a composite of vegetation deities. His physical beauty is that of any and all of the youthful consorts of the mythical goddesses, and it is this by which the Princess is attracted. Touching his bare chest with her finger tips, she observes: "It feels like silk... Hairless, silky smooth gold." (Ibid:145) (Again we must note the effeminacy and the reversal of male female roles in appearance and aggression).

In a brief but interesting study by Peter L. Hays, a number of parallels are drawn between *Sweet Bird of Youth* and the Adonis myth, but while some of his points are significant, they are not, as shall be seen, elements characteristic solely of Adonis.(Basing his evidence on

The Golden Bough, the critic claims that Chance Wayne was named after Frazer's favorite term for the sacred king who presides over nature, the 'waxing god'..

Likewise, citing the castration theme which runs throughout the play (Chance, Heavenly, the Princess, and an unnamed Negro are all either literally or figuratively castrated, "and Boss Finley is said to be impotent) Hays cites the work of Frazer and Jessie Weston to argue that ritual castrations were performed in various vegetation festivals "in imitation of Adonis' death, and that the play, therefore, specifically reflects the Adonis rites. Adonis was not the only vegetation god however, to maintain a tradition of death by castration there were at least Attis, Osiris, and Tammuz, in addition to Adonis, and even the greatest scholars are undecided as to the specific worship in which the castration rites arose.

Considering the fact that a god who was worshipped in one part of the world was often merely a counterpart of a god whose worship had already been established in another part of the world, and that Adonis was not the god from whom all other vegetation deities originated, it would seem more reasonable to conclude simply that the castration theme strongly suggests Williams' generalized use of various vegetation god elements in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. The Mid Eastern motif of the setting of the play which Hays points to (everything from the decor to the hashish is Moroccan) likewise suggests the Attis Adonis Tammuz et al. worship which spread throughout the Middle East.

C- The Lament of the God King

Frazer notes, "Adonis was reputedly the son of King Cinyras of Cyprus, and Cyprus is the first of several exotic exiles mentioned by the Princess,... and characterized by her as places of palm gardens by the sea and olive groves in Mediterranean islands through which pass a lament for whatever has been loved."(Frazer).He similarly notes that Williams' musical theme, "The Lament," which recurs throughout the play for Chance and the Princes they are

the two major "castrated" characters suggests the laments and lamentations cited by Frazer and Weston which were so notably a part of the ritual of Adonis. The laments, however, like the castrations are also connected with other vegetation festivals as well. And finally, as Hays points out, the Royal Palms Hotel with its grove of palms "the most important and constant" projection, Williams tells us, on the cyclorama backing the stage, is highly suggestive of the sacred groves of fertility kings and the traditional garden of Adonis, but sacred groves, as Hays himself observes, are general to all of the fertility kings, and the palm tree was sacred particularly to Isis and Osiris. In all of the Adonis, Attis, Tammuz, Osiris myths Chance is clearly a part of the whole vegetation god pattern, and this is the important point.

So much for Chance Wayne and his mother goddess: a new, mythic element has been added in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Contrasting her to the grotesque, almost hellish, figure of the ageing screen goddess, Williams introduces the celestial Heavenly, the "divine maiden." In placing his young god in a love relationship with a maiden goddess, Williams has drawn upon the Jungian concept of the divine maiden so popular in Greek mythology. Pure in spite of the disease Chance has caused in her, revirginized in a typical Williams' fashion, and celestial in her white garments, Heavenly is the female counterpart of the vegetation god. Like the young god, she is a sacrificial victim in the annual renewal of life. Pure and passive, she is "the maiden doomed to die." (Williams:42) Neumann expresses the role as "the young girl who receives the god in an ecstasy of longing, (Newmann,1962:23) and it is a role which is, in many respects, similar to that of Catharine Holly. Catharine is likewise a maiden figure (in spite of her incident at Dueling Oaks) in her love for, and submission to, Sebastian, although Catharine's role is of little importance in terms of the real action of the play, i.e., Sebastian's story. Both, however, are ideals of fidelity Catharine loved her cousin because he liked her, and Heavenly is "something permanent in a world of change." (Williams:115) In fact both are highly vulnerable.

"The maiden's helplessness," Jung observes, "exposes her to all sorts of dangers, for instance of being devoured by reptiles or ritually slaughtered like a beast of sacrifice. Often there are bloody, cruel, and even obscene orgies to which the innocent child falls victim."(Jung,1957:214) If Catharine is struggling at Lions View against the knife, Heavenly has succumbed to it, just as Chance is about to. In Williams' view, however, it is her own father who demands of her the greatest sacrifice. His offering up of his daughter in a succession of near marriages to wealthy men more than twice her age is intended to assist his political career and is culminated by her final devastation on the campaign stage. Her humiliation is televised to the world, and she "is suddenly escorted down the stairs, sobbing, and collapses"(Williams: 137) she is yet another victim in this play of death and sacrifice.

In presenting the death-rebirth theme, Williams once more modifies the ritual structure of the Greek drama first used in *Orpheus Descending*, but it is far less modified than in *Suddenly Last Summer*. He presents the first four phases of the ritual pattern in the usual order. There is the **Agon**, the contest of Chance and Heavenly, against Boss Finley and his world. It is the traditional contest of the forces of light against darkness, good against evil, spring against winter. There is the **Pathos**, the ritual death or death equivalent of the god (Heavenly and even the Princess share in the death to an extent, although the structure is based on Chance's sacrifice and not theirs). There is likewise the announcement of the death, for Tom Jr. is both agent and messenger. And, there is the **Threnos**, in which the lamentation of the dead is mingled with the sense of triumph at the imminent rebirth. (Williams was not being inconsistent when he prefaced his sorrowful strains of the '**Lament**' with the startling burst of the Hallelujah Chorus)The final three phases of the ritual pattern, however, are omitted altogether. Since Chance has not yet undergone the castration (except at the hands of the Princess), there can be no recognition and gathering up of the slain and no resurrection, although all Three are clearly implied. The audience and Princess recognize the death of the

god, the resurrection is implicit in the Easter symbolism, and the Hallelujah Chorus supplies the sense of joy to counteract the sorrow and suffering of the death. Somewhat modified, the ritual structure of the sacrifice of the vegetation god has nonetheless been fulfilled if not explicitly, at least implicitly.

If Chance and Heavenly are victims of the dark forces of the universe, Chance and the Princess are victims now or in the near future, of "the enemy time" ("*The Enemy Time*" is the title of the one act play on which *Sweet Bird of Youth* was based; it was published in the March, 1959 issue of *Theatre*). And if Heavenly is the sweet, passive maiden in her role, the Princess is a fighter arrogant, forceful, at times grotesque, yet, on rare occasions, compassionate in her sharing and understanding of Chance's fate.

D- Princess as the God's Consort

In the early version of the play and in the working script, the Princess was named "Ariadne," after the maiden who offered Theseus an escape from the labyrinth. Deserted by him, Ariadne became the bride of Dionysus. Possibly recognizing the impossibility of alluding to a maiden figure in the form of a strong, self-seeking mother goddess who shows only brief flashes of compassion, Williams changed her name to the more dramatic and more masculine Alexandra del Lago (perhaps suggestive again of the Albertine strategy, although in Freudian and Jungian psychology "Del Lago" would suggest the dark, feminine principle). She is also, of course, the Princess Kosmonopolis, very much in keeping with her Earth goddess role. Thus deprived of her maidenhood, she nevertheless represents a route of escape. Offering herself to Chance as a way out of the castration he faces if he remains in St. Cloud and moved by the similarity of their situations, she pleads with him to go with her: "The only hope for you now is to let me lead you by that invisible loving steel chain through Carltons and Ritzes and Grand Hotels and.." (Williams:98) when she learns of the success of her comeback, however,

she becomes the "monster" again and reneges on her promise to "talk about" Chance and Heavenly to the producers. "Talk about beach boy I picked up for pleasure, distraction from panic? Name? When the nightmare is over?" (Ibid) But recognizing that "her future course is not a progression of triumphs"; (Ibid:102-103) the Princess offers her beach boy one last chance.

Princess: I'll send a boy up for my luggage. You'd better come down with my luggage.

Chance: I'm not part of your luggage. (Ibid) Chance prefers to end the corruption of his life in a purifying sacrifice and his Easter death is a reflection of the time cycle of the vegetation god: "I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding not even that no. But for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all." (Ibid:105)

Time is a major motif of the play, and the Princess is very much a part of the motif.

The dismemberment of Chance Wayne is certain when the curtain falls on the drama, and his entertainment of this form of self-sacrifice is reminiscent of the ancient myths of Attis, Adonis, and Dionysus. Hans Sachs points out that dismemberment is a very common symbolic expression associated with resurrection or rebirth. Williams adds references to Christian symbols by setting the play on Easter Sunday, suggesting Chancel's role as a Messianic martyr. Is it possible that this outwardly polluted, aging satyr might have the transcendent inner purity which could make him a messiah preaching the gospel of love? Henry Popkin says of these martyrs of love, that "They suffer for us, in a sense, so that love may be free." (Popkin, 1976:51) Whether or not one is convinced by the allusion to Christian salvation, there is certainly an echo of the ancient myth of the savage death of the fertility god and his eventual seasonal rebirth here in this character whose chances have faded into the one inevitable tragic path which he takes with the dignity of the stubbornly tragic characteristic of Williams' hero.

In *Orpheus Descending*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams' males are the victims of violent death and torments of immolation, dismemberment, castration. Such torments are mythic, befitting the young vegetation gods on whom Williams' protagonists were modeled. They are not, however, common occurrences in the modern world, and this fact has raised questions concerning the validity of such violence. "Sensational" or "Gothic": the plays succeeded or failed by these judgments. *Suddenly Last Summer*, to which "Gothic" can best be applied, is in many respects the most completely successful of the three plays, and it should be noted that its story is also the least realistic of the three and perhaps because of this the most obviously mythic. Having declared, after his psychoanalysis sessions in 1957 and 1958, that his preoccupation with violence was over (he had achieved his catharsis, he said, with *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams appears to have borne out his claim in *The Night of the Iguana*.

2- Profanation of Religious Conservatism and the 'Lavender Scare' in *The Night of the Iguana*(1960)

At the background of Williams' *The Night of the Iguana* lies the 1960s Lavender scare historically referring to the gay and lesbian witch hunting. In fact, there are moments in history when conditions come together to signal a seismic shift in the social and political geography. Three critical moments sparked an era of fear, suspicion, and repression leading to the interrogation of Madeleine Tress a 24-year-old business economist at the Department of Commerce in Washington, DC – was required to pass a security investigation as a condition for employment (Johnson, 200:10). The first occurred during the Truman administration in June 1947 when the US Senate Appropriations Committee warned Secretary of State Marshall that a concerted effort was being carried out 'to protect Communist personnel in high places' (p. 21), and that this subversive project involved 'the

extensive employment in highly classified positions of admitted homosexuals who are historically known to be security risks' (p. 21). In their attempts to counter these alleged security lapses, the Committee attached the McCarran rider to an appropriations bill giving the Secretary of State authority to dismiss any employee at his 'absolute discretion' to promote public security. A second critical moment occurred three years later, in February 1950, when a relatively young and brash US Republican Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, provocatively claimed in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia that 205 'card-carrying Communists worked for the US State Department. In part as a response to McCarthy's allegations, the third moment transpired when Deputy Undersecretary of State testified that a number of persons had been fired for being 'security risks', including 91 homosexuals (p.54). These disclosures set off a firestorm. Within one month, Republicans in the Congress ordered investigations looking into the extent of the 'homosexual problem' and the 'infiltration of sexual perverts' in government. Drawing on a variety of primary sources David K. Johnson reconstructs an era of persecution and purges of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people, as well as their heterosexual allies, in what the author has dubbed the '*Lavender Scare*' during the height of the Cold War(p.56).In the mind of many officials and in the public imagination, homosexuals and Communists in government posed similar threats. According to Johnson:

Both groups were perceived as alien subcultures that recruited the psychologically maladjusted to join in immoral behavior that threatened the nation's survival. Many claimed the two groups were working together. (p. 38)

It is important to note that the Soviet government itself criminalized homosexuality under Joseph Stalin and blamed homosexuality on the West as a product of 'bourgeois decadence'. The US countered by blaming homosexuality on a Soviet Communist international 'godless conspiracy'. The so-called 'Red Scare' was said to have been saturated with lavender: the

colour associated with homosexuality at the time(p.42). Some US government officials connected the Comintern (an international Communist organization) with what they termed the 'Homintern', which they saw as an international homosexual conspiracy linked with Communists(p.42).

The Night of the Iguana had been promised for the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy in 1959. Well received in Spoleto, it was then performed in New York by Actors Studio in the winter of 1961. Williams saw the studio's production, liked it, and decided to develop and revise the play for Broadway production. It opened on December 28, 1961, to predominantly favorable reviews and was selected by the critics as the best American play of the 1961-62 Broadway season. It was perhaps Williams' most realistic work since *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, his 1955 Pulitzer Prize winner. Realistic in its setting, structure, plot, and staging, it is a play depicting psychological, rather than physical torments (psychological anguish was never absent from the violent plays, but it was eclipsed to a great extent by shock of the violence). Nevertheless, *The Night of the Iguana* retains the mythic archetype of the dying god and his mother lover goddess along with a certain amount of Christ symbolism. The non-realistic impact of these elements is softened, however, by Williams' translation of the archetype and symbolism into primarily psychological terms.

A- The Hero and the 60s Lavender Scare

For a Christ figure, the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, the minister locked out of his Church, would appear at first glance an unlikely candidate. Having been barred from active ministry for fornication and preaching atheistic sermons, Shannon has only his clerical garb (the button of the collar pops off when he attempts to wear it for his "Baptist Female College Schoolteachers") and his gold cross (recently redeemed from a Mexico City pawnshop) as evidence of his calling. He is an alcoholic with a strong penchant for under aged girls whom

he punishes after seducing them (or after they seduce him), and he is, Williams tells us in the stage directions, "a young man who has cracked up before and is going to crack up again perhaps repeatedly." (Williams, 1961:1-2) Guilt ridden and tormented, he is a man searching for God, desiring to become God like, at least Christ like, in his search for freedom from his mortality. The striving for freedom from mortality is a characteristic of all religions from Dionysian to Orphic to Christian, and Shannon represents:

Everything is silver, delicately lustrous. Shannon extends his hands under the rainfall, turning them in it as if to cool them. Then he cups them to catch the water in his palms and bathes his forehead with it. The rainfall increases... Shannon lowers his hands from his burning forehead and stretches them out through the rain's silver sheet as if he were reaching for something outside and beyond himself. Then nothing is visible but these reaching out hands. this striving as he stands in the tropical rainstorm: There is "a pure white flash of lightning," the power is cut off, and "a clear shaft of light stays on Shannon's reaching out hands until the stage curtain has fallen slowly." (Ibid: 78)

Shannon is not presented as Christ, but as a man striving to become Christ. He is a minister apparently of the Episcopal Church, and he sees himself even when he is most self-disparaging as more than a representative of Christ. He sees himself in the Roman rather than English tradition as Christ himself, although a sinful Christ. Mocking Hannah and the poppy seed tea she is making for her grandfather, Shannon tells her to be merciful and put in some hemlock. Launching a tirade, he tells her to "put in the hemlock and I will consecrate it, turn it to God's blood... I'll say, 'Take and drink this, the blood of our...'" (Ibid: 98) She interrupts him, but the words are those spoken at the focal point of the Mass celebration, the moment in which the bread becomes the body of Christ, and the wine becomes the blood. Without quibbling over consubstantiation and transubstantiation, Williams has shown his protagonist in the context of Christian sacrifice the ceremony in which Christ's death is commemorated. Not only his clerical garb and his allusions, however, show that Shannon conceives of himself as Christ; Shannon, like Christ, suffers crucifixion. As Shannon continues striving to become

Christ, his suffering is self-imposed and largely psychological. His is, Hannah points out as he lies roped and struggling in the hammock, a "Passion Play performance." (Ibid: 97) and as Hannah asks:

Who wouldn't like to suffer and atone for the sins of himself and the world if it could be done in a hammock with ropes instead of nails, on a hill that's so much lovelier than Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, Mr. Shannon? There's something almost voluptuous in the way that you twist and groan in that hammock no nails, no blood, no death. Isn't that a comparatively comfortable, almost voluptuous kind of crucifixion to suffer for the guilt of the world, Mr. Shannon? (Ibid: 96)

She takes his desire to sacrifice himself seriously to some extent, however. Half believing his threat that he will "swim out to China," she ignores his demand that she untie him: "Not quite yet, Mr. Shannon. Not. Till I'm reasonably sure that you won't swim out to China, because, you see, I think you think of the . . . 'the long swim to China' as another painless atonement." (Ibid: 99)

In all of this, the play avoids the charges of blasphemy of the kind leveled against Val and Chance Wayne as Christ-figures. Shannon, as Williams presents him and Hannah describes him, is not a Christ figure, but a man trying to become one. The Christian imagery, however, has served its purpose. If Shannon can succeed in becoming a sacrifice, he can, it would follow, to reborn. That the sacrifice is not completed, that Shannon disappears in happy compromise with the Widow Faulk, is a new variation for Williams and an important one. First, however, the sacrifice theme must be seen in its entirety, and this involves the vegetation god-goddess archetype once again.

B- Reverend T. Shanon as the Fertility God

Shannon is young, handsome, generally submissive even in his rantings, and alienated exalted even both by his sins and by his view of himself as Christ-like sacrifice. With mention only of a mother whose influence is referred to but whose present existence is never indicated,

Shannon, like Val and Chance Wayne, is the orphan-wanderer. To the rapaciously lusty Widow Faulk " (Ibid: 7) He is, as were the young vegetation gods, the incarnation of the powers of fertility, and his function is a phallic one. Maxine, even her name suggests dominance and aggressiveness, is the incarnation of fertility itself, the mother-goddess demanding to be reawakened after the death of her husband (the young Mexican boys have been temporarily serving the purpose, but they are desirable only in Shannon's absence).

Shannon, with his self-declared compulsion for seducing teenage girls, is apparently repelled by this earth mother, nevertheless, he comes to her and her husband whenever he is about to undergo another crack-up." Making the demands of a lover, she is also a mother to him, and Shannon submits to the "loving steel chains", which she, like the Princess Kosmonopolis, would bind him with, and which he, unlike Chance Wayne, accepts as a temporary escape from the painful atonement. She tells him that she wants him to stay with her to "help manage" the hotel, that "I've got five more years, maybe ten, ta make, this place attractive to the male clientele. . . . And you can take care of the women that are with them. That's what you can do, you know that, Shannon." Shannon "chuckles happily," and, accepting her suggestion of a swim in "that liquid moonlight," he goes down the path with her, Maxine half-leading half supporting him." (p. 126) the goddess consort relationship here has only begun the sacrifice in which it must ultimately culminate is unacknowledged. Unable to suffer an actual, physical crucifixion, Shannon has learned from Hannah to accept the **lack** of punishment for his sins and the impossibility of his becoming god like; he has learned to endure his own mortality. Because the modern world, the "second history," does not offer the violent sacrifice and actual rebirth witnessed by Nonno's "orange bough" of the golden age, Shannon must pray for courage, the courage to bargain with "mist and mould" and to accept the only sacrifice it does offer, which is acceptance of life to Shannon an even greater compromise than death, the "painful atonement."

Hans Sachs explains the reasons for this choice of subject matter thus:

Anything which would threaten to uncover the secrets of the Unconscious would produce the strongest repugnance in his audience. The aim must be to reproduce as much of the unconscious fantasies as can be reconciled with ignoring their existence. The disguise must be as complete as it is in a dream, but it must be constructed with much more diligence. Causality, continuity, and logical development must not be neglected in the finished product, since it has to stand the searching censorship of a wide-awake mind, not of a sleeping one....

The most effective method of disarming the resistance against the introduction of the repressed contents is the downright opposite of the happy end. We have seen it used in a class of rather exceptional daydreams, in which suffering takes the place of pleasure...The most intensely repressed parts of the unconscious may be presented...when they don't seem to satisfy any desire, but arouse instead, as Aristotle puts it, compassion and fear: compassion for the preordained guilt of the hero and fear of sharing his crime and punishment.(Ibid:39-41)

Applying the guidelines suggested by Sachs as to subject matter, we should not be surprised to find that modern drama is "a cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human," (Williams,1972) But the question of the shape of the cry is still to be answered. We know that we are dealing with a myth of death and rebirth, answering certain psychological needs of the author and the audience.

In *The Night of the Iguana*, Shannon's relinquishing of his intent to become a sacrifice is also depicted in symbolic terms. The iguana is like Shannon, "one of God's creatures at the end of his rope." (p. 125) The gold chain of his cross cuts his flesh as he struggles in the hammock. Shannon is the iguana struggling against the rope around his throat, and Williams presents his symbol in an appropriately mythic context. Shannon is the reptile, the symbol of rebirth, awaiting his agony and death. "Poking out their eyes... and burning their tails with matches" (p. 120), the Mexican children torture, slaughter, and ultimately devour the iguanas. In *The Night of the Iguana* the title states the symbol Williams makes much of the boys' frenzied scrambling to catch the shy lizard, and he translated for his readers their shouts of "We're

going to have a feast! We'll eat god." (p.59) In their grotesqueness, the children are like the dark, bird-like savages of *Suddenly Last Summer*, swarming after and devouring their prey. They are enacting the pagan ritual. Shannon is induced by Hannah with her poppy seed tea and Maxine with her rum coco to abandon his determination to become a sacrifice, however, he is also persuaded by Hannah to cut the iguana loose, to free it of its fate as victim of the awful feast. Thus the iguana escapes into the jungle at the moment that Maxine appears to claim Shannon as her lover, and Shannon escapes into the mother goddess' embrace. As Hannah had explained, "We all wind up with something or with someone, and if it's someone instead of just something, we're lucky, perhaps... unusually lucky." (p. 117) and in spite of his need to suffer, Shannon is not unhappy about his forced compromise. The life without the death of a vegetation god, it would seem, is an accepted existence.

In *Sweet Bird of Youth* it was noted that Heavenly introduced a new mythic element. The same can be said of Nonno and Hannah. Nonno is a kind of Tiresias or Jungian "wise old man" figure combined with the mad, or "inebriate," or drunk poet, and in spite of the "little cerebral incidents," (p. 38) Nonno accepts and endures life with an ancient wisdom. Likewise Hannah, an artist, has learned to endure, if only for the sake of one moment of communication between people. Hannah is depicted as a spinster with the fragility and spirituality of an Emily Dickinson (whom Williams quotes in his epigraph to the play), but she is also a mythic figure. Unlike Maxine, the fertility goddess who, in spite of her masculine aggressiveness, is predominantly feminine, Hannah is essentially sexless in her appearance. She is, like heavenly, a divine maiden, but she is also a divine androgyne. Williams describes her at her entrance: "Hannah is remarkable looking ethereal, almost ghostly. She suggests a gothic cathedral image of a medieval Saint, but animated. She could be thirty, she could be forty: she is totally feminine, and yet androgynous looking almost timeless." (p. 18) in his description, Williams makes use of an archaic mythic figure whose meaning has played an important role

in philosophical and psychological studies from the Middle ages to the present day. As a sexual deviation androgyny a concept necessarily related to the homosexuality, sexuality, and transvestism of a number of Williams' protagonists, and it is a concept, which, along with these others, must be ultimately considered for its meaning and function in the whole body of Williams' mythic plays. For the moment, however, its function in *The Night of the Iguana* can be explained in terms of mythology alone, in which divine androgyny represents, as Professor Eliade explains in *Myths Dramas, and Mysteries*, "more than a state of sexual completeness and autarchy. Androgyny is," rather, "an archaic and universal formula for the expression of **wholeness**, the co-existence of the contraries," in effect, the divine androgyne symbolizes "the perfection of a primordial, no conditioned state."¹⁴

Hannah's perfection is suggested even by her name spelled forward or backward, it is the same either way. (Perhaps it isn't wholly coincidental that the names "Nonno" and "Shannon" are unusual in their combinations of letters, and that "Shannon" combines "Hannah" and "Nonno.") Hannah, like Shannon, has been the victim of a crack up, but she has found the way to escape her fate, she has emerged victorious. Having made the "subterranean travels, the... journeys that the spooked and bedeviled people are forced to take through the . . . unlighted sides of their natures," (p. 105) she has recognized, like Vee Talbott and Mrs. Venable, that the world is a world of light and shadow: "Everything in the whole solar system has a shadowy side to it except the sun itself the sun is the single exception." (p. 106) Hannah is saying that she has recognized the light and shadow in her own nature and come to terms with it. It is this which Shannon, despising and punishing himself for his human nature, must likewise learn to do, and it is this which Hannah teaches him through courage and endurance and acceptance of life.

With all of these figures earth goddess, divine maiden, divine androgyne and blind seer, it is interesting that, unlike *Orpheus Descending* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, the protagonist in

Night of the Iguana is never eclipsed. In spite of her natural dominance, Maxine as a character is nevertheless secondary to Shannon, as are Hannah and Nonno, both of whom are major figures in their mythic roles and their functions within the play. In *The Night of the Iguana*, Williams has achieved a success even greater than that of *Suddenly Last Summer*. He has avoided the weaknesses of *Orpheus Descending* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* in which the mother goddess figures play too great a part in the action of the play. Denied the fruits of her fertility role, Maxine, like Mrs. Venable, fulfills her function without overshadowing Shannon as protagonist. But in addition to this, it should be noted that Shannon is the only character whose psychological torments are expressed on stage. Nonno is primarily an offstage figure, Hannah has Mastered her fear and panic, and Maxine knows how to resolve her problems. Shannon is given the greatest psychological dimension, and his mental anguish is presented in physical and verbal terms. Writhing and twisting, groaning and ranting, Shannon is always present, always in motion, always spotlighted. He is soothed, pacified, physically led and supported, but it is he, and not Hannah the soothing and pacifying supporter who dominates the stage. Through skillful craftsmanship, Williams has mastered the myth, and found the key to making the male dominate the stage and fulfill his assigned role as protagonist.

3-Jungian 'Individuation Process' in *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969)

Mark Conley is the central figure in this syntactically experimental Williams drama of 1969. He is a painter, the first artist of this medium to be extensively dealt with by Williams. However, many of his characteristics and his philosophy of art are clearly congruent with the set of romantic conventions and dogmas which Williams has used many times before with "artists" of other media.

Mark Conley has known material success, and his talents have been recognized by a wide audience. He always has been, however, "a restless creature that lives in his private jungle.(Williams,1973:34) " As the play begins, we learn that Mark is in Tokyo, and has

apparently broken through into a completely new style of painting, an approach which is so intense and personal that it has physically debilitated him to the point of frequent collapse. His wife, Miriam, a rapacious, ravening woman, feels that he has had "a total collapse of the nervous system, mental and physical"(Ibid:11) and she does not feel that he can return to any relatively sane perception of reality from his latest artistic departure. She says to Leonard, Mark's agent, "he's gone through drip, fling, sopped, stained, saturated, scraped, ripped, cut, skeins of, mounds of heroically enduring color, but now he's arrived at a departure that's a real departure that I doubt he'll return from. Oh, I'm no fool about the. His sacred studio, talking to his."(Ibid:41) Williams' fractured, elliptical sentences here add to the impression of Mark's, and Miriam's, psychological disorientation.

Indeed, there seems to be an idea of the sacred in Mark Conley's definition of the stage of his art which he has reached at this point. His agent says, "I've never seen so much torment expressed in canvasses before,"(Ibid:35) and Mark's fragmented syntax suggests that he has been injured in an act of creation. He is not a word artist, but he feels the need to try to explain to Leonard and Miriam what he has discovered, as in this exchange with Miriam, who is unsympathetic:

Mark (slowly): I've always approached my work with a feeling of frightened timidity because the possibilities are.

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

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

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

Mark: I suppose you might say it's.

Miriam: Crock.(Ibid:27)

Although she does not understand Mark's theory of art, which he elsewhere terms "a discovery of color," she does sense his absolute terror at this discovery. "Says it's glorious but is terrified of it.... You didn't hear me. I said he's terrified of it."(Ibid:37)

Mark Conley has always, like his creator Tennessee Williams, found the value of his life in his art, seeing there an intensity which is lacking in the ordinary business of life. His wife tells of Mark's intimacy with his creative process,

I've heard him shout at the studio canvas. "You bitch, it's you or me! I'm betting I've got you now! A burst of light in the." I'd send the maid out at three or four with some food. "Get the fuck out of!" Once he struck with the tray! You! You see the completed paintings. I? I hear the continual madness of his attack on the canvasses as he paints, and I can say with authority on the. Mark is mad! I am married to madness: I need some space between myself, and.--A man raging in dark! Constantly further away from.(Ibid:38,39)

Tennessee Williams' mother quotes her son on the greater importance of the reality of the artistic, "Tom believes it is only in work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, 'for the actual world is less intense than the world of his invention and consequently his life, without recourse to violent disorder, does not seem very substantial'(Edwina Williams:245). At the time of the composition and presentation of this play, Williams was himself suffering from the same problems of locomotion demonstrated by Mark Conley. He says that he "was falling a great deal," and at one time fell with hot coffee in his hands, burning himself severely. In a case of life imitating art, after the critical response caused Hotel to close, Williams took Anne Meacham, the actress who portrayed Miriam in the play, to Tokyo, to "escape the brutality of the critics."(Williams,1972:78)

These biographical parallels are important only in that they suggest the close conformity of Williams' artistic philosophy and that expressed by Mark in the play.

Mark Conley has carried his involvement in his art beyond the merely philosophical, however. A major facet of his breakthrough into his new purer art is a physical union with the painting, suggesting a type of action painting. He now paints in the nude, with the canvas covering the floor of his hotel room, nothing separating him from his work,

I've understood the intimacy that should, that has to exist between the, the-- painter and the- I! It! Now it turned to me, or I turned to it, no division between us at all anymore! The one- ness, the!... Images in!....There was always a sense of division til! Gone: Now absolute one- ness with!(Williams:70)

This extreme, almost religiously fanatic, identification of the artist and his art may be recognized as a manic extension of Williams' statements of the superior worth of art over everyday life. Mark Conley has made his art sacred, and, in identifying so closely with his work, he has made himself a part of the divinity of his discovery.

The nature of Mark's discovery is inadequately termed, "color," but he sees in "color", a transcendent unity of the eternal and the essence of life, "I didn't know it till now. Color, color, and light! Before us and after us, too. What I'm saying is--color isn't passive, it, it--has a fierce life in it....The possibilities of color and light, discovered all at once, can make a man fall on the street. I've heard that finally on earth there'll be nothing but gigantic insects but now I know the last things, the imperishable things, are color and light."(Ibid:125) Mark's process of discovery, which might be termed a distillation of the essence of visual art, is paralleled by the distillation process that is at the heart of the work of the poet, who, Jung terms the 'Individuation Process'.

Although as a fearless explorer, Mark Conley may seem physically unlikely, he is capable of creation in his studio, even though he may have difficulty standing up in the bar. The bartender repeatedly speaks of him as "nerveless," and although an obvious verbal mistake, its repetition emphasizes the courage demonstrated by this adventurer into the new territory of discovery.

For Mark to continue on his journey demands great courage, for the territory before him is unexplored and forbidding, "I feel as if I were crossing the frontier of a country I have no permission to enter, but I enter this, this I tell you, it terrifies me! Now In the beginning."(Ibid:19) But, "An artist has to lay his life on the line,"(Ibid:22) and Mark is the

archetypal artist, pressing on, no matter if the physical cost makes him stumble instead of walk and prevents him from lifting a glass to his lips without help.

His physical appearance when we see him for the last time suggests a modern gladiator who has just ceased fighting for a short interlude of conversation, "Mark enters and crosses to the center table, with bloodied bits of tissue paper scattered over his face. He has on a clean white suit but has obviously lost weight so it doesn't fit him. His appearance is ravaged and fantastic: yet he has a childlike quality. When he speaks, his voice trembles."(Ibid:42) Yet his courage has not failed him. Mark refuses to go back to America with a nurse and commits himself to an asylum. His discovery is the most important thing to him, and he will not take time away from his work even to find a studio in Tokyo. His courage has not deserted him, for, as he tells his agent:

Mark: I was.

Leonard: What?

Mark: Always willing to.

Leonard: What?

Mark: Die.(Ibid:45)

The act of creation is a divine act in Williams' philosophy, and the creator is placing himself in the role of a god. The god who chooses to die tragically does so in the same mythic tradition as the artist who sacrifices himself to the demands of the divine act of creation. Mark Conley has so immersed himself in the creative process that he has attained the stature of a divinity, who has the power to dictate his own life and death. He drops dead in front of us, after literally writing "fini" to his life, saying in a reference to Williams' tools rather than his own brushes "Put the words back in a box and nail down the lid. Fini."(Ibid:50)

Miriam discusses her own humanity in juxtaposition to Mark's divinity in the final conversation with Leonard. She uses the metaphor of a circle of light, which, for her is existence. It is existence on the stage, for she has been lit from the curtain with a "small area of intense light."(Ibid:3) She says that it is also a circle of companions, who are like her,

"people at a smart restaurant talking gaily together. Interested in jewelry, clothes, shopping, shows."(Ibid:52) The circle is also a home, a way of living which defines one's perceptions, simultaneously illuminating and limiting. Those who step outside the circle are the indiscreet, the adventurers, the madmen, and, by implication, the artists, and a venture outside the circle must inevitably result in death. Miriam suggests that the light might be called "the approving look of God," and her penultimate line suggests the divine role that Mares creativity played, "He thought that he could create his own circle of light." (Ibid:51,53)

Mark, then, is the artist whose courage and nerveless desire to explore have brought him the touch of divinity. He has held the knowledge of the essential eternal unity of color and light, and has communed with that knowledge, made it his own, and, to some extent, has made this timeless unity one with himself. He thus will not die, just as this knowledge has not died, and just as the divine oneness does not die. His death assures his rebirth and therefore his union with eternity; it is only his words and his puny body which will be nailed into a box. His discovery of "color and light" was only the first inevitable step of his sacrifice. His death was the final step of the sacrificial ritual, but was only an intermediate stage in his ultimate journey of existence. Williams' message is that in nature, the process of movement is death and rebirth, which finds its mythic adaptation in the 'dismemberment' and rebirth of the 'dying god'. Parallel to nature's cyclical process is the imaginative cycle of dreaming and waking life.

4- The Jungian 'Terrible Mother' in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore closed its curtains after two abortive attempts at production one in 1963 and the other in 1964.

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore derives its name from the final scene of the play in which Chris, the "Angel of Death" poet, has just pulled a bottle of milk from the canvas

sack in which he carries all of his personal belongings, including his highly symbolic mobiles. The stage directions read: "Chris opens the milk bottle and sips the milk as if it were sacramental wine... He catches some drops... that have run down his chin, licks them almost reverently off the palm of his hand." (Williams, 42) Shortly after, Mrs. Goforth emerges from her bedroom. She is now close to death and Chris has told her that "you need somebody or something to mean God to you," (Ibid: 111) and that he is there to bring it to her. He has brought her "the love of true understanding," (Ibid: 12) and the message that the meaning of life is acceptance - acceptance "of how not to be frightened of not knowing what isn't meant to be known, acceptance of not knowing **anything** but the moment of still existing, until we stop existing and acceptance of that moment, too." (Ibid 113-114) In fear and panic, Mrs. Goforth angrily declares that she doesn't want to be escorted to death that she will "go forth alone. But you, you counted on touching my heart because you'd heard I was dying, and old dying people are your specialty, your vocation. But you miscalculated with this one. This milk train doesn't stop here anymore." (Ibid: 115) She is deceiving herself, of course, for she does need Chris, and when she tells him to "be here when I wake up," (p. 116) it is clear that, regardless of her anger, he does "mean God" to her. The fertility goddess demanding sexual reawakening in the myths is now demanding spiritual reawakening, and Chris Flanders, a poet, is the agent of her spiritual fertility. But in his role as agent, he is dependent on the mother goddess for his own nourishment (symbolized by Williams in the sacramental milk). His vocation is to bring someone "to mean God" to dying, demanding, old women, and he cannot fulfill his function without the goddess consort relationship.

That Mrs. Goforth is the mother goddess of mythology is indicated by Williams' imagery as well as the relationship itself. She is "a legend, (p. 65) the "mountain" goddess in her villa a top a cliff, inaccessible except by the sea which is "the cradle of life," connected by "that old water snake, the Nile." (p. 94) as a symbol of the matriarchal goddess, the ocean is

treacherous; "the sea is full of Medusas." (p. 77) Mrs. Goforth is likewise a griffin, "a mythological monster, half lion, and half eagle and completely human." (p. 5) she is surrounded by her "lupos," the dogs which she calls Wolves (p. 61) and she and the others like her are variously described as "witches" (the Witch of Capri), monsters, and bitches. Yet, like Kybele, Aphrodite, and the other earth goddesses, she is beautiful and a symbol of fertility. She is both "good" mother and "terrible" mother, the terms generally ascribed by mythologists and psychologists in analyzing the nature of the mother goddess. (This would also explain the Princess Kosmonopolis' frequent reference to herself as "monster.") She is the "bitch goddess." As Chris asks in the play:

"How is it possible for a woman of your reputation as a patron of the arts and artists, to live up here, with all this beauty about you, and yet be" "A bitch?" She interrupts him. "A swamp bitch, a devil?...a female devil." (p. 83)

The symbols are all those used in mythology and psychology to represent the beautiful and ugly, the good and terrible earth goddess, whose demands are voracious and, ultimately, destructive to the beautiful, submissive youth who must answer her demands.

The relationship in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, however, is not the physical one of mythology. Chris is a lover in a sense, but only figuratively. Making a point of rejecting her sexual demands, Chris is concerned with her emotional perhaps spiritual needs. But regardless of whether the relationship is physical or emotional or spiritual, it is essentially the same as that found in all of the plays after *Orpheus Descending*. Like Shannon, Chris Flanders has suffered from the awareness of his own mortality. With "the specter of lunacy at my heels," (p. 113) he has sought out a Hindu teacher, helping a man to die along the way told that in that incident he had found his vocation, Chris had suddenly felt "that sudden feeling of quiet"; he felt "peaceful." (p. 113) Like Shannon, he had learned that violent physical sacrifice cannot be elected in the modern world and that the meaning of life is acceptance. In accepting

his own mortality, he has become god like to the point that the play closes with Christaking a "medieval goblet" of wine, drinking from it, and passing it back to Blackie, Mrs. Gosforth's secretary. He has become a priest, a representative of Christ. Like all of Williams' Protagonists in the plays discussed, he is a Christ figure and a beautiful youth. And like most of these same protagonists, he is a wandering poet with no home and no family, who brings comfort and pleasure generally physical but in this case spiritual to lonely, ageing women who have nothing or nobody to believe in.

The allegorical nature of the play is obvious; Williams calls it a "sophisticated fairy tale. (p. 1) as seen in some of Williams' plays *Suddenly Last Summer*, for example this is not in itself a flaw. But Williams commits many serious blunders in his handling of the play. Conscious symbolism and myth usage can be good, but self conscious symbolism and myth, exaggerated to the point of the bizarre and directed to appeal to fashionable psychology and theatricality can only end in failure. *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* does this. Aside from his handling of myth and symbol, Williams' craftsmanship fails him in much the way it did in *Orpheus Descending* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

The mother goddess is once again not only dominant in meaning, she is a dominant Character. Because the plot centers about her rather than Chris, and because Chris is too allegorical to survive on the real level, he is totally eclipsed by the bitch goddess (in spite of his two or three brief flashes of authority). Possibly Williams intended this time to write a play about the goddess and not the god, but the reader is never certain that this is the case, and the play remains a divided work which has little claim to success.

5- Myth and Ritual Symbolism in Tennessee Williams' Plays

Introduction

All along this thesis, we have shown with evidence that Tennessee Williams has permeated his plays of the three first decades after World War II with ancient fertility and death and rebirth myth and ritual. We have also demonstrated that he has adapted the mythical symbols, patterns, and motifs to his own artistic needs, fitting them to plot, structure, character, theme and language. That these elements must necessarily affect the meanings of the plays is likewise clear as we have previously shown it. Yet, because his critics have failed to recognize the extent of the mythic elements, they have failed to recognize their impact. Even when the more obvious Dionysian or other myths and Christian allusions to death and resurrection are recognized, they are nearly always condemned as inappropriate and having little or no organic relationship to the meaning.

A- Death and Rebirth Modes in Williams' Plays

That the fertility myth symbolism reinforces the vegetation god themes of death and rebirth in terms more familiar than those of ancient myth cannot be understood when the vegetation god element itself is not recognized. In answering the questions we have raised in the introduction to this thesis, we must likewise consider what the modes of death and rebirth and the god goddess relationship meant in their original contexts, for it is these meanings on which Williams bases his own conceptions of reality that is to say, it is the past myth from which he constructs a present myth, a "true story of our time and the world we live in..." says Williams (*Suddenly Last Summer*, p. 47). This part will therefore show that in all of the plays examined, death is related, implicitly or explicitly, to suggestions of rebirth. Death is the means to the ultimate goal of becoming freed from the corrupting bonds of immortality; it is the means to becoming immortal and god-like. This linking of death and rebirth is a

characteristic of the great religions from ancient to Christian times. It is not, however, a characteristic of the modern existential view of life. Mircea Eliade notes that 'Anguish before Nothingness and Death' seems to be a specifically modern phenomenon. In all the other, non-European cultures, that is, in the other religions, Death is never felt as an absolute end or as Nothingness: it is regarded rather as a rite of passage to another mode of being; and for that reason always referred to in relation to the symbolisms and rituals of initiation, rebirth or resurrection. In the early religions, Eliade explains, "Death is the Great Initiation." This is true also of Christianity, but, as Eliade continues, "a great part of the modern world has lost faith, and for this mass of mankind anxiety in the face of Death presents itself as anguish before Nothingness." (Eliade:125)

Varying the theme only slightly, Tennessee Williams presents "anxiety in the face of Death" anguish before time and time is Nothingness. "Whether we admit it to ourselves, or not," the playwright tells us, "We are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence." (Williams, 1957) This sense of impermanence likewise haunts Williams' plays. Thus, in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Chance Wayne asks the question: "Time who could beat it, who could defeat it ever?" (p. 51) Nevertheless, his acceptance of the castration which is death is an act of optimism and not despair. If the Princess' life and, implicitly, his own has meant nothing, "Something's got to mean something... Something's still got to mean something." (p. 49) "The enemy time" can be conquered if "something means something." As Chris explains it to Mrs. Goforth, "Finally, sooner or later, you need somebody or something to mean God to you, even if it's a cow on the streets of Bombay, or carved rock on the Easter Islands..." (p. 111) And if somebody or something means God, then death becomes birth, preparing the way as it did originally to that God and to immortality: "Death," Eliade continues, "prepares the new, purely spiritual birth, access to a mode of being not subject to the destroying action of Time."⁴ Escape from time is escape from mortality, and immortality

is god like; death is the way to immortality, and thus death is the way to becoming one with God.

In restoring to death its primitive significance as a rite of passage, Williams gives particular attention to the mode of death or the death equivalent. Most often it takes the form of an ancient ritual sacrifice i.e., crucifixion, dismemberment, immolation, cannibalism, or castration. These are present or suggested in Williams' plays under study namely in *Orpheus Descending*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Summer and Smoke* or *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *The Night of the Iguana* and *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* and *Kingdom of Earth* or *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*. We will show that in every case, the death or ritual involves a surrendering of the individual identity in an effort to achieve rebirth.

1-Crucifixion

Crucifixion is the mode of death rebirth that Williams uses in his *Battle of angels* and *Orpheus Descending*. Crucifixion Val's original mode of death and the mode referred to in relation to Shannon, is a return, as Jung expresses it, to "the birth giving branch of the tree of life." (Jung, 1952) Trees are interpreted mythically and psychologically as signifying rebirth through the feminine, maternal principle, and crucifixion is the central symbol of sacrifice in Christianity as well as an occasional one in the vegetation god myths.

2-Dismemberment

Dismemberment, another sacrificial mode and the traditional mode of Orpheus' death, is mentioned in *Orpheus Descending* and is the mode of the death of the hero Sebastian in *Suddenly last Summer*. It is likewise related to fertility and rebirth. Dionysus, for example, is dismembered, gathered up by the goddess, and produced anew. Dismemberment is an integral

part of countless sun myths and many vegetation god myths, in which it is interpreted as" the inversion of the idea of the composition of the child in the mother's womb."⁶

3-Immolation

Immolation is another form of ritual sacrifice and the means by which Val's death was apparently carried out. It is a universal symbol of purification and procreation and was a common primitive, ancient, and Old Testament form of sacrifice. It was the purifying and generative powers of fire on which the Greeks based their concept of "the cosmic fire (ekpyrosis) that periodically puts an end to the universe in order to renew it,"(Frazer) and it was fire in which the phoenix, one of Williams' major symbols of resurrection, was both destroyed and reborn. Although regarded by many as a masculine principle, because of its association with the self-generating fire, the phoenix is also regarded as an androgynous symbol. It is often the symbol of the creative powers and holds special significance for the artist. In Williams' work immolation is used to suggest both the creative and purifying forces, with special emphasis on the latter. Val is burned to death, thus being purified and therefore becoming god-like both victim and victor.

4-Cannibalism

Frequently related to both dismemberment and immolation is cannibalism, the devouring of human flesh and the mythic device (generally regarded as "gothic") of *Suddenly Last Summer*. Cannibalism often followed dismemberment in the vegetation god myths, and it is the basis of the immolation of animals as a sacrifice to the gods. Once purified by the flames, the animal was looked upon as the god himself, and in the act of eating the purified animal, the worshipper was partaking of the "life" or "soul" principle, the "mana" of the god. As for cannibalism in Christianity, "it only remained to identify Christ with the Paschal Lamb of the New Covenant for the eating of the flesh and the presentation of the blood of the divine Victim to become integral in the sacrificial Eucharistic action. Like the other sacrificial

modes, cannibalism is also related to rebirth: "it was instituted by divine beings. But they instituted it to give human beings the opportunity to assume a responsibility in the cosmos, to enable them to provide for the continuity of vegetable life." Thus the vegetation gods were sometimes devoured after they were dismembered, thereby maintaining the continuity of the seasons. But Erich Neumann notes that the concept of sacrifice and food symbolism sometimes becomes distorted, until "the relation between the world and god is equivalent to that between food and the eater of food and god, once glorified as the world nourisher, is now seen as the world devourer, for the world is God's sacrificial food" (Neumann, 1967). This is Sebastian's vision of God the ugly black birds devouring the vulnerable baby turtles. And Sebastian, himself a kind of vegetation god, thinks of the young boys he exploits in terms of food: "Fed up with dark ones, famished for light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if they were items on a menu. 'That one's delicious looking, that one is appetizing,' or 'that one is not appetizing.'" (Williams, 1947:39)... Ultimately, of course, it is Sebastian who becomes the sacrificial food of the young boys who had run after him crying "pan," the Spanish word for "bread." This identification of Sebastian with bread and the idea of the boys' cannibalism as an attempt to partake of the god's spirit and immortality adds to Sebastian's role as a sacrificed god, especially when we recall Mrs. Venable's lifting Sebastian's volume of poems "as if elevating the Host before the altar." (p. 13) In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Williams has created a world in which sacrifice, in the form of cannibalism, is the dominant theme.

5-Castration

Sweet Bird of Youth employs another ancient mode of sacrifice as a central theme. In addition to the theme of time, which is also related to death, the play develops the castration motif of the vegetation god myths. Pointing out that ritual castration originated in the Mother Goddess cults, Neumann goes back to the vegetation gods in explaining the sacrificial mode:

The youths, who personify the spring, belong to the Great Mother. They are her bond slaves, her property, because they are the sons she has borne. Consequently the chosen ministers and priests of the Mother Goddess are eunuchs. They have sacrificed the thing that is for her the most important: the phallus. Hence the phenomenon of castration associated with this stage appears here for the first time in its proper sense, because specifically related to the genital organ. The castration threat makes its appearance with the great Mother and is deadly. For her, loving, dying, and being emasculated are the same thing. Only the priests, at least in later times, escape being put to death because, by castrating themselves, they have voluntarily submitted to a symbolical death for her sake (Neumann: 254)

This symbolical death is, as all death is in myth, "precondition of spirituality," and the resultant eunuch is a common symbol of spiritual generation which occurs again and again in the mystery religions. It is in this sense that Chance Wayne is a Christ figure as well as a vegetation god; his castration is his "purification" (case of the short play entitled *purification* in which castration is more clearly the means to the washing away of sins). It is his "symbolical death," and thus spiritual rebirth, as emphasized by the Hallelujah chorus and the Easter symbolism. This spiritual regeneration, like many of the ritual sacrifices, is based on the feminine principle. Like crucifixion, dismemberment, and cannibalism, castration involves the worshipper's surrendering his identity and returning to the maternal through death (death as a return to the womb is a generally accepted concept). And just as death is the beginning of immortality, thus enabling man to become god like, castration likewise involves the worshipper's staking on the characteristics of the worshipped. The sexual mutilations are performed, as E. O. James explains, in order that the priest may "secure complete identity with the Goddess."¹³ Or, as Neumann expresses it: "By surrendering himself, the devotee becomes the property of the Great Mother and is finally transformed into her."¹⁴ In the process of transformation through castration, however, another ritual becomes involved. Generally regarded as a sexual deviation, transvestism can also have a highly symbolic spiritual significance, and it is this religious significance which Williams attempts to express

in *Kingdom of Earth*. In *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, E. O. James observes of the Phrygian priest: "By sacrificing his virility he assimilated himself to her [the goddess] so completely that he shared in her life giving power. Henceforth he adopted female attire, having consecrated himself to her service even at the cost of his manhood."(Jones:98) Neumann adds the observation that the priest attired in the dress of the goddess and thus identified with her had not necessarily sacrificed his masculinity in castration, but that male prostitution was commonly a variant.(Newmann:144)

The religious identification with the goddess is clearly depicted in *Kingdom of Earth*. Dressed in his mother's garments, Lot descends the stairs. "With each step his gasping for breath is louder, but his agony is transfigured by the sexless passion of the transvestite. He has a fixed smile which is almost ecstatic." (p. 108) Attired in the goddess' garments, Lot has become "transfigured"; he has become Miss Lottie. Meanwhile Myrtle, "in a state of mental shock," has retreated to the kitchen and opened the icebox as if it were a place of refuge "Pan? Pan! Knife?Knife!" (pp. 108-109) Lot has undergone the ultimate sacrifice, and in his death, Williams is telling us, he has achieved new life. Myrtle, in choosing between "bread," (the "pan" of *Suddenly Last Summer* and the way to the spiritual life) and Chicken's symbol, the phallic knife, is at the same time underlining Lot's role as a victim of the knife his spiritual castration and his sacrifice in general.

In taking the myth of the vegetation gods and placing it in a modern context, Williams, unlike many contemporary writers, has made a point of retaining the intimate relationship of death and rebirth. Without the death of the god or god king preferably physical and preferably violent there can be no rebirth, and without rebirth man, because he is corruptible, cannot achieve union with God. Thus sacrifice becomes an optimistic, desirable act, and thus Williams's heroes Sebastian Venable, Chance Wayne, Shannon, and the other cosmic males submit to and desire some form of sacrifice. For most critics, however, the concept of

sacrifice as union or communion is overlooked. Although atonement is generally discussed, it is always in terms of guilt and appeasement rather than its true sense of union, i.e., "at-one-ment," with god. In arriving at their definitions of "atonement," the critics inevitably turn to a passage in the short story '*Desire and the Black Masseuse*': "the principle of atonement [is] the surrender of self to violent treatment by others with the idea of thereby clearing one's self of his guilt." (Williams,1970:21) taken out of context, the passage suggests only a punishment for sin, with possible forgiveness. Man, who is punished and perhaps forgiven for being corrupt. There is no suggestion in this concept that, once forgiven, he will become less mortal, that he will be restored to his original innocence, or that he can become God. Nor is there any acknowledgement that atonement is actually man's unconscious compensation for his lack of god likeness, his solace in the absence of the element which can be achieved only through death. Yet, if we read carefully, this is what Williams says in the story. The paragraph from which the passage is taken explains the principle in its entirety:

For the sins of the world are really only its partialities, its incompleteness, and these are what sufferings must atone for. A wall that has been omitted from a house because the stones were exhausted, a room in a house left unfurnished because the householder's funds were not sufficient these sorts of incompleteness are usually covered up or glossed over by some kind of makeshift arrangement. The nature of man is full of such makeshift arrangements, devised by himself to cover his incompleteness. He feels a part of himself to be like a missing wall or a room left unfurnished and he tries as well as he can to make up for it. The use of imagination, resorting to dreams or the loftier purpose of art, is a mask he devises to cover his incompleteness. Or violence such as a war, between two men or among a number of nations, is also a blind and senseless compensation for that which is not yet formed in human nature. Then there is still another compensation. This one is found in the principle of atonement, the surrender of self to violent treatment by others with the idea of thereby clearing one's self of his guilt. This last way was the one that Anthony Burns unconsciously had elected.(Ibid:35)

6- Atonement

Atonement for Williams, then, is not primarily a question of appeasement for or forgiveness of sins. It is man's unconscious compensation "for that which is not yet formed in human nature"; it is man's compensation for his lack of perfection. And through this compensation, in his "surrender of self to violent treatment by others," it is not merely guilt that is cleared although this may be the desired psychological effect but it is also perfection which is achieved. In sacrifice man can find the missing god like element. Williams reiterates this in the story's closing paragraph: "And meantime, slowly, with barely a thought of so doing, the earth's whole population twisted and writhed beneath the manipulation of night's black fingers and the white one's of day with skeletons splintered and flesh reduced to pulp, as out of this unlikely problem, the answer, perfection, was slowly evolved through torture."(Ibid:20)

That the torture of Anthony Burns is carried out against the background of the evangelist preacher's Crucifixion sermons is significant, but just as significant is the fact that when the masseur completes the ritual by devouring the little man, "the passionate services at the church were finished," "quiet had returned and there was an air of completion"(Ibid).The completion is the rebirth, and thus perfection, of the sacrificed Burns.

Beginning with *Orpheus Descending*, Williams has presented, in all of the plays discussed, modern man searching like ancient man for completion. In all of the plays man believes the completion can be achieved through sacrifice. In *The Night of the Iguana* and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop here anymore*, man is faced, however, with the problem of finding no one to carry out the sacrifice, of finding that there is no violent sacrifice in the modern world. Renouncing his vision of a world only too willing to act as executioner, Williams renounces violent sacrifice as the means to perfection. Gradually, he replaces it with what presents as the even greater sacrifice acceptance of the incompleteness. Ultimately, Williams calls for violent

or "quiet" sacrifice to be combined with devotion to the worship of the goddess who is the source of all fertility and thus of rebirth. And thus the ancient goddess consort relationship is a major theme in Williams' work.

Throughout his history, man has been preoccupied with death. For the man without faith, death marks the end of all life; for the religious man, it is the beginning of a higher life. Either way it is man's ultimate concern. For Tennessee Williams, nothing can be created without sacrifice, and the sacrifice and rebirth of the Cosmic Male is, as we have seen, Williams' major theme in the later plays. The plays are centered around what were known in ancient times as the "Death Mysteries." Characterized by the worship of a goddess, the death mysteries stood in contrast to the mysteries of birth and generation, which were devoted to the worship of a god. Because the goddess was regarded as the source of all fertility and birth and the god the agent of that fertility, it was the goddess who was worshipped as supreme in the mystery of death and rebirth. It was she who was responsible for life rising renewed from the grave, for it was she who symbolized the earth, the mortal part of nature. The masculine principle, the immortal part of nature signified by the sun, was the object of the Earth Goddess. According to ancient myth, the Earth swallowed up the sun nightly in the west, only to see it rise again in the east. Williams had portrayed this myth and this relationship of the sun and the earth early in his career in the short play depicting D. H. Lawrence's death. Written in 1941, the final scene of *I rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* presents Lawrence watching the sunset moments before his own death. "When first you look at the sun," he declares, "it strikes you blind Life's blinding ..." He stirs and leans forward in his chair. "The sun's going down. He's seduced by the harlot of darkness. . . . Now she has got him, they're copulating together! The sun is exhausted, the harlot has taken his strength and now she will start to destroy him. She's eating him up...Oh, but he won't stay down. He'll climb back out of her belly and there will be light. In the end there will always be light..."²² It is the same

concept which is implied in *The Night of the Iguanaw* when Shannon, speaking of God, suddenly declares to Hannah, "that' shim! There he is now!" The stage directions tell us that "he is pointing out at a blaze, a majestic apocalypse of gold light, shafting the sky as the sun drops into the pacific." (p. 57) that the sun is sinking towards the ocean and not the earth is not an inconsistency, for, like the earth, the ocean is a feminine principle, a symbol of containment, the maternal womb, and death is the return to the womb. In *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, Chris Flanders puts forth his theory of the sea and relationship to rebirth and the feminine principle: "this sea called the Mediterranean Sea, which means the middle of the earth, was the cradle, of life, not the grave, but the cradle of pagan and Christian civilizations, this sea, and its connecting river, that old water snake, the Nile." (p. 94) Ocean or earth, the Goddess is the center of the death mysteries which ultimately become life mysteries. As Eliade explains it,

When the Earth becomes a goddess of Death, it is simply because she is felt to be the universal womb, the inexhaustible source of all creation. Death is not, in itself, a definitive end, not an absolute annihilation, as it is sometimes thought to be in the modern world. Death is likened to the seed which is sown in the bosom of the Earth Mother to give birth to a new plant. Thus, one might speak of an optimistic view of death, since death is regarded as a return to the Mother, a temporary re-entry into the maternal bosom (Eliade, 1957: p).

Because the primordial concept of the earth involved features both of nourishment and famine, the Earth Goddess was an ambivalent figure. She was both nourished and protector and ensnarer and devourer; she was both Good Mother and Terrible Mother. Neumann tells us that the death mysteries are mysteries of the Terrible Mother for they are "based on her devouring ensnaring function, in which she draws the life of the individual back into herself. Here the womb becomes a devouring maw and the conceptual symbols of diminution, rending, hacking to pieces, and annihilation, or rot and decay, have their place..." And thus "because ritual killing and dismemberment are a necessary transition toward rebirth and new

fertility, the destruction of the luminous gods in the journey through the underworld appears as a cosmic equivalent of the birth of the new day.'

6- The Symbolism of the Earth Goddess: Good or Terrible Mother

A- The Good or Terrible Mother

The basis of Williams' metaphysics and the ancient religions was the maternal principle. Kybele, Aphrodite, Isis and the other Earth goddesses were both beautiful and destructive, both good and terrible. Thus Lady Torrance, Mrs. Venable, the Princess Kosmonopolis, Maxine Faulks, Mrs. Goforth, and Miss Lottie are both the maternal and devouring figures who dominate the son lovers. All are endowed by Williams with the positive symbols of their sex which are based on their functions as containers, nourishes, and protectors. Symbols such as the city (Princess Kosmonopolis), the mountain (Mrs. Goforth), and the ocean (Maxine Faulks) indicate the "good," protective nature of the mother goddess, while the crucifixion, immolation, dismemberment, cannibalism, and castration, on the other hand, are all evidence of the devouring nature of these mother goddesses to whom the beautiful young gods are bound by the "invisible loving steel chains" of the umbilical cord, the ultimate female symbol. Good or Terrible, positive or negative, the Earth Goddess is the center of the death mysteries of which sacrifice and rebirth are integral aspects.

In the goddess cults the worship and devotion like the sacrifice which was a part of the worship had as its end the votary's union with the earth goddess. Whether the union was achieved through frenzied abandonment in the form of dancing or an orgy, or whether it was achieved through ritual castration or transvestism was of little consequence. The important thing was that, through a union with the feminine principle, the male rose "to a sublimated, intoxicated, enthusiastic, and spiritualized existence of vision, ecstasy, and creativity, and to a state of 'out of him selfness' in which he is the instrument of higher powers, whether 'good' or

'evil'. "Certainly Lot in his "transfiguration" is an example of the looking forward to the perfect union with the goddess, as was Sebastian's vision:

"My son was looking for God, I mean for a clear image of him. He spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow's nest of the schooner watching this thing on the beach till it was too dark to see it, and when he came down the rigging he said 'Well, now I've seen Him!', 'and he meant God. And for several weeks after that he had a fever, he was delirious with it.'" (Williams, 1947:19)

It was then that Sebastian saw himself as a sacrifice. That Williams is speaking here of union with a masculine god rather than the feminine principle is not irrelevant to the goddess worship, for even his gods appear at times in terms of the maternal as well as the masculine. As negative female symbols, the voracious black birds of *Suddenly Last Summer* are more Kybele than Zeus. The storm of *The Night of the Iguanawhich*, like the sun, is Shannon's strong, angry god, also contains a feminine element: it appears "with its white convulsions of light,...like a giant white bird attacking the hilltop of the Costa Verda." (p. 77) Likewise Mrs. Goforth's "angry old lion, the sun" (p.11) is ambivalent, for, while the sun is a masculine symbol, the lion is often a feminine symbol of the Terrible Mother. The suggestion is that God, like the young gods of the plays, is both masculine and feminine; that "He "is the union of the two principles of life and of death; and that the two principles together equal perfection. The same dual principle can be seen in Christianity as well. The Mother Church is understood as the Mother of the living and it is through her that the spiritual life was mediated from Christ the second Adam as well as the bride of Christ, and much of the earth goddess and goddess consort imagery was employed by the early fathers. As a return to the maternal tree of life, Christ's crucifixion could be said to have the meaning of a union with the mother, and Jung cites a passage from Augustine to this effect: "

As a bridegroom from his chamber, Christ advanced to meet the world, looking forward to his nuptials; as far as the bed of a cross he walked, and there, by mounting on it, he strengthened his marriage bond. As soon as he heard his creature heavily breathing and yearning, through an interchange of

love he submitted himself to pain, and was one with his woman with rights everlasting!(Jung,1965:144)

Through the incestuous principle, then, Augustine has made Christ's death parallel to the sacred marriage of the Adonis festival in which Venus and Adonis were laid upon the nuptial couch, where god and goddess united to become one eternal entity. In joining the two principles of the masculine and feminine in his images of God, Williams is not only suggesting that the god thus becomes both masculine and feminine, but that the "incompleteness" in man with which Williams is concerned is, perhaps, man's unconscious desire and inability to return, in life, to the original state of unity with the maternal principle, i.e., the embryonic state. A statement by E. O. James concerning the votary's attempt at union with the goddess bears this out:

Whether or not this was prompted by some unconscious desire to return to the maternal womb, either of the actual mother or of that of a symbolic womb of the earth, it would seem to have been an urge to return to a bio cosmic unity inherent in the maternal principle in order thereby to acquire a renewal of life at its very source and center(James,1952:132)

In psychological terms, the idea is an especially interesting one since Williams has said much about his strong childhood ties with his mother, and since he has publicly acknowledged his homosexual tendencies. Burstein's comment that the plays are mostly about incest may not be unfounded, although the plays clearly are not merely parables of possible incestuous drives on the part of the author or even of Jung's universal instinct toward matriarchal incest. Rather, they are parables of man's search for a kind of cosmic unity. Like Christ and, in a sense, like the young vegetation gods, Williams' Cosmic Males are Second Adams, the first of whom is commonly thought of as androgynous. Thus, in depicting the Cosmic Male in a matriarchal universe, Williams is depicting man's "incompleteness" his separation from the source of life and creativity, from the great feminine principle and his attempt to return to it through

sacrifice and worship. The mythical goddess consort relationship offers Williams a means of expressing this attempt.

A- Sexual symbolism in Williams' Plays

Homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, transvestism all are judged in the modern world as oddities to be wondered at or deviations to be condemned or cured. Yet in all of his later plays, Williams presents his protagonists god like young men searching for completion through sacrifice and rebirth and the worship of the Eternal Feminine as verging on one or more of the sexual abnormalities.

Homosexuality has been defined as "a female soul in the frame of a male." Bisexuality is the physical presence of both male and female characteristics in one individual, and asexuality is both a figurative lack of any sex or the ability to reproduce without the union of male and female. In a sense, the homosexual is a kind of spiritual bisexual, while the asexual creature, capable of reproduction without dependence on another, can likewise be thought of as bisexual. Closely related are hermaphroditism and androgyny. The former named after the bisexual child of Hermes and Aphrodite is essentially a synonym for bisexuality, while the latter is distinguished from bisexuality by the fact that the androgynous individual, while having some of the characteristics of the opposite sex, is predominantly either male or female. Finally, transvestism is the act of symbolically assuming, in addition to one's own nature, the nature of the opposite sex. That the sexual themes, generally described as "sordid," are an integral aspect of Williams' work, can be seen by only a brief sketch of each of the protagonists of the plays under consideration.

Learning that he had "something to sell besides snakeskins ...," (p.49) Val Xavier became a male prostitute. Val possesses an animal magnetism and a kind of "wild beauty," (p. 16) making him extremely attractive to women, yet he is, for the most part, passive in his

relations toward them. Submitting to the female aggressors, Val is, in a sense, both male and female.

Sebastian Venable is handsome, impeccable, and homosexual. Unresponsive to women excepting his mother, he is described as giving birth to his poems every year after nine months of preparation. As a poet, Sebastian represents fertility. "Myson was a creator!" (p. 32) Mrs. Venable declares, further emphasizing Sebastian's feminine aspects. Creator and homosexual, Sebastian is, in a sense, bisexual.

Chance Wayne is a male prostitute whose first and last encounters with sex are both reluctant. Like Val, he is beautiful and apparently virile. Reluctant to touch Heavenly because she was too pure, he is reluctant to make love to the Princess because she is too corrupt:

Chance: Aren't you ashamed, a little?

Princess: Of course I am. Aren't you?

Chance: More than a little... (p. 372)

In both instances referred to in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, the woman is the aggressor in the sexual relationship. Chance is at no time seen in the usual masculine role, even to the extent that both relationships that with heavenly and that the princess are initiated and ended by the woman. In his passivity and castration, Chance Wayne is more feminine than masculine.

Shannon, the protagonist in *The Night of the Iguana*, is modeled on the young homosexual poet in Williams' short story of the same name. Seduced or having been seduced by two "teenagers" (p. 46) Shannon's mental torments his "rage at Mama and rage at God... and rage at the everything..." (p. 95) and his ultimate decision to stay with Maxine as her lover and as a male prostitute are the play's focal point. As reluctant as Chance Wayne, Shannon is persuaded to accept the role by Hannah, who is herself described as "totally feminine and yet androgynous looking almost timeless." (p. 18) in repressing his instinct for self-destruction, Shannon is on his way to becoming, in his prostitution, more like Hannah who has achieved

completion and mastered her fears. He is totally masculine, yet in his submission to the earthy Maxine she is described as "rapaciously lusty" (p. 7) he is likewise feminine.

Chris Flanders is the young poet who comes to "mean God" to Mrs. Goforth. Figuratively asexual, he rejects physical love altogether, submitting himself emotionally and spiritually to the domination of grotesque and dying women, and in his submissiveness, he, too, is more feminine than masculine. Lot is a transvestite. He has submitted himself to the domination of Miss Lottie, his mother, and in assuming her dress he is symbolically assuming her nature. Transvestist and impotent, he nevertheless affirms his masculinity: "Don't imagine you have married a fairy." (p. 43) Lot has, like Chris, rejected sex in favor of what he considers a higher existence devotion to beauty and devotion to Miss Lottie. His passion is like Hannah's and, as Williams describes it, "sexless" (p. 108)

It is interesting that of the six protagonists one is homosexual with suggestions of bisexuality, one is asexual with suggestions of bisexuality, a third is asexual and a transvestite the symbolic equivalent of castration, and thus of death in the maternal principle while the remaining three are male prostitutes, symbolic in the goddess cults of castration, death, and submission to the feminine principle. If the incestuous goddess consort relationship was for Williams the means of expressing man's attempt to return to the original unity of masculine and feminine, the sexual theme is likewise an expression of man's awareness of "incompletion" and his attempt to overcome that incompleteness by uniting himself with the missing feminine element. Severely condemned by many critics as sensationalism and exploitation, the sexual abnormalities are nevertheless an integral part of Williams' metaphysics just as they were an integral part of myth and the cultic rituals. Homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, transvestism all represent, in Williams' work as well as in primitive and ancient cults, a religious ideal founded in myth and holding a sacred and transpersonal significance. The essential feature common to all of these sexual concepts is the union in

varying forms and to varying degrees of the two sexes. Primarily male, primarily female, or both equally, the individual represents a union of the masculine and feminine principles. The ancient cults regarded such a union as a return to the primordial time of the hermaphrodite round from which all creation was thought to have emerged. As Neumann explains, "The round is the calabash containing the World Parents... The World Parents, heaven and earth, lie one on top of the other in the round, spacelessly and timelessly united, for as yet nothing has come between them to create duality out of the original unity. The container of the masculine and feminine opposites is the great hermaphrodite, the primal creative element who combines the poles in himself..."The symbol of self-creation with the power and beauty of both male and female, the hermaphrodite or androgyny the terms are used interchangeably by most psychologists and myth theorists became a divine figure in most primitive cults, especially in those of the goddess and vegetation god. Discussing the concept at length, Jung considers the theory that divine hermaphroditism may have originated as the product of "primitive non differentiation" in which differences and contrasts were "either barely separated or completely merged." However,

If... the hermaphrodites were only a product of primitive non differentiation, we would have to expect that it would soon be eliminated with increasing civilization. This is by no means the case; on the contrary, man's imagination has been preoccupied with this idea over and over again on the high and even the highest levels of culture, as we can see from the late Greek and syncretic philosophy of Gnosticism. (Jung:100)

The latter, Christ's androgyny, is particularly important when dealing with Williams, for if a sexualized Christ figure can draw criticism, a bisexual Christ figure can draw twice as much.

E. O. James cites a passage from St. Paul to explain the basis for the mystical concept:

"The Lord Christ, the fruit of the Virgin, did not pronounce the breasts of women blessed, nor selected them to give nourishment; but when the kind and loving Father had rained clown the Word, Himself became spiritual nourishment to the good, O mystic marvel! The Universal Father is one, and

one is the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one, and the same everywhere, and one is the Virgin Mother."(James:44)

Kebele, Attis, Adonis, Dionysus and Christ all have been interpreted as androgynous figures, and all represent an ideal. The ideal is a complex one. Eliade observes that this signifies more than the coexistence or rather coalescence of the sexes in the divine being. He explains that Androgyny is an archaic and universal formula for the expression of wholeness, the co-existence of the contraries. More than a state of sexual completeness, androgyny symbolizes the perfection of a primordial, non-conditioned state(Eliade:96)

Thus Williams' male characters are not searching for the missing feminine element solely by uniting sexually, nor are the female characters searching only for sexual union with the male. The physical union is merely the symbol of the spiritual union of the two principles. For Williams, the absence of the physical union is even presented as the true ideal, for it is ultimately the androgynous individuals Hannah and Lot (and the symbolic phoenix) who are presented as the most perfect in their attainment of the missing principle. To cite Eliade once more, "Androgyny has become a general formula signifying autonomy, strength, wholeness; to say of a divinity that it is androgyne is as much as to say that it is the ultimate being, the ultimate reality." (Ibid)Thus Hannah and Lot are presented as having learned the secret of man's striving, and the phoenix presides over many of the plays in which resurrection is a major theme. For Williams, as for both the ancient and modern worlds, "the primordial idea" (whether androgyny or hermaphrodism)"has become a symbol of the creative union of opposites, a 'uniting symbol' in the literal sense. In its functional significance the symbol no longer points back, but forward to a goal not yet reached. Notwithstanding its monstrosity, the hermaphrodite has gradually turned into a creator of conflicts and a bringer of healing, and it acquired this meaning in relatively early phases of civilization."³⁵ For Williams' tormented characters, the "mutilated" and the "fugitive kind," then, androgyny or bisexuality

is an ideal by which their conflicts, their separateness, and their incompleteness are subdued and healed. Thus the sexual abnormalities actually reinforce the sacrifice rebirth theme, for they bring Williams' protagonists even closer to the god like perfection for which they are striving, the supreme union of masculine and feminine.

When asked about the theme of a finished work, Williams generally looks vague and answers, "It is a play about life." Then he explains: "I have never been certain of what my plays meant very precisely since I have always written mostly from the unconscious...(Williams)Adrian Hall, director of the off Broadway production of *Orpheus Descending*, supports this explanation, remarking that Williams works from some "dark metaphysical source," that "he writes out of some really subjective contact with his psyche. He is in contact with himself.(Hall,1975)

Perhaps we should let this stand as an explanation for the flood of archetypal images, symbols, and themes which has made Williams' work rich ground in which to unearth mythic artifacts. Every artist is entitled to an artistic pose. But although mythic artifacts as artifacts are interesting and decorative, they are of less significance than the knowledge of their relationship to the individual or the society that created them, the spirit that informed them.

-Conclusion

The spirit which informs Williams' myth infused plays is one of universal truth. Drawing upon the myths of the past Williams has created the "true story of our time and the world we live in..." Finding a meaning for the modern world reflected in the mythic meanings, Williams has worked, reworked, and molded the myths until they have little outward resemblance to their archetypes; yet he has retained the essential meanings of those archetypes. In his search for a metaphor for man's struggle to attain his original unity, whether it be with his mother or the cosmos, Williams has discovered the language of myth, and he has employed this language fully during the past decade. Divine androgyny, gods and

goddesses, sacrifice and rebirth Williams has found in these mythic elements metaphysics, and through them he has transformed that metaphysics into theatre. He has used these elements to inform every aspect of his work his plot and structure, his characters, his themes, his language, and even the frequently nonrealistic staging of which he is so fond.

Creating his own Death Mysteries, Tennessee Williams has constructed them on the foundations of the past, and before them he has erected this monument: "it showed three figures of indeterminate gender astride a leaping dolphin. One bore a crucifix, one a cornucopia, and one a Grecian lyre" Williams is described as aesthetic whose vision is considered private, regarded as self indulgent, interested in the past, To my mind, and I hope I have been able to indicate this in the foregoing study of his plays, there is one extraordinary truth about this "shy, introverted Southerner": he is troubled by the dilemma - how to maintain the integrity by which I mean, and I think, he means- the wholeness of human personality of the individual under the impact of the prevailing social atmosphere in the post war period. Williams finds answers to the problem in art itself, by which is meant a way of life and thought rather than the practice of an aesthetic profession. In his drama he seeks to offer his fellow contemporary man a source of sustenance and strength. Williams' gradual renunciation of his earlier moral skepticism and a consequently enlarged and more balanced vision is anticipated by some of his more recent work. No artist can be expected to produce masterpiece after masterpiece, but within his existing repertoire this American Blues already offers a deep spring of inspiration for the contemporary theatre. Williams is (to borrow the expression Eliot used for Joyce) "the greater craftsman." He has given rise to a whole style of dramaturgy executed upon the stage by such complementary artists as Elia Kazan, and Harold Clurman, and emulated by modern theatres in more than a continent.

Williams' revelation cannot be reduced to any simple rule. It is rich, varied and full of what may appear to be contradictory assertions and statements. Apart from what has been said

above, Williams' vision can also be described as that of a romantic rebel fighting against conventions and demanding for himself a wild freedom which is incompatible with an urban society. These rebellious individuals are lonely people and all of them might repeat Val Xavier's words: 'Nobody gets to know nobody: We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins for life'.

Our analysis of Williams' major works using myth ritual theories reviewed in part one has revealed that the essential force at the base of most of the plays of Williams is this fear of the dark chaos of death, defeated by the hope of rebirth, and the myth derived from this god-man tragic death. There are several reasons for which a god-man might be forced to put himself to death. One obvious cause might be an infraction of the religious or social rules of a society. As Sir James George Frazer said, "But while in the case of ordinary men the observance of the rules (of a social system) is left to the choice of the individual, in the case of the god-man it is enforced under penalty of dismissal from his high station, or even of death." (Frazer,1969:306)As we find the impulses of the human mind become more violent as we approach the unconscious more closely, the violence in the myth becomes more pronounced as the myth becomes more primitive. The modern example of a governmental official forced to resign for failure to observe the rules of his social system is a shadow far removed from the violent death awaiting the primitive leader of a tribe upon his failure to conduct himself as his society required.

The rebellion against the social milieu is an effort to bring happiness and grace out of frustration in the lives of poor victims like those in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which however seems doomed to failure. William's world has a central mood of evil, cruelty and decay as most of his discussed plays have exploited all forms of sexual perversity in a society of horror, brutality and moral depravity. Even the short plays like *Kingdom of Earth* and others have outcasts that are sex deviates and are described with sympathy and understanding. His drama depicts frustrated people who have taken to drinking or some other intoxicant to drown their despair and seek some solace. Like the broken

Dionysus, the frustrated characters in the plays under scrutiny need some adventures which may help them to go on in life.

Williams' vision of man is that of a lonely and helpless creature surrounded by forces which do not suit him. He cannot overcome those forces but always hopes to do so through one effort or the other. These efforts are made only in imagination and so he is always keeping himself in illusion. Williams has created Blanche, Alma, Sebastian and other characters to illustrate the different illusions of man to keep himself away from facts. These illusive dreams indicate the retreat of these characters from the established social order. These false hopes are the make believe answers which seems to provide them with the elixir of life. Williams' perception of the post war man is that of an incomplete human being. Everyone is haunted by loneliness and in spite of apparent completion, pleasure is always incomplete. Alma, in *Summer and Smoke*, swallows air to escape blank loneliness. Serafina, in *The Rose Tattoo*, thinks that adherence to Sicilian morality will help to lighten the burden of loneliness. In sum, Williams has invented rituals clothed in modern dress to rid himself and the audience of those pressures engendered by the archetype here presented and to give hope in the possibilities of resurrection.

General Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the issue of myth in modern American drama through the discussion of selected plays by American playwright Tennessee Williams namely: *Battle of Angels*(1940) *Orpheus Descending*(1957), *A Streetcar Named Desire*(1947), *Sweet Bird of Youth*(1959), *The Rose Tattoo*(1951), *Camino Real*(1953), *Suddenly Last Summer*(1959), *The Night of the Iguana*(1961),*The Milk Train doesn't Stop Here Anymore*(1963) *Summer and Smoke*(1964), *The Seven Descents of Myrtle or Kingdom of Earth*(1968) , *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969), *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*(1970) , and Williams' novel *The Roman Spring of Mrs Stone* (1950)

We have shown that Williams attempted to bring into focus new implications of Greek myth and ritual affecting the present condition of man. We have discussed with evidence from his drama the ways into which he interprets the contemporary epoch as a time of acute crisis. The selected plays are mythic projections of a moment of decision which engages man-kind in the mid-twentieth century. The crucial question of being and action is not twentieth century novelty. With his literary archetypes, Williams demonstrates how it has puzzled almost every era in Modern Western History. Gutman, Williams' mouthpiece in *Camino Real* functions like a chorus-voice in a modern tragedy, comments on the universality of man's existential problem: 'it is like the fall of capital city, the destruction of Carthage, the sack of Rome (...) when I observe this change, I say to myself: could it happen to me? The answer is yes'(Williams,1962:93)

It may be surprising to observe that Williams quite consciously saw his work as part of a tradition of tragedy. Indeed, in his *Memoirs* (1975), he explains why he considers his drama to be tragic "The plays come closest to being both works of art and works of craft. They are really very well put together, in my opinion, and all my characters are credible and touching.

Also it (his drama) adheres to the valuable edict of Aristotle that a tragedy must have unity of time and place and magnitude of theme”. (Williams, 1975: 212)

Furthermore, in the essay '*The Timeless World of a Play*', Williams notes his admiration for the unfettered scope of Greek tragedy, in contrast to the (presumably realistic) plays of many of his contemporaries. Observing that modern plays have “disguised from ourselves the intensity of our own feelings, the sensibility of our own hearts,” (Williams, 1978:53). He notes that ancient tragedy once offered spectacles which provided the “almost liquid warmth of unchecked human sympathies, relieved of self-consciousness” (Ibid) He observes with disappointment that plays in that great tradition have “begun to seem untrue” for modern audiences out of “fear and evasion” (Ibid). Greek tragedy, on the other hand, created a timeless world, “removed from that element which makes people little and their emotions fairly inconsequential” (Ibid: 51).

In his essay, Williams argues for the restoration of a world in which “the magnitude of the events and the passions aroused by them does not seem ridiculously out of proportion to human experience” (Ibid). Rather than plays which revolve around quotidian anxieties, Williams calls for plays which restore this elemental power inherent in the theatre, plays written “in the tragic tradition which offers us a view of certain values in violent juxtaposition” (Ibid: 55).

We have also given justification of Williams' borrowing of the most violent and most tragic of Greek Myth, that of Dionysus from which tragedy sprang. In fact in the Foreword to *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Williams suggests that “if there is any truth in the Aristotelian idea that violence is purged by its poetic representation on stage, then it may be that my cycle of violent plays have had a moral justification after all” (Ibid: 109-10). It is interesting that the playwright here refers to his plays as a “cycle,” suggesting that there may be thematic cohesion through the depiction of violent action. This perspective is accompanied by the

author's observation that "I have always felt a release from the sense of meaninglessness and death when a work of tragic intention has seemed to me to have achieved that intention, even if only approximately, nearly" (Williams, 1978: 110).

Our investigation of the issue of myth and ritual in Tennessee Williams' drama revealed that in his critical writings, Williams argues for theatrical representations involving powerful passions and violent, extreme actions on stage; even going so far as to suggest that such depictions may provide something akin to catharsis in the spectator. While these may not reference an explicit definition of tragedy, his writings certainly suggest an artist self-consciously exploring and testing the parameters of tragedy in the modern age. In the short essay, '*The Meaning of the Rose Tattoo*,' Williams further connects his own work with the notion of the origins of Greek myth and tragedy as a form of religious celebration honoring the god Dionysus.

As the researches of Antonin Artaud, and Carl Gustav Jung have indicated, the creation of a work of art may serve as a therapeutic device for externalizing certain psychological conflicts. Whatever the psychological pressures felt by the artist, his creation of the art work provides an island of clarity and controllable order in the midst of the chaos felt within his mind and the chaotic state which many modern artists have perceived as the condition of Western society today. If the artist feels the world is horrible, violent, and decaying, then escape from that system of things is necessary to preserve the artist's equilibrium or sanity. The work of art fulfills the demands made upon the artist by his own nature and his perception of the nature of mankind. The creation of the work of art is thus the construction of a bridge of images or symbols, a safe passageway from imagination to reality, even though the artist may be certain that dark chaos awaits him at either end of the distance.

Williams is described as aesthete whose revelation is considered private, regarded as self-indulgent, interested in the past, To my mind, and I hope I have been able to indicate this in

the foregoing study of his plays, there is one extraordinary truth about this "shy, introverted Southerner": he is troubled by the dilemma - how to maintain the integrity by which I mean, and I think, he means- the wholeness of human personality of the individual under the impact of the prevailing social atmosphere in the post war period. Williams finds answers to the problem in art itself, by which is meant a way of life and thought rather than the practice of an aesthetic profession. In his drama he seeks to offer his fellow contemporary man a source of sustenance and strength. Williams' gradual renunciation of his earlier moral skepticism and a consequently enlarged and more balanced vision is anticipated by some of his more recent work. No artist can be expected to produce masterpiece after masterpiece, but within his existing repertoire, this American bohemian already offers a deep spring of inspiration for the contemporary theatre. Williams is (to borrow the expression Eliot used for Joyce) "the greater craftsman." He has given rise to a whole style of dramaturgy executed upon the stage by such complementary artists as Elia Kazan, and Harold Clurman, and emulated by modern theatres in more than a continent.

Williams' revelation cannot be reduced to any simple rule. It is rich, varied and full of what may appear to be contradictory assertions and statements. Apart from what has been said above, Williams' poetics can also be described as that of a romantic rebel fighting against conventions and demanding for himself a wild freedom which is incompatible with an urban society. These rebellious individuals are lonely people and all of them might repeat Val Xavier's words: 'Nobody gets to know nobody: We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins for life'.

Our analysis of Williams' major works using myth ritual theories reviewed in part one has revealed that the essential force at the base of most of the plays of Williams is this fear of the dark chaos of death, defeated by the hope of rebirth, and the myth derived from this god-man tragic death.

The discussion of the selected plays and novel has also shown that Williams' rebellion against the social milieu is an effort to bring happiness and grace out of frustration in the lives of poor victims like those in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which however seems doomed to failure. William's world has a central mood of evil, cruelty and decay as most of his discussed plays have exploited all forms of sexual perversity in a society of horror, brutality and moral depravity. Even the short plays like *Kingdom of Earth* and others have outcasts that are sex deviates and are described with sympathy and understanding. His drama depicts frustrated people who have taken to drinking or some other intoxicant to drown their despair and seek some solace. Like the broken Dionysus, the frustrated characters in the plays under scrutiny need some adventures which may help them to go on in life.

This thesis has exposed Williams' depiction of modern American man as a lonely and helpless creature surrounded by forces which do not suit him. He cannot overcome those forces but always hopes to do so through one effort or the other. These efforts are made only in imagination and so he is always keeping himself in illusion. Williams has created Blanche, Alma, Sebastian and other characters to illustrate the different illusions of man to keep himself away from facts. These illusive dreams indicate the retreat of these characters from the established social order. These false hopes are the make believe answers which seems to provide them with the elixir of life. Williams' perception of the post war man is that of an incomplete human being. In sum, Williams has invented rituals clothed in modern dress to rid himself and the audience of those pressures engendered by the archetype here presented and to give hope in the possibilities of resurrection.

One of the basic assumptions of this research as stated in the general introduction is that Williams' theater is a product of his age, then, a theater of revolt as Burstein terms the dominant theatrical movement of the twentieth century. Williams sees it, in one sense as a reflection of a decaying, confusing, chaotic society: "If the theatre of communion climaxes with a sense of spiritual disintegration, the theatre of revolt begins with this sense, inheriting from the western tradition a continuity of decay in an advanced stage"(Burstein,1962:6). We

have confirmed that as playwright of revolt, Williams reacted artistically to the decadence that is tradition and his milieu. His work itself is the artist's desperate cry amidst the chaos enveloping him. Hence his drama becomes a subversive gesture, a more imaginative reconstruction of a chaotic, disordered world Williams has said as much in an interview with himself printed in 1957: "Haven't you noticed that people are dropping all around you, like moths out of season, as the result of the present plague of violence and horror in this world and time that we live in?"(Williams,1957:21)In Williams' drama there is a dichotomy between Puritanism and the longing for freedom, both artistic and sex, which led not only to the religious symbolism which pervades much of his work, but also reflects the personal feelings of guilt at the center of much of Williams' most important creative work. As it has been demonstrated in both parts of this thesis the post World War II era challenged social historians because of the sharp disparities between the experiences of different social groups. For many it brought good times as a stream of consumer goods poured forth from a powerful engine of production near its peak of efficiency. American capitalism between 1945 and 1960 made possible a standard of living unmatched in human history with an abundance of consumer goods that frightened the world. From the perspective of a later generation coping with industrial decline, trade deficits, environmental worries, and soaring energy costs, that distant era of seemingly effortless abundance seemed later almost a mirage. Yet the darker side of the picture must be recognized as well. The postwar red scare warped the political process and shriveled intellectual and cultural life. Nuclear fear affected the national psyche in profound ways

We have shown that Williams' drama is distinguished for the "plasticity" that the playwright has achieved. With this achievement, Williams has approached the "synthesis" that he considered to be "ideal theater." As in the French theater of the avant-garde, these techniques are not employed "for the simple delight of the spectator": They are philosophical – even

theological – in their intent, for they attempt to re-establish the ritual function of theatre.

They are intended as modes of signification: signs of a present search for truth.

We have likewise demonstrated that Tennessee Williams is a modern American playwright whose motivation, approach, and dramatic language are the embodiment in theatrical ritual of a myth of great psychological depth and ancient historical origin, the myth of the self-destruction of vegetation deities. Williams' use of such a myth as the basic organizing principle for the symbolic structures of his plays makes us consider him a modern dramatist in the tradition of Strindberg, Artaud, and Cocteau, not as merely a regionalist obsessed with gothic horrors, as so many of his critics have hitherto classified him.

The most powerful ritual presented in theater, whether that theater is religious or secular, is the rite of passage, which may be seen as a symbolic equivalent of birth, death and rebirth or resurrection. The killing of the 'god' hero is one of the most ancient rituals in the world. The history of this ritual is examined in detail, and connected to this ritual we find many myths of deities of vegetation and fertility, such as Attis, Adonis, and most importantly Dionysus relying on the anthropological foundations of Sir George James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. In addition, the Christian doctrine of 'Messianic Salvation' through the death of the god is congruent with the pattern of this ritual. The psychological bases of the ritual are also investigated, primarily utilizing the research of Jung's theory on the 'universal unconscious' and Freud's interpretation of dreams and their relation to myth.

Williams as playwright can comprehend and control his own private psychological pressures, which are, to some extent, identical to the pressures upon any modern American playwright, through the use of the ritual of the theatrical performance. Any playwright creates a dramatic myth to explain the psychological imperative of his need. The theatrical presentation of this myth is a ritual which is, in its repetition, form of reassurance, but which is also reminder of his symbolic death for the others and thus is also a kind of rebirth for the playwright.

However, the nature of the theater requires that the dramatic sacrificial ritual must communicate messages, not merely satisfying the private demands of the playwright. Thus the play itself must draw on a particular set of perceptions of reality which are common property, even though that set of perceptions may not be part of the audience's conscious knowledge. Williams has chosen a historically ancient and psychologically deeply-rooted myth, the sacrifice of the artist-god, as a central motif for his dramatic works.

Beginning with Williams' first professionally produced play, *Battle of Angels*, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis and continuing to his most recent, *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, discussed in the last chapter of part two, the heroes of his plays are systematically described as searching artists whose divinity is symbolically apparent. They have come to be aware of the passing of their youth and former strength. Williams' divine artists have three ways of dying in response to this awareness of the necessity of their sacrifice for the others and then resurrection. They may cause their own physical deaths, usually by invoking fatal violent attack at the hands of others. They may choose the fate of sexual surrender, which is, according, to some cultures, considered 'a fate worse than death'. These sexual suicides may become promiscuous or they may marry an obvious inferior. The third method of withdrawal from reality is death through drugs. Within each of these three modes of death, the dying gods or heroes have been examined in details, as presented in virtually all the major selected plays with reference to myth and ritual theories. It seems clear that the central underpinning of Williams' dramatic oeuvre is the ancient ritual of birth, death and rebirth or resurrection.

From the time that Williams was very young, he alternated between psychoanalysis and writing as forms of therapy and "purification" of his sickness. However, Williams' ritualization of ordinary experience in drama does not remain restricted in the author's private world; on the contrary the synthetic myth – thematic or technical – that he created, bears immediate relevance to the major concerns of our time. Through the rite of his theater,

Williams universalizes man's existential struggle from the American point of view. His choice of the Dionysian myth reveals the playwright's optimism in a world where violence and death should be always followed by the hope of rebirth. This thesis has basically shown that Tennessee Williams is a twentieth century American playwright susceptible to the form of modern theater and to the anxieties of modern man. His drama of the post World War II era, has found a fundamental unifying structural principle in mythology. The reasons for this choice lie in the psychology of the twentieth- century playwright and in the very nature of the theatrical experience.

As the researches of Antonin Artaud, and Carl Gustav Jung have indicated, the creation of a work of art may serve as a therapeutic device for externalizing certain psychological conflicts. Whatever the psychological pressures felt by the artist, his creation of the art work provides an island of clarity and controllable order in the midst of the chaos felt within his mind and the chaotic state which many modern artists have perceived as the condition of Western society today. If the artist feels the world is horrible, violent, and decaying, then escape from that system of things is necessary to preserve the artist's equilibrium or sanity. The work of art fulfills the demands made upon the artist by his own nature and his perception of the nature of mankind. The creation of the work of art is thus the construction of a bridge of images or symbols, a safe passageway from imagination to reality, even though the artist may be certain that dark chaos awaits him at the end of the road.

Since drama is essentially communication, a connection between the artist and the audience by means of the theatrical presentation of his creation, the mythological content of the dramatic work increases its possible effect as a medium of communication in the theater only if the artist has chosen to use as the basis of his work a myth of sufficiently universal applicability, which is the myth of vegetation deities in general and the Dionysian myth in the case of Tennessee Williams. The patterns of perception which this myth involves must be

such that they are capable, when externalized through the playwright's symbolic structure, of revealing to the members of the audience a fundamental discovery of their basic nature.

The playwright as a guide to this discovery is aided by a certain map based upon an instinctual awareness of the common motives and forces beneath the consciousness of each member of the audience. He is more than ordinarily aware of these feelings of instinct because he has cultivated his awareness of them; he has made himself vulnerable to their conscious echoes in his own mind, to their manifestations in his dreams and to their symbolic realizations in his dramatic works. The contents of this set of common feelings and perceptions, which might be termed a psychological model, have been most simply externalized using the symbolic structures known as myths. The myth incorporates bits of the essential instincts and presents them in a comprehensible milieu based on understandable, even occasionally familiar models from relative historical proximity.

Therefore it is not surprising to find that, although the central mythic motives behind Williams' dramatic oeuvre are these ancient ones which are the birth, death and rebirth of the god and the rites of passage. He has chosen to present these myths through a set of symbols or characters which are drawn from his own unique personal experience. His hero may be either masculine or feminine; the magical religious importance of the hero may be reflected through metaphors as diverse as football and masturbation; the artistry of the hero may be manifest in the field of music, poetry, or the endeavors of the bed.

Whatever the actual physical characteristics of the hero Williams constructs, there remains a consistency in the playwright's perception of reality and its effect upon the individual. This consistency is a result of his continuing use of the particular myth of the aging hero and his sacrificial withdrawal from reality. The use of this myth may or may not be conscious on Williams' part, but it is important to note that it is based upon a common human reaction, which may be termed an archetype. This archetype, the basis of the myth and the rituals

which embody the myth, is the terror experienced by man upon contemplation of the ultimate loss of order, the chaos of death and darkness. Williams has constructed a ritual in modern dress to enable himself and his audience to recognize and therefore endure this confrontation.

As shown throughout this thesis, Williams' hero king, the divine wandering artist, confronts death personally both spiritually and physically, and, in response to the recognition of the passage of time, and thus the onset of decay and death, reacts according to the ancient mode, that of self-sacrifice. He may destroy himself in relation to reality by drugs, sexual suicide through surrender to inferiors, either promiscuously or martially, or he may actually invoke his own physical destruction, in, an apocalypse of blood. This sacrifice both proclaims finally the power of the hero to win the ultimate battle, and, through its historically potent embodiments in the myths of the ancient gods of fertility and vegetation, suggests the eternal continuity and continued existence possible through the resurrection of the natural cycles. Its ritual reenactment in the theater establishes Williams as a modern playwright who has successfully attempted to establish his own edifice amid the crumbling ruins of a civilization whose institutions have long since ceased to stand with any value in America of the post World War II era. He has chosen to expose the audience to a fundamental truth about their own nature, using the powerful mechanism of this most religious, most moving myth and ritual of birth, death and rebirth. This aim and this effect obviously participate fully in the very definition of the drama, both the most ancient and most modern.

In spite of the sociological, psychological and ideological odds against which Williams has worked and which are outlined in the discussion chapters and developed subsequently, he has managed to present to his audience a mythic rebellious 'Other' America that shakes established values, opens the small closets of narrow minded thinking, and tears down conventional ideas to replace them with those of one's own creation. In his project, Williams hoped to re-establish the dignity of the individual, the outcast and the misfit among all, and

restore the humanity of the human being "What I am writing about is the human nature" Williams Claims. His characters are rebellious against the exclusive and conservative post war America, and his main theme is a defense of that attitude, a violent protest against those things that defeat it.

From my analysis of Williams' drama and novel, Williams emerges as the Dionysian playwright of the 'Other' America. The human spirit of the postwar period is under threat as Williams sees it, and the individuality of the individual is under siege; but Williams is determined to write to save the individual from extinction through rebirth. In Williams' drama, his vision is apocalyptic, but the option of being a sensitive, giving and compassionate human being is still a possibility, and the ability to be resurrected and overcome the brutality of the world we live in is still feasible. In his drama, we rediscover ourselves, we recognize our human face, and find the long forgotten pleasure of being human again.

Williams' career has been consumed in opening up spaces and securing safe zones for the deformed, the misfits, the fugitive kind, the mutilated and the uprooted that we all might be if the odds of our existence are so prevalent and part of our everyday life, then the ultimate message is that perhaps we all have to settle for these odds, not as an act of fatal submission, but as a celebration of our own humanity that remains far from being perfect in Williams' understanding. The message Williams sends to his readers, audience and critics is one of acceptance. It is a message to embrace life with all its odds, extremities, contradictions, and complexity because between the tensions of its paradoxes lies its vitality. Williams' vision expands beyond the narrow focus of systems and ideologies and refers us back to what we all share together as an irreducible common denominator that is humanity. His drama does not destroy the individuals nor does it deny them an identity of their own. The individual that Williams presents to us is simultaneously ideological and counter-ideological. It is a product of the cultural rule, regulations and beliefs in which we are born and shaped, it is expressed in

a mythical language that has existed prior to our own existence, but in its longings and inspirations for their possibilities, it reveals what this culture has taken away from the individual. This individual is counter-ideological not only in the sense that he questions these rules and laws, but also reformulates and reworks them towards its own private inspirations therefore the post war American in his negotiation with the ideology in which it is produced challenges this ideology from within and presents better options of freedom and democracy .Williams' mythical depiction of the American as pluralistic and creative indicates the impossibility to rationalize the unconscious and the distortions which arise from attempts to do so. His understanding of the post-war American is more fluid and more accommodating to paradoxical human nature than the traditional ways by which the American has often been perceived.

This is the revolutionary playwright that Williams dreamed himself to be and that other critics and playwrights have seen in his drama. Arthur Miller wrote in his biography *Time Bends* that Williams was not the sealed of aesthete he was thought to be. There is a radical politics of the soul in his work (Miller,1987;180) Williams is the poet of the human heart, but he is also iconoclastic playwright who puts perceptions in doubt, makes Americans re-examine their values. He was a playwright who called himself a revolutionary and meant it, a playwright who produced a new and radical theatre that challenged and undermined the post-war and Cold War orders.

In the midst of Mc McCarthy's hearings the Lavender scare, the threatening homophobia of the 1950s , and 1960s, and the resultant of prevalent conservatism, Williams managed to open on the Broadway stage a space of acceptance and compassion. However, it is also this iconoclasm in Williams' works which has made both critics and audience wary of him and contributed to pushing him to the edge of insanity, and to his being confined to a mental hospital for long periods so as to silence him for the disturbing images of corruption and

brutality he depicted. His portrayal of his heroes as dynamic, multiple and paradoxical challenges the theories and perceptions of his time which confined them to more linear descriptions. The critics' failure to see the value of Williams' work after *The Night of Iguana* can be greatly attributed to the lack of language to understand, describe and analyze what Williams was presenting to the audience. Williams' work is ahead of its time. It is the foundation of which recent playwrights such as Harold Pinter, Sam Shepard and David Mamet developed later in their plays. What Williams has offered to the American theatre defies the already existing formulas to which critics and audiences were accustomed. In his later works he achieved what he was set to fulfill early in his career.

Williams came to theatre with the desire of an artist to work in new forms. Not only was Williams challenging and subverting our understanding of the human being, but also subverting the expression in which this new understanding is to be conveyed and communicated. In one of his interviews, Williams has revealed his rejection of any systematic thinking and expressed how his revolutionary approach and understanding to theatre does not correlate with the ideologies and conventions of his time. "People think I'm a communist" he claims, "But I hate all bureaucracy, all isms. I am a revolutionary only in the sense that I want to see us escape from this sort of trap (Williams, 1975)

Williams escapes theoretical frames and paradigms. In fact, if we approach his work only to place him in a clear-cut theatrical category, our effort would more likely be in vain. Approaching Williams' work from a theoretical perspective is reductive for it fails to comprehend the birth-death rebirth myth and ritual that Williams dramatizes on stage. In the course of this study, we have come to the realization that Williams' works should be approached from at least the psychoanalyst, cultural, historical, rhetorical and biographical perspectives which will illuminate and enrich our understanding of them. Williams' works open themselves to such critical possibilities not only because of their complexity and

humanistic dimensionality, but also because of the multilayered humanity and human beings that Williams presents to his audience. Future scholarly studies of Williams' works will I predict, find it increasingly useful to turn away from limiting singular critical paradigms to approach Williams' works which are much more complex, inclusive and subversive in content and philosophy, than we have allowed them to be. When researching for this study the question whether by his use of ancient Greek and classical myths Williams is a modernist or a postmodernist posed itself with an obsessive urgency.

However, as I reached the conclusion of this thesis, I have realized that the answer is not perhaps relevant at all to our understanding of Williams and his work. If the modernist is that who questioned the certainties that provided a support for traditional modes of social organization, religion, morality, and the conception of the human, then Williams can be perceived as an integral part of this literary movement. By the same token, if postmodernism defines itself as the theory that perceives the human being as the product of normalizing effects of power and institutions, and the linguistic medium in which humans are perceived from themselves or imagined by others, and presents its objective as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlining "abyss" or 'void' or 'nothingness' on which our supposed security is precariously suspended (Holt and Rinehart,1988:109) then Williams is not willing to accept this theory at face value for he gives his characters more resilience and agency than such theory is willing to grant the individual. Simultaneously, if postmodernism defines itself as resisting closure, order, and stability and tends to open more space for paradoxes and contradictions then one can find justification for aligning Williams with such theory.

Before bringing this study to a closure, I would like to clarify the reading I chose to pursue in some parts of my dissertation. In my reading, rather than seeking exact correlation between Williams' life and his writing, I was instead more interested in the symbolic relationship

between him and his creation as I have demonstrated in the chapter on 'Myth and ritual symbolism'. Early in his life, Williams learned what kind of masks he had to present of himself to survive and cope with the ugliness of brutal rejections. Earlier on he learnt how to transform himself into a public lie of pretenses and façades and to create a masquerade. Consequently, the young Tom was pushed to the dark corners of the closet where his sole outlet of self-expression was his writing, his stories and his plays that he could share with his public sometimes in half confessions and other times in whispers and hints, but always with a frankness and truthfulness to the times and the culture in which he was forced to co-exist. His homosexuality also drove him away from his family at an early age, and prompted him to seek a home for himself in highly unlikely places. From one foreign country to another, from one state to another, Williams was constantly searching for a safe haven where he could be the Williams that he had wanted to be. It is no surprise, therefore, that he peopled his plays with mythic characters who are struggling against the same odds and driven by the wish for a home and acceptance. To these characters he offered a dream and a myth which is that of rebirth or resurrection.

When we examine the features of Williams' mythic characters' identity, analyze the public and private identity of mythic heroes like Blanche du Bois, notice the Dionysian masks and guises of Brick Pollit, and realize the sense of mutilation which besets Williams' characters, then it becomes apparent to what extent Williams has turned himself and his own quest for identity into the very theme of his own works. In writing autobiographically and mythically, Williams not only dared to be himself but also managed to dramatize how the artist captured the sense of homelessness, loneliness and mutilation to which the human race is ultimately condemned.

Williams and his characters are drifters, bohemians, and malcontents who are trying to find their own way in the society in which they live as Dionysian rebels. Williams shares with his

characters the spirit and restlessness of the wonderer "I think I've been expelled from America', he remarked. The image that such a remark brings to mind is similar to the image of Val Xavier, the Dionysian wandering artist with his guitar and his wild snakeskin jacket. Williams shares with his creations his sense of uprootedness and non-belonging "I live like a gypsy. I am a fugitive" and in a statement that echoes Val's monumental live "we're all sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life" Williams adds:"No place seems tenable to me for long anymore, not even my own skin(Williams,1957:158).

Williams' hero as we have analyzed them in this thesis epitomize the artist's quest for selfhood. His artist characters are in search of a 'Terra Incognita' where they can free themselves from the burden of the past and the restraints of their immediate environment. However when their search proves to be in vain, their Terra Incognita becomes their imagination where they can rearrange and remodel the ideal world they seek in accordance with their own desires.

Myth is the private space of Williams' characters when they construct themselves and recreate the world they dream to inhabit. It is within this sphere of the imagination that they can move and operate freely and fearlessly. The imagination is the space where their dreams, their hopes, ideas and ideals of themselves are created and sustained. They seek refuge in myth because the rest of the world is getting smaller and increasingly minimized for them.

The public space is closing down on them and leading to their suffocation, death and madness under the best of circumstances. The inner space of the dream is the only refuge allowed to them. This is a means still available to Williams' characters to survive and to exist within the brutal reality, but it is also a possibility that points to the state of impoverishment and sterility that these characters have to face. They are alienated and marginalized not in the outside world but also in the mythical world they have created for themselves in their quest for what is ideal and perfect.

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Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat intitulée *'Mythes et rites dans l'œuvre de Tennessee Williams'* étudie la récurrence du mythe de la naissance et de la résurrection connue sous le nom du mythe de Dionysos dans la mythologie grecque dans le théâtre du dramaturge Américain Tennessee Williams de l'après deuxième guerre mondiale, notamment des années quarante, cinquante et soixante. L'approche mythocritique de l'œuvre de Williams met en évidence un grand mythe de référence, dans lequel berce l'imaginaire Williamsien, dans un agencement qui reflète l'histoire de la psyché occidentale et la stratification de l'inconscient collectif dont il est issu. Le mythe de Dionysos, immortalisé par Les Bacchantes, est le substrat du corpus williamsien, la tragédie d'Euripide apparaissant comme le paradigme dramatique de plusieurs pièces majeures. Les comédies de Williams révèlent également une homologie avec l'autre versant du mythe, celui du dieu phallique et de l'homosexualité. Le déclin du mythe de Dionysos est lié à l'émergence rivale du mythe d'Orphée, qui hanta toute sa vie le poète dramaturge à l'inspiration élégiaque. La résurgence des mythes de la descente aux enfers, du regard en arrière et du sparagmos final témoignent d'une identification profonde au mythe grec, dont le sacrifice est assimilé à l'oblation du Christ, par un rapprochement sacrilège caractéristique du gnosticisme Williamsien. L'archétype Dionysien apparaît finalement, à la lumière de la psychologie Jungienne, comme la représentation incomplète de la totalité psychique symbolisée l'androgynie, dont la nostalgie sous-tend toute l'œuvre williamsien. Le mythe grec constitue un outil pratique de représentation des diverses facettes de la vie humaine grâce à sa plasticité et à sa polysémie. Ces derniers éléments, ainsi que son caractère archétypal ont permis la création d'un grand nombre de récits, qui ont inspiré la création de plusieurs thèmes littéraires et de motifs iconographiques. Leur survie même après la fin de l'Antiquité, au cours du Moyen Age, de la Renaissance, et jusqu'à l'époque actuelle, prouve l'adaptabilité de ces traditions mythiques aux besoins de sociétés et d'époques variées.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة الميثولوجيا الإغريقية و الكلاسيكية في مسرحيات الأديب الأمريكي المعاصر تنسي وليامس. بحيث تتناول الدراسة بالبحث مسرحيات وليامس في الثلاثينيات الثلاث بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية و الممتدة من 1940 إلى 1960. إذ يكمن الهدف الرئيس في إبراز مدى تأثير التغيرات الاجتماعية و الفكرية و السياسية و الثقافية على الأدب الأمريكي بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية و إثبات مدى سعيه إلى تمثيل تراجيديا الفئات المهمشة في أمريكا ما بعد الحرب , إعتد الأديب في مسرحه على الميثولوجيا الإغريقية كمصدر للإلهام . يعتمد منهج البحث في هذه الأطروحة على النظريات الأنثروبولوجية إجايمس جورج فرايزر و كلود ليفي سترويس , و النظريات الميثوسيكنايزية لكارل غوستاف يونغ و فرويد. لأن النموذج من المسرح فلقد إعتدنا كذلك على النظريات النقدية للفرنسي أنطونين أرنطو.