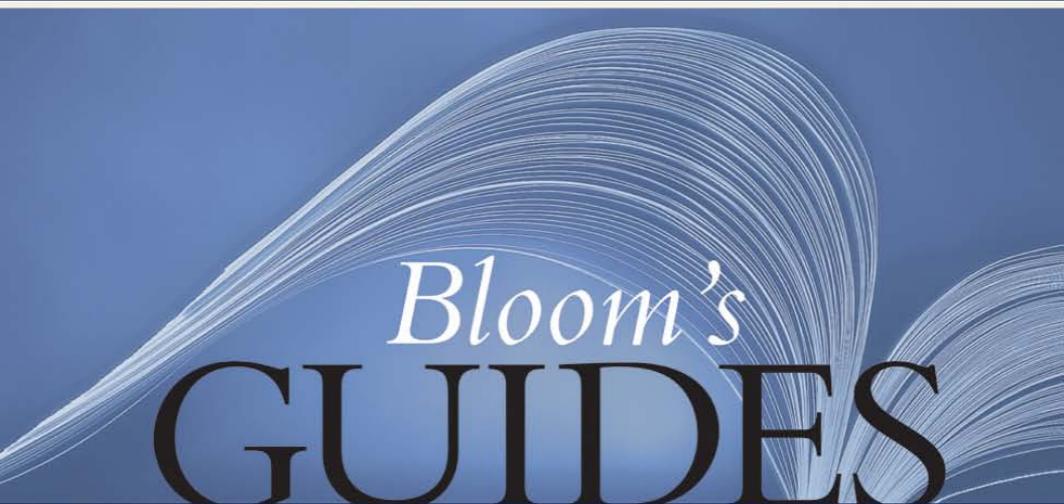


The Glass Menagerie



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**The Glass
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Tennessee Williams's
The Glass Menagerie

Edited & with an Introduction
by Harold Bloom

 BLOOM'S
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Introduction

HAROLD BLOOM

In Hart Crane's last great Pindaric ode, "The Broken Tower," the poet cries aloud, in a lament that is also a high celebration, the destruction of his battered self by his overwhelming creative gift:

The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower;
And swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave
Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score
Of broken intervals ... And I, their sexton slave!

This Shelleyan and Whitmanian catastrophe creation, or death by inspiration, was cited once by Williams as an omen of Crane's self-immolation. "By the bells breaking down their tower," in Williams's interpretation, Crane meant "the romantic and lyric intensity of his vocation." Gilbert Debusscher has traced the intensity of Crane's effect upon Williams's Romantic and lyric vocation, with particular reference to Tom Wingfield's emergent vocation in *The Glass Menagerie*. More than sixty years after its first publication, the play provides an absorbing yet partly disappointing experience of rereading.

A professed "memory play," *The Glass Menagerie* seems to derive its continued if wavering force from its partly repressed representation of the quasi-incestuous and doomed love between Tom Wingfield and his crippled, "exquisitely fragile," ultimately schizophrenic sister Laura. Incest, subtly termed the most poetical of circumstances by Shelley, is the dynamic of the erotic drive throughout Williams's more vital writings. Powerfully displaced, it is the secret dynamic of what is surely Williams's masterwork, *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

The Glass Menagerie scarcely bothers at such a displacement, and the transparency of the incest motif is at once the play's

lyrical strength and, alas, its dramatic weakness. Consider the moment when Williams chooses to end the play, which times Tom's closing speech with Laura's gesture of blowing out the candles:

TOM: I didn't go to the moon, I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoebox. I left St. Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space. I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I run around and look into her eyes. Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candles out!

[*Laura bends over the candles.*]

For nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura—and so goodbye....

[*She blows the candles out.*]

The many parallels between the lives and careers of Williams and Crane stand behind this poignant passage, though it is fascinating that the actual allusions and echoes here

are to Shelley's poetry, but then Shelley increasingly appears to be Crane's heroic archetype, and one remembers Robert Lowell's poem where Crane speaks and identifies himself as the Shelley of his age. The cities of aesthetic exile sweep about Wingfield/Williams like the dead, brightly colored leaves of the "Ode to the West Wind," dead leaves that are at once the words of the poet and lost human souls, like the beloved sister Laura.

What pursues Tom is what pursues the Shelleyan Poet of *Alastor*, an avenging daimon or shadow of rejected, sisterly eros that manifests itself in a further Shelleyan metaphor, the shattered, colored transparencies of Shelley's dome of many-colored glass in *Adonais*, the sublime, lyrical elegy for Keats. That dome, Shelley says, is a similitude for life, and its many colors stain the white radiance of Eternity until death tramples the dome into fragments. Williams beautifully revises Shelley's magnificent trope. For Williams, life itself, through memory as its agent, shatters itself and scatters the colored transparencies of the rainbow, which ought to be, but is not, a covenant of hope.

As lyrical prose, this closing speech has its glory, but whether the dramatic effect is legitimate seems questionable. The key sentence, dramatically, is: "Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" In his descriptive list of the characters, Williams says of his surrogate, Wingfield: "His nature is not remorseless, but to escape from a trap he has to act without pity." What would pity have been? And in what sense is Wingfield more faithful, after all, than he attempted to be?

Williams chooses to end the play as though its dramatic center had been Laura, but every reader and every playgoer knows that every dramatic element in the play emanates out from the mother, Amanda. Dream and its repressions, guilt and desire, have remarkably little to do with the representation of Amanda in the play, and everything to do with her children. The split between dramatist and lyrist in Williams is manifested in the play as a generative divide. Williams's true subject, like Crane's, is the absolute identity between his artistic

vocation and his homosexuality. What is lacking in *The Glass Menagerie* is that Williams could not have said of Amanda, what, Flaubert-like, he did say of the heroine of *Streetcar*: “I am Blanche DuBois.” There, and there only, Williams could fuse Chekhov and Hart Crane into one.



Biographical Sketch

Thomas Lanier Williams III was born on March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi, to Edwina Dakin Williams and Cornelius Coffin Williams. He was one of three children including an older sister, Rose Isabel, and a younger brother, Walter Dakin. Due to Cornelius Williams's inability to adjust to a settled, domestic life, and in part because of his occupations, first as a traveling salesman and later as a manager, he was almost always absent. Edwina and the children relocated frequently, living in Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

At the age of five, while living in Mississippi, Tom became ill with diphtheria, an experience that he would barely survive. He was temporarily paralyzed and did not regain full use of his legs for two years. As a result, Tom was significantly transformed. He kept more to himself and took to more stationary pursuits. This traumatic event proved fortunate for Tom, as these pursuits consisted primarily of reading and writing later in life.

At the age of sixteen, Williams published his first work. His essay "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?" appeared in *Smart Set* magazine in May of 1927 and in 1928, his story "The Vengeance of Nitocris" was published in *Weird Tales*. A year later, Tom began studying journalism at the University of Missouri at Columbia. As a freshman, he wrote his first play, entitled *Beauty Is the Word*, which received an honorable mention from the University Dramatic Arts Club. Motivated by the positive response to his work, or perhaps driven to receive more than an honorable mention, Tom began focusing more on his writing and less on other subjects. With his grades declining, Cornelius withdrew his son from the university and found him a job as a typist for Continental Shoemakers, where he would work for the next few years.

During this time, the mental health of Tom's sister, Rose, was rapidly failing and by 1937 a prefrontal lobotomy was performed, leaving Rose incapacitated and requiring institutionalization. Tom heard this news only after the procedure was complete. His inability to save his sister, coupled

with the backdrop of his complex domestic situation, provided him with material that would appear again and again in his works. Despite the distractions of a difficult home life and after failed stints at the University of Missouri and Washington University, Tom re-enrolled in college and graduated from the University of Iowa in 1938.

The name “Tennessee Williams” is believed to have first appeared on an application for a drama contest in 1937 and later made a more formal debut on “The Field of Blue Children” published by *Story*. Reborn as “Tennessee,” Williams worked even more furiously on his writing, now venturing to construct full-length plays. Between 1941 and 1943, after taking time to study advanced playwriting with John Gassner at the New School of Social Research, Williams moved often, finding work in Provincetown, St. Louis, New York, Macon, and Jacksonville, and finally accepting a position as a screenwriter for MGM in Hollywood, California. It was during this time that he began work on *The Gentleman Caller*, which would later be renamed and given new life. *The Gentleman Caller* became *The Glass Menagerie*, the play responsible for making Williams famous—an affliction that he would refer to as “the catastrophe of success.” *The Glass Menagerie* opened in Chicago in 1944 and later ran in New York, where it won the New York Critics Circle Award.

Though not always immediately well-received, Williams went on to write some of the most important and dynamic plays in the history of American theater, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Night of the Iguana*, and *Orpheus Descending*. Additionally, he published several volumes of poetry, as well as compilations of original short stories.

Despite his success, Williams suffered emotionally throughout his life. This distress was exacerbated by the deaths of several loved ones over the years: his father in 1956, his grandfather in 1957, his lover, Frank Merlo in 1963, and finally his mother in 1980. Williams fought long battles with depression and alcohol and drug abuse. He sought help through psychoanalysis and through his conversion to Roman

Catholicism, whereby he renamed himself for a second time—this time as Francis Xavier, a saint believed to be an actual ancestor of Williams. Unable to overcome the problems that plagued him, he nevertheless continued producing work throughout the remainder of his life.

Contrary to his confessed wish to someday pass away peacefully while sleeping in the brass bed at his New Orleans apartment, Tennessee Williams died tragically on February 25, 1983, at the Hotel Elysée in New York.

Although his work did not consistently receive the positive critical acclaim that Williams hoped for during his life, his plays have survived the test of time and are widely produced throughout the world today. His most well-known works continue to evolve in new adaptations, and previously unreleased or lesser-known works are now being studied and produced posthumously. Williams has been honored for his achievements with several New York Critics Circle Awards, Pulitzer Prizes, a National Arts Club gold medal for literature, several honorary degrees, and countless other awards.



The Story Behind the Story

The Glass Menagerie opened on December 26, 1944 at The Civic Theatre in Chicago. According to Tennessee Williams, there were few reasons to think that this production would have better success than any of his other plays. Williams said as much to his agent, Audrey Wood, in a note that he submitted along with *The Glass Menagerie* manuscript. Although Williams did have some small successes, such as an award from The National Academy of Arts and Letters, he had been struggling for years. In 1940, his play *Battle of Angels* opened in Boston; it would be Williams's first major production. The play had little success and closed where it began, never making it to Broadway. Floating around the country, Williams worked at jobs that provided little satisfaction and negligible pay. It seemed to be a lucky break when his agent secured him a full-time job as a writer at MGM Studios in Hollywood, but Williams quickly grew frustrated with the job. His language was deemed too difficult for the actors of the day, and his screenplay, *The Gentleman Caller*, was rejected for being another *Gone with the Wind*. Williams quit his job, and finding that he was contractually obliged to receive pay for a few more months, took the time to focus solely on his writing.

By 1944, Williams had already written at least six full-length plays, in addition to poetry, short stories, and other writings. He reworked the screenplay that had been declined by MGM and prepared it as the script for a stage production. Audrey Wood passed the work on to Eddie Dowling, an independent actor, director, and producer, who decided to codirect a production of the play with Margo Jones. Unable to quell his nerves about the ability of the play to succeed in New York, Williams made the decision to open it in Chicago first. As opening day approached, there were no indications that the play would succeed. In fact, the actors were having trouble memorizing their lines; they couldn't perform the required accents; and they fought with each other throughout rehearsals.

On the evening of December 26, 1944, the snow was coming down heavily in Chicago. The latest rehearsals had shown no more promise, and minutes before the curtain was set to open that night, Laurette Taylor, who was to play Amanda, was found re-dyeing a piece of clothing that she would wear in the play. When the curtain opened, there was a near-miraculous transformation. Ms. Taylor gave an outstanding performance, as did the rest of the cast. The reviews of the play were overwhelmingly positive. However, with ticket sales failing to meet the standards of the day, the play was threatened with cancellation. A critic for *The Chicago Tribune*, Claudia Cassidy, rallied for the play's rescue and continued production. The support would turn out to be invaluable as the play made it to Broadway, opening at The Playhouse Theatre of New York City on March 31, 1945. Only a few weeks later it was awarded the New York Critics Circle Award. Amazingly, the play ran for over five hundred and sixty performances. Williams was suddenly famous.

As it had turned out, there were an outstanding number of reasons why the play should succeed. Audiences, who were mostly familiar with realism in drama, were willing to receive a new kind of theatrical experience. Williams's concepts of sculptural drama and plastic theater (which would be toned down in a subsequent acting version of the play) made for a dynamic and new experience. Audiences who were forced to deal with the realities of war and economic hardship were happy to lose themselves, at least temporarily, in a more fantastic and expressionistic dramatic experience.

Referred to as Williams's most autobiographical play, the writer had an immense personal investment in the work. He had been working on versions of *The Glass Menagerie* since the 1930s. *The Glass Menagerie* had previously taken the form of a short story ("Portrait of a Girl in Glass") and a screenplay (*The Gentleman Caller*, declined by MGM), and had gone through several revisions as a script for a stage play before it took on the form revealed to audiences in 1944. Barely disguised, subjects such as the mental health of Williams's sister, Rose, the absence of his real-life father, and Williams's own struggle to be an

artist were now made public. Turning his own family drama into a theatrical experience for public consumption was an incredibly painful experience for Williams. He would describe it as one of the most painful experiences of his life, but the members of the audience could certainly relate, not only to the familial tensions evident in the play, but also to the grander economic and cultural tensions and certainly, to the personal struggles—issues which continue to engage audiences today.

Defying the current of time, *The Glass Menagerie* continues to evolve as it is produced year after year in adaptations around the world. It is the work most consistently credited with securing fame for Williams. Without a doubt, *The Glass Menagerie* also helped Williams attain his lasting position in the canon of American drama.



List of Characters

Tom Wingfield is a character in the play as well as the narrator, who both recounts and reenacts his memories of a difficult period in his life when he lived with his mother and sister in St. Louis. One of Tennessee Williams's most autobiographical characters, Tom is a self-anointed poet, forced to work in a shoe factory in order to support his family in the absence of his father. In an attempt to escape the problems of his life, he frequents the cinema.

Responding to the persistent requests of his mother, Tom brings home a gentleman caller for his sister. The match is a disaster, failing to resolve any of the issues that display themselves so prominently in the memory of Tom. Ultimately, in order to avoid a desperate future, Tom must choose to leave home, abandoning his mother and sister as his father once did. In Tennessee Williams's own description of the character, the author notes that this act does not come without remorse and is nothing less than the "escape from a trap" (*The Glass Menagerie*, XVIII).

Amanda Wingfield is the mother of Tom and Laura. Abandoned by her husband and forced to care for her children alone, Amanda takes comfort in her memories of the past, repeatedly recounting a time in her life defined by proper Southern manners and filled with endless visits from gentleman callers and vases overflowing with jonquils. Insistent that Laura should find herself a good husband, Amanda asks Tom to bring home a gentleman caller. Her persistence in attempting to orchestrate events that she believes will lead to a good, secure future creates tension and distance between her and her children. Despite Amanda's apparent infatuation with a romanticized past, she confesses to Tom that she cannot speak of all that is in her heart. Her tales of a better time are frequently punctuated with the remembrance of Tom and Laura's father, Mr. Wingfield. This demonstration that Amanda is all too aware of her situation lends support to the

notion that she is not purposely cruel or antagonistic. Rather, she is simply doing her best to endure, and wants her children to escape a fate that she cannot.

Laura Wingfield is Tom's sister and the daughter of Amanda; she is based on Tennessee Williams's real-life sister, Rose. Laura is not only physically handicapped, forced to wear a leg brace; she is emotionally crippled as well. She is unable to hold a job or interact socially with others and retreats into a world of illusion, hypnotically winding the Victrola and playing with her collection of glass animals. There is a moment of hope for Laura when Jim, the gentleman caller, dances with her and follows this with a kiss, but Laura retreats back into her world upon the failure of this match due to Jim's engagement to another.

Jim O'Connor is the gentleman caller who is brought to the Wingfield residence by Tom. He works with Tom at the shoe factory and formerly attended high school with both Tom and Laura. Jim is described by Williams as an "ordinary young man" (XVIII). He was popular in high school, successful in sports, drama, debating, and politics and indeed, Jim exudes the confidence of someone who has succeeded in all they have done. He possesses an optimism that the other characters do not. Ultimately, Jim's presence is not enough to resolve the problems that haunt the Wingfield family.

Mr. Wingfield is introduced by his son, Tom, as "the fifth character in the play" (XVIII). Mr. Wingfield never actually appears in the play, but his absence is glaring. A large photograph of him is displayed on the wall of the living room and is illuminated throughout the play as a reminder of the part he has played in the dire situation the audience witnesses. He is generously described by Tom as a telephone salesman who was "in love with long distances" (5).



Summary and Analysis

“The plot is slight stuff, as Williams himself knew.” (Scanlan, 99) Equipped with the knowledge of the outstanding success of *The Glass Menagerie*, it might be shocking to encounter a scholar’s reference to the meagerness of the plot. More shocking is the assertion that Tennessee Williams was fully aware of this lack of dramatic action in *The Glass Menagerie*. Scholar Tom Scanlan is brave enough to make this statement, and while it seems that this is a critical remark about a flaw in Williams’s work, the opposite is in fact true. After all, Tennessee Williams repeatedly made references to the “plastic” element of the play. In fact, Scanlan backs his claim by including one of Williams’s own comments from his **Production Notes** (Scanlan, 108); Williams states, “A free and imaginative use of light can be of enormous value in giving a mobile plastic quality to plays of a more or less static nature.” Furthermore, Williams actually emphasized this static quality, speaking in favor of a new “sculptural drama” or “plastic theatre” to replace the dramatic realism that was dominant at the time. It was Williams’s belief that realism was no longer adequate to convey the complexities of modern existence. The totality of experience could be better represented through symbolic implications, psychological action, and a lack of other distractions. In his Production Notes, he says:

The straight play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays...that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.

An abundant plot is therefore superfluous, and so, Williams adopts a more minimal approach. This pared-down concept flows throughout the play. *The Glass Menagerie* consists of only four characters: Tom Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, Amanda Wingfield, and Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller. The set consists of a living room, dining room, and an exterior portion of the Wingfields' apartment building; the props are almost non-existent (characters who are eating have no actual food or silverware); and the timeline accounts for a very brief period of time. Even the actions of the characters are minimal. Amanda, Tom, and Laura are seen performing basic, domestic tasks such as washing the dishes, clearing the table, or reading the newspaper. Robert Bray references a related note from Williams in his introduction to the play: "Arguing for the necessity of a sculptural drama, Williams wrote, 'I visualize it as a reduced mobility on stage, the forming of statuesque attitudes or tableaux, something resembling a restrained type of dance, with motions honed down to only the essential or significant.'" (Bray, ix)

As Tom Scanlan has already pointed out, the overall dramatic action is equally sparse. There are only two basic lines of thought touched on in *The Glass Menagerie*: Tom's desire to escape and Amanda's obsession with finding a husband for her daughter, Laura. (Scanlan, 99) Accordingly, the "major" dramatic actions of each character can be summarized as follows: Amanda and Tom clash; Laura plays with her collection of glass animals and winds the Victrola; Jim, the gentleman caller, comes to visit. In fact, the gentleman caller's visit is the only true dramatic action; the overall structure of the play is defined by this event. Williams divides the play into two parts: "Part I Preparation for the Gentleman Caller" and "Part II The Gentleman Calls." Tom's departure, which is perhaps the most drastic act of the play, is revealed passively in a monologue, rather than actively in a more traditional dramatic format. Appearing as Narrator, Tom says matter-of-factly, "I left St. Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for the last time...."

The general themes of *The Glass Menagerie* are no more original and dynamic than the actions in the play. The subjects

that the play approaches have appeared again and again in international theatre and the greater body of literature as well. *A family battles to stay afloat in the face of adversity and internal struggle ensues.* As Robert Bray points out later in his introduction to the play:

It is no mere coincidence that many of our most memorable American plays, from *Long Day's Journey into Night*, through *Death of a Salesman* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* up to *Buried Child*, depict familial tensions and alienations, the give-and-take of domestic warfare. Indeed, the venerable tradition of dramatizing family strife...transcends all cultures and predates Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, even going back to the drama of *Aeschylus*. (Bray, x)

Working with another common subject, Williams creates a young protagonist, faced with the decision of whether or not to leave home and consequently, whether or not to begin an impending journey. As many existentialist philosophers have acknowledged, embracing one's freedom does not come without consequences, and so, the protagonist must choose whether or not to also leave his past and his loved ones behind. Such existential (and physical) journeys have been explored thoroughly in literature, as Delma Presley suggests when she says that "Tom's departure from home is like Mark Twain's Huck Finn, who seeks adventure in the West, Herman Melville's Ishmael who goes to sea, Dante who travels in the dark woods, Odysseus who sails towards home." (Presley, 55) Since Tom was abandoned by his own father, the difficulty of being faced with a decision that consequently requires becoming "that which one despises" is also represented.

Given these facts, what can account for *The Glass Menagerie's* ultimate and lasting success?

Robert Bray makes a suggestion:

With this first great artistic success ... Williams demonstrated how he could synthesize music, poetry, and visual

effects into compelling emotional situations, structurally underpinning them with symbolic moments so arresting that theatergoers depart the aisles—and readers turn the last page—enriched with an assortment of moments guaranteed to haunt the receptive mind. (Bray, xv)

Tennessee Williams's deceptively simple play is able to address the whole of the human experience by symbolically broaching opposing concepts such as self and other, the internal or interior and external or exterior, duty and freedom, domestic experience, and religious experience. This is accomplished through the interplay of several unique strategies, some of which are discussed in Tennessee Williams's Production Notes, which precede the text of the play in the reading version of *The Glass Menagerie*. While these notes are brief, they provide essential information about the dynamics of the play. In his essay "Entering *The Glass Menagerie*," C.W.E. Bigsby points out the relevance of this text:

All the key words of Williams' work are to be found in these introductory notes: paranoia, tenderness, illusions, illness, fragile, delicate, poetic, transformation, emotion, nostalgia, desperation, trap. These defining elements are to be projected not merely through character and dialogue. He envisages a production in which all elements will serve his central concern with those who are victims of social circumstance, of imperious national myths, of fate and of time as the agent of that fate. (Bigsby, 33)

One of the most critical devices is the use of memory in *The Glass Menagerie*. *The Glass Menagerie* is described as a "memory play." The scenes that we witness are memories belonging to Tom Wingfield; he is therefore, given the unique job of serving as both narrator and character in the play. This format has distinct benefits for the audience. Rather than serve as voyeurs, watching an act as it happens (as an audience would have done at a realistic play of the time), Williams's audience is given direct access to Tom's most private, psychological place—his

memory. Not only is the audience subject to this internal realm, but they are also able to witness the original actions as if they had been there with Tom. And so, the memory becomes theirs as well. Tom Scanlan describes the dynamic balance of these forms, noting “even while we move into the bizarre or exaggerated situation emblematic of the gauzy mind of the protagonist, we are constantly aware that it approximates a realistic situation.” (Scanlan, 97)

As was noted earlier, in addition to his original use of memory, Williams had called for another necessary new form in drama—the “sculptural drama” or “plastic theatre.” Williams tells us that this new form uses expressionistic tools, not in an attempt to avoid reality, but rather, to approach experience more closely. He says, “When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn’t be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are.” In the production notes, Williams refers to three of the main expressionistic tools used in *The Glass Menagerie*—the screen device, music, and lighting. Williams’s screen device is simply the projection of words or images onto a screen onstage. In *The Glass Menagerie*, projections appear on a part of the wall between two rooms that compose the interior portion of the set. For instance, when we learn that Jim was a “high school hero,” an image of him holding a trophy appears onscreen. Williams explains that these devices are meant to highlight the “values” of scenes that are structurally important to the play. It was also Williams’s intention that the devices remove some of the emphasis from traditional dialogue and action.

The atmosphere in the play is moderated through the manipulation of music and lighting. Rather than play the music of the time, a single piece of music is predominantly heard throughout *The Glass Menagerie*. Williams describes it as being “like circus music” heard from a distance. It functions as an auditory symbol of the emotional states of the characters, evoking a feeling of sadness. Its repetitive tune and consistent

presence throughout the play helps to accent the feeling of stasis. Other background music does occasionally manifest itself, changing with the events on stage. For instance, Jim and Laura hear a romantic piece of music like a waltz; when Amanda and Tom argue, the background music is heavy and ominous.

The lighting works in tandem with the music, mimicking the actions and emotions of the play. The overall lighting of the play is dim, another reminder that the play is about memory. Williams is able to use light to symbolize a character's critical traits. For example, he directs that the light on Laura be distinct from the light shone on the other characters. Hers should be reminiscent of the light of a church or the light one would associate with a saint. Felicia Hardison Lóndre generously states that the symbolism embodied in these techniques makes it nearly impossible to convey a sense of the play through mere description or summary. "So tightly written are the scenes in *The Glass Menagerie*, so full of musicality and suggestive power are the lines of dialogue, so integral are the effects of sound and lighting—that a summation of what is said and done on stage cannot nearly convey a sense of the play." (Lóndre, 47)

It is also worth mentioning that these three devices are not the only symbolic tools employed throughout the play. Williams also uses time and color as symbolic devices. For instance, transitional scenes such as Scenes Five and Six take place at dusk, a transitional time of day. In these scenes we shift from Part I of the play (preparation for the gentleman caller's visit) to Part II (the actual visit). When Williams wants to express that his characters feel hopeful, he might have Tom tell us that it is spring, a season of rebirth and growth. As Williams uses spring to convey optimism and hope, he uses color accordingly, dressing Amanda and Laura in light-colored dresses in these scenes. When he wants a more ambiguous feeling, he dresses his characters all in white. Even the lighting takes on varied tones: ebony darkness in Scene Four, pale white moonlight in Scene Five, lemony-yellow light in Scene Six, artificially warm and rosy lamplight in Scene Seven. The color

blue is introduced in Scene Two in the projection of blue roses onscreen. When associated with roses, the color is an oddity. It is also the color traditionally equated with sadness and with the Virgin Mary and is therefore, an appropriate color to correspond with Laura.

The structure of *The Glass Menagerie* might also be considered an expressionistic device. Lóndre suggests that the splitting of the play into multiple scenes is a reflection of the nature of memory. "This fragmented quality is justified by the selectivity of memory," she says (Lóndre, 47). Williams corroborates this in a statement that Lóndre has not failed to miss; in his Production Notes he says, "In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may seem fragmentary rather than architectural." This structure also brings to mind not only the fragmented nature of memory, but more literally, the image of shattered or fragmented glass—the central symbol of the play, and certainly an appropriate symbol for the shattered Wingfield family.

Furthermore, the play is broken down into seven scenes. The number is suggestive of an ordinary sense of time (seven days in a week), but this number has religious implications as well. There are seven sacraments, as there are seven deadly sins. This merging of the secular and the nonsecular is carried throughout the play. Williams employs typical cultural symbols as well as religious iconography and allusive language to demonstrate the whole of the human situation, or as Judith J. Thompson puts it, "two types of symbols, concrete and transcendent are used by Williams to evoke this communal response." (Thompson, 681) As the final seventh scene approaches, one might feel that the number seven is an indicator of luck; at the conclusion of this scene, we learn that it might rather have been a sarcastic or ironic nod to such an idea.

But even before the first scene begins, before the music is played and the lights are dimmed, there exists no trace of the play for the audience other than a small combination of words on the playbill—the title. Like the dynamic new tools of

sculptural drama that Tennessee Williams exalts in his production notes, the title is used for support, primarily, and emphasis, finally. It might allude to a key aspect of a climatic scene, or it might play a cruel trick as an ironic disguise. The title is a provocateur, a conjurer of images that precedes the language and action of the play. Because it is the first trace of the work that one encounters, it is the source of the ignition of internal experience for a theatergoer.

Seated in Chicago's Civic Theatre on the night of December 26, 1944, what might a theatergoer be thinking while examining the words "glass menagerie" on the playbill? The image of glass provides us with a nearly inexhaustible stream of associations. Glass is associated with fragility, an ability to break. In light of its susceptibility to external forces which might cause it to shatter, it has the potential to become fragmented. If one sought a psychological equivalent, we might think of emotional fragility, desperation, or confusion. In a different context, glass is also multifaceted and complex in a beautiful and positive way when illuminated by light, perhaps the symbolic equivalent of joy, spiritual ecstasy, or purity. Glass is reflective, and in this way, can be indicative of self-exploration, or, taken further, narcissism. It might be used as a barrier—or it might simply be admired for its decorative properties (something Amanda Wingfield would be prone to doing).

When it is placed between two sites, as a window might be, one might either assume the role of voyeur, observing an interior site as an outsider; or one might be on the inside, looking out to the world beyond as a dreamer or philosopher might (as many of Williams's 'poet' characters, such as Tom Wingfield, do). It functions as the link *and* the boundary between the internal and external. In the symbolic context of the play, it could be said that it provides voyeuristic access to internal experience beyond the self, simultaneously exposing the grander experience, drawing us outside of ourselves and into the realm of empathetic experience. The revelation of empathetic experience is perhaps the primary success of Williams's work. For, while realistic drama can succeed in

attaining a sympathetic response from its audience, Williams goes a step further, creating for his audience an umbilical link between the realms of self and other. As it turns out then, the title may be the most critical and forthright of the expressionistic devices used by Williams in *The Glass Menagerie*.

The word ‘menagerie’, thought to be derived from the Middle French word “ménage,” translates to “management of a household or farm.” More commonly, it is associated with a collection of animals. One might consider a zoo, a place where animals are trapped, or at least confined, and in many ways, exposed. It is a place where primal nature is made public. As **Scene One** begins, Williams uses this analogy to set the stage.

The play begins with a shot of the dark wall of the Wingfields’ apartment building in St. Louis, Missouri. The external wall is transparent, encouraging the association of the characters to animals on display. The building is described as a “hivelike conglomeration,” providing us with the image of drones, a comment on the dire economic situation of the people who live there. The building area is dark, dirty, and surrounded by alleys, a sinister dead-end frequently employed in Hollywood movies to indicate danger. Williams puts particular emphasis on the presence of the fire escape, a part of the building ironically attached. When in the role of narrator, Tom frequently appears here. The fire escape doesn’t primarily or ultimately symbolize freedom or escape, but rather the opposite. Like the alleys, it indicates the potential for catastrophe.

The living room, because of the disparity of the Wingfields’ economic status, is also Laura’s bedroom; it is placed in closest proximity to the audience. The walls are decorated sparsely with a large photograph of Tom and Laura’s absentee father, Mr. Wingfield, and with charts for typing and shorthand. An old-fashioned curio houses Laura’s collection of glass animals.

The physical environment has been revealed, and it is at this time that we are introduced to Tom, the narrator, who will also take a place as a character in the play. As noted previously, Tom frequently appears outside of the building as narrator,

temporarily separating himself from the internal dynamics of the action on stage. Dressed as a sailor, he begins by setting up the social background of the play. Roger B. Stein elaborates:

The time of the play is 1939, as the narrative frame makes explicit both at the beginning and the end...As Tom says, 'the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind'. What he calls the 'social background' of the play has an important role. The international backdrop is Guernica and the song America sings is 'The World Is Waiting for a Sunrise', for the sober truth is that America is still in the depression and on the brink of war. The note of social disaster runs throughout the drama, fixing the lines of individuals against the larger canvas. (Stein, 136-137)

The exterior wall is lifted away and not seen again until the end of the play; the play is now concerned with the interior or internal—the realm of memory, pain, and emotion. Music is heard for the first time, as any reference to the external falls away. Tom (on cue) reminds us that the play is about memory. He introduces himself as narrator and as a character in the re-enactments of his own memory, which will provide "truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion." He also introduces his mother, Amanda; his sister, Laura; Jim, the gentleman caller; and his father, who only appears in the form of the large photograph in the living room. Tom generously refers to his father, who has abandoned his family, as a telephone man "who fell in love with long distances." As if inextricably linked in Tom's memory, at the mention of Mr. Wingfield, we hear Amanda calling for Tom in the distance.

The first instance of the screen device occurs when we meet Amanda. The words "*ou sont les neiges*" appear on screen. They translate to "where are the snows?", words from a fifteenth-century French poem in praise of beautiful women. The text is puzzling, fragmented, and appropriately, it is foreign—projected in French rather than English. As our

understanding of Amanda is only partial, so is our comprehension of this phrase.

In the first scene we are immediately faced with two of the main dynamics of the play: the tension between Tom and his mother, and Amanda's obsessive desire for Laura to have a gentleman caller. The essential actions of the characters are to be repeated throughout the play in a kind of gestural merry-go-round. Stripped of any real variation, their recurrence in the next five scenes creates tension and encourages the audience in their hope that things might turn out differently in the final scenes.

There is no time to adjust or settle into the dialogue, as the primary moments of the play yield the first glimpses of a domestic battle. Amanda begins nagging Tom about the way he is eating. Tom makes his way to the door, as if to escape, indicating that this is not the first instance of his mother frustrating him in this way. Amanda calls for Tom to return, and when he informs her that, rather than leaving, he was going to get a cigarette, she replies with another criticism: "You smoke too much." Laura, who is also in the dining room, seems unaffected—or perhaps, resigned. She offers to get something from the kitchenette but Amanda instructs her that she needs to stay seated so she will be "fresh and pretty—for gentleman callers." Laura states plainly that she is not expecting any callers.

Amanda begins to reminisce about her own experiences with gentleman callers and again there are indications that this is not the first instance of their mother behaving this way. "I know what's coming!" and "She loves to tell it" are Tom and Laura's reactions. While it initially seems quite normal for a woman of Amanda's age to recount stories of better times which begin "When I was your age..." there seems to be something amiss when she recalls having seventeen gentleman callers in one afternoon. Despite Tom's sarcastic goading, Amanda continues on as if in another world. At this time, the second screen device appears. It is the image of Amanda as a young woman with her gentleman callers. The image draws further attention to the absurdity of Amanda's exaggerated tales and supports the audience's developing suspicions. Amanda harkens back to

another time, a better time when she was in the South at Blue Mountain. It is a time when men were gentleman and women knew how to make pleasant and clever conversation. To clear up any remaining doubts about the truth of Amanda's stories, Tom steps in as Narrator and directs that music be played and a spotlight shone on Amanda. Amanda continues and ceases only when the recollection of her absent husband surfaces. Alice Griffin suggests that this retreat "from the harsh reality of the Depression to the illusion of herself in the legendary South of elegant beaux and belles makes the present somehow more bearable for Amanda." (Griffin, 62) The full phrase "*Ou sont les neiges d'antan?*" now appears onscreen, translating to "Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

For the second time, Laura responds as if she is unaffected, asking to clear the table. Amanda reminds Laura again that she needs to stay so she will be "fresh and pretty" for any callers. The glass menagerie music can be heard in the background as Laura reminds her mother that there will likely be no callers.

Scene Two opens with an image of blue roses projected on the screen. Laura is seen cleaning her collection of glass animals, but when she hears her mother coming, she goes and sits at the typewriter. Amanda has discovered that Laura hasn't been going to business school classes as she thought. Her first word of the scene is "deception" and the scene will close with the same.

Laura had gotten sick the first week and hadn't returned. Instead, Laura confesses, she has been going to the museum to view the religious paintings, to the zoo, and to a glass greenhouse where tropical flowers are raised. The sites reinforce the portrayal of Laura as a fragile, unearthly flower. Amanda is sure that Laura's only hope of a future is in finding a good husband. When asked if she has ever liked a boy, Laura confesses that there was a boy named Jim that she liked in high school. An image of Jim, holding a large trophy, appears on the screen. Laura points out that Jim was supposedly engaged, and must be married by now.

It is later revealed that Jim had nicknamed Laura “blue roses” in high school. She had been ill with pleurosis, and when Jim questioned her about her absence, he had misheard her. This moment of social contact was clearly an important and treasured one for Laura. For the moment, the image of blue roses remains a curious one. It parallels the other references to flowers; these flowers, however, are different and point to Laura’s difference. She is forced to wear a leg brace. Aware of her handicap, Laura is accepting of her current situation, which clearly doesn’t allow for a boyfriend like Jim, but her mother is clearly unable to accept this. She refuses to allow Laura to use the word “crippled” and defines Laura’s handicap as “a small defect” that can be hidden by charm. It is not the last time that Amanda makes such a claim—that charm, a variety of acceptable deceit, can hide that which one does not want to be revealed to others. The scene ends as Amanda recalls that charm was something Mr. Wingfield had plenty of, pointing out Amanda’s own ability to be deceived.

Tom reappears as narrator outside of the apartment on the fire escape at the start of **Scene Three**. He notes that finding a gentleman caller for Laura has gotten to be an obsession for his mother. He tells us that in order to make more money so that their home will look nice when callers do arrive, Amanda sells subscriptions to *The Homemakers Companion* magazine.

As soon as Tom’s monologue as narrator is finished and he reclaims his role as character, he and Amanda begin to quarrel. Tom, an aspiring poet, has left some of his books out. Amanda, disapproving of the subject matter written about by authors such as D.H. Lawrence, returns the book to the library. For Tom, this is clearly an indication that his mother doesn’t understand him. More than a small act of motherly disapproval, it is for Tom an indication of his lack of freedom. Tom and Amanda’s tension reaches an apex when Amanda accuses Tom of “saying he is going to the movies when he is elsewhere.” Tom explodes at Amanda, throwing his overcoat, which hits the curio cabinet that houses Laura’s glass

menagerie. There is the sound of breaking glass. Laura, like an animal, cries out “as if wounded.”

The inside of the apartment is dark and a church bell can be heard in the distance as **Scene Four** begins. It is five o'clock a.m. and Tom is stumbling home. “A shower of movie ticket stubs” and a bottle fall from his pockets as proof of where he has been. (Scholars suggest that this is an autobiographical nod to Williams himself, who also frequently escaped to the movies.) Laura is inside when he arrives. She is concerned and gently disapproving, pointing out that their mother might wake up. Tom replies, describing a stage show that he claims to have seen, “It doesn’t take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?” His thoughts, even after having been gone all night, are still on the pain of entrapment and the hope of escape. On cue, the photograph of Mr. Wingfield, the true escape artist, is illuminated. The church bell rings again and Amanda is heard calling Laura; she wants her daughter to go get groceries. It is made clear enough that Amanda always asks for credit, or rather it is Laura who is always sent for the groceries. With the brace on her leg, there is no doubt that Laura’s “small defect” will ensure that they all remain satisfactorily fed.

When Laura departs, one hears “Ave Maria” in the background. After a long, awkward silence, Tom apologizes to Amanda. She begins to cry, claiming that it is her “devotion” that makes her children hate her. She confesses that she worries about her children and implores Tom never to be a drunkard. As if incapable of resisting, she begins to nag Tom again, this time for eating too fast and drinking black coffee. Amanda, who is accomplished at using her daughter for the sake of deceiving others, tells Tom that she believes Laura is concerned about him. After all, this might instill some guilt in him and he might possibly stop going out. She admits that, contrary to what Tom believes, she understands that he doesn’t enjoy working at the warehouse.

The Christian symbols (“Ave Maria,” the mother’s tears, her choice of the word “devotion”) reinforce the notion of Amanda as martyr (an image that is referred to throughout the play), but it also sets the stage for a critical moment in the play—Amanda’s confession. She says to Tom, “There’s so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you!” It appears that Amanda is not purposefully cruel or antagonistic after all and her character becomes deeper after this admission.

In a moment of foreshadowing, Amanda says that she sees Tom taking after his father. Tom tries to explain his restlessness to his mother. “Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse,” he says. Thomas Allen Greenfield notes that “Williams presents us with an irresolvable conflict between meaningless rationalized modern work and the passion and romance that are for Williams the life’s blood of men who are intellectually and spiritually alive.” (Greenfield, 74) Surely, Tom embodies this conflict.

As it turns out, Amanda has seen Tom’s letter from the Merchant Marine. She understands his desire to escape as his father did, but she asks him not to go until Laura is taken care of, imploring Tom to bring home a gentleman caller for Laura. Tom reluctantly agrees.

Perpetuating the Christian motif, the projection of the word “Annunciation” is the first image of **Scene Five**. It is the foretelling of a hopeful event and the calling of someone to a higher purpose. Williams indicates that the sun is just about to set on a Spring day. The opening is therefore optimistic and a tense audience might have their first chance to relax. Amanda and Laura are performing the ordinary task of cleaning the table, but Williams refers to it as being like “a dance or ritual.” They wear light-colored dresses and Tom wears a white shirt and pants. The atmosphere is lighter, almost ethereal, corresponding to the message on the screen. This is disrupted when Williams compares the characters to moths, colorless and silent. Tom is separate from the women and remains by the exterior portion of the set. We hear Amanda, and this time she

is nagging Tom about combing his hair and again about smoking. Tom, who had been reading a newspaper with international news, grows frustrated and steps outside to smoke. The door slams behind him and Amanda looks over to the photograph of her husband, perhaps considering the inevitable.

Across the alley, music is coming from a dance hall. Now that Tom is outdoors he resumes his position as Narrator and describes the source of the music. Clearly, he has been inside before. He describes “a large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling.” He says, “It would turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbows.” The young men and women come outside on nice nights to kiss in the moonlight. For Tom, this image is interpreted as a repeated momentary deception, paralleling many other details of the play.

In the next part of Scene Five, Amanda and Tom come together. In a moment symbolic of Amanda’s attempt to reach out to her son, she steps outside to an area that clearly has belonged to Tom up until this point. They both make wishes on the moon. Tom reveals that he has found a gentleman caller for Laura. Williams refers to this revelation as “the annunciation,” and an ordinary event such as having a visitor is elevated to a level of spiritual significance. Like the Christian annunciation, this event is a reason for hope. With Mr. Wingfield absent and Tom’s departure imminent, “it remains therefore for Jim to come as the Savior to the Friday night supper.” (Stein, 115)

The two return inside and Amanda begins making preparations for the visit. Since the caller will be arriving on a Friday, Amanda decides they will dine on fish (another religious symbol, reminiscent not only of Jesus Christ himself, but also of his miracle of providing the desperate fisherman with plenty). Jim’s coming is infused with the hope of providing a miraculous transformation for the Wingfield family.

Amanda questions Tom to see if Jim drinks. After all, she doesn’t want Laura to be in the same situation she currently finds herself in. She can’t help referring back to her time at

Blue Mountain and her own “tragic mistake” which interrupted those happier times.

Tom confesses that he didn’t tell Jim about Laura, but Amanda is sure that when Jim encounters Laura he will be taken with her unique beauty. Tom is more realistic, pointing out that, while Laura’s positive points are evident to them, someone else might notice her handicap first. But with every word that Tom uses to describe the way someone might see Laura (crippled, peculiar), Amanda counters it with her denial. The music coming from the dance hall now “has a minor and ominous tone.” Frustrated, Tom announces that he is leaving to go to the movies. Unable to let him go, and perhaps anticipating his final departure, Amanda yells after him “I don’t believe you always go to the movies!”

With Tom gone, Amanda calls Laura outside to wish on the moon. Scene Five is the first scene that finds all three characters on the exterior portion of the set and there is an indication that, perhaps, the characters are being drawn outside of their selves, but Laura, who is out of her element, isn’t sure what to wish for. As Stephanie B. Hammer says, “Everyone else in Williams’s drama has a clear wish to escape, to get somewhere, to have something. But Laura’s desire is something and somewhere else.” (Hammer, 43) Amanda, filled with new hope, enthusiastically instructs her to wish for “Happiness!” and “Good fortune!”

Scene Six begins with our narrator, Tom, in his usual place on the fire escape. Onscreen is an image of Jim, the gentleman caller, as a “high school hero.” As it turns out, Jim has gone to high school with Tom and Laura; he is, of course, the same Jim that Laura once had a crush on. He was popular in school and successful at everything including sports, drama, and politics. Despite all of this, Jim now works at the warehouse with Tom, who he calls “Shakespeare.”

The lighting in the apartment is described as a “lemony light.” Again, it is nearly dusk, implying that a transition is about to take place. Amanda has transformed their home, hiding any flaws that might reveal their true situation to Jim,

and Laura and Amanda are seen together again, performing another domestic task. This time, Amanda is fixing Laura's dress. Williams describes it as "devout and ritualistic," with Laura standing with her arms outstretched as her mother kneels in front of her. Judith Thompson notes that "Williams' plays do not simply recall the old mythic images and religious rituals; they transform them in their reenactment." (Thompson, 684) Laura "is like a piece of translucent glass, touched by light." She is so nervous that she is visibly shaking. Her mother, who wants her daughter to wear "gay deceivers," instructs her that "all pretty women are a trap," perpetuating the notion that charm should be used to deceive. Perhaps on her own advice, Amanda leaves to dress herself and when she returns, she is holding jonquils and wearing one of her old dresses—a vision of her youth. Getting away with herself, she describes a day when she received so many jonquils from her callers that there weren't any more vases to hold them. As always, she promptly concludes this line of thought with a remembrance of Mr. Wingfield.

In another moment of foreshadowing, Amanda notes that it is about to rain. When Amanda says that she gave Tom money "so he and Mr. O'Connor could take the service car home," Laura realizes that her caller is the same Jim O'Connor that she went to school with, the same Jim that used to call her "Blue Roses." Laura says that she will be unable to come to the table knowing that it is him. She is left alone to panic as Amanda goes to check on dinner.

By this time, Tom and Jim have arrived and are standing on the fire escape. "A low drum sounds." Amanda calls to Laura to open the door, but she is frozen with fear and stares at the door without moving. Her instinct in this moment is to run to the Victrola and begin winding it. As if this act has given her strength, she finally goes to the door and lets the boys in. Tom introduces Laura to Jim and it is clear that Jim doesn't immediately remember her. Jim shakes her hand, boldly (or some might say rudely) noting that her hand is cold. Laura instinctively heads back towards the Victrola and then disappears from the room. When Tom explains that Laura is

very shy; Jim replies that he doesn't meet girls like this very often. He also notes that Tom never mentioned that he had a sister.

While they wait for dinner, Tom offers Jim the newspaper and Jim, the All-American boy, requests the sports page. Tom is clearly disinterested in the news that Jim shares from the page, and as if provoked by Tom's mood, Jim begins to try to sell Tom on the benefits of public speaking. Jim notes that the primary difference between him and Tom is their "social poise." He tells Tom that their boss had been speaking about him in a less than positive manner. He warns Tom that he could lose his job if he doesn't "wake up." Tom responds, "I am waking up." He is clearly not referring to his job, but to a more personal matter. An image of a ship with the Jolly Roger appears onscreen. Tom leans over the rail of the fire escape as if he is on the ship. He confesses to Jim that he is tired of the movies because movies simply portray people having adventure and Tom is interested in the real thing. He shows Jim his membership card for the Merchant Marines and confesses that he has paid his dues rather than his family's electric bill. When Jim asks what his mother will do, Tom responds, "I'm like my father," as if he has already resigned himself to the idea. His fate, he believes, depends on his ability to avoid the realm of empathy, simply disregarding his mother's feelings.

As if on cue, Amanda approaches. She is wearing one of her old ball gowns and, since charm is the best form of magic, she exaggerates her Southern manners for Jim's benefit. An image of a young Amanda appears onscreen. Amanda begins to talk about the weather and uses it as an opportunity to draw attention to her dress. Perhaps afraid that his mother will launch into one of her tales of the past, Tom interrupts, asking about dinner. In an effort to impress Jim, she claims that Laura is in charge of supper and begins to glorify Laura. As Tom anticipates, she can't help entering herself into the conversation, mentioning her gentleman callers and her subsequent marriage to the absent Mr. Wingfield. It is critical to note that Amanda's tales of the past always end with the thought of her husband. She is not sincerely stuck in the past;

rather, the charm of her memories is sufficient to temporarily—and only temporarily—deceive her. Scholar Benjamin Nelson points out that while Amanda does cling to the past, “she clings just as desperately to the present. She is attempting to hold two worlds together and realizes that both are crumbling beneath her fingers.” (Nelson, 89) Catching herself, she apologizes and uses this as an opportunity to ask if Jim has any “tribulations” of his own. Before he can answer, Tom returns with the news that Laura is sick and cannot come to the table. Amanda demands that she come to the table and a faint Laura obediently appears, only to stumble to the table in near collapse. With the elements of nature mimicking the elements of the play, we hear the sound of thunder. Tom helps Laura back to the living room while Amanda suggests to Jim that her daughter is only sick from being in front of a hot stove for too long on a warm night. As if the façade can no longer be kept up, it begins to rain. Amanda, perhaps facing the reality of the situation, looks nervously at Jim. She insists that Tom say grace, and as he does, we see Laura lying on the sofa, holding back a “shuddering sob.”

As noted previously, **Scene Seven** is the climax and the finale scene of the play. Accordingly, all hope rests in the actions of this scene. Williams punctuates this feeling with small details: the light is a warm rose color, the rain ceases, and the moon, the holder of the Wingfields’ wishes, comes out from behind the clouds. The light, however, is artificial; coming from a new shade that Amanda has put on one of the lamps to hide its shabbiness and, as in Scene Five, this atmosphere quickly disintegrates. Since Tom didn’t pay the electric bill, the lights have gone out. This draws attention to the disparity of the Wingfields’ situation, but it also gives cause for a lighting change. Candles, typically associated with religious or romantic encounters, are lit.

Amanda sends Tom off to do the dishes and asks Jim to check on Laura in the meantime. Elevating this act to ritual status, she gives him a candelabrum “that used to be on the altar at the Church of Heavenly Rest,” which burned down

after being struck by lightning. The implications are not positive. She also gives him some wine to offer her. The action that follows is described as “the climax of her secret life.”

Jim invites Laura to sit on the floor with him. He offers her wine and later, a piece of gum, which makes him think aloud about the success of the Wrigley Company. Jim can't contain his optimism, telling Laura that “the future will be in America, even more wonderful than the present time is.” Laura doesn't reply. After a kind smile from Jim, she regains herself, taking a stick of gum and starting a conversation. She asks if Jim has continued singing. Jim finally realizes that he has met Laura previously in high school; they shared a class together, to which Laura always arrived late. Not trying to hide or downplay her handicap, she confesses that it was because of her leg brace. While in Laura's mind the brace attracted attention with its loud clanking, Jim says that he hardly noticed and begins coaching her on how to gain self-confidence. He relates that all people have their own disappointments, even himself, who hoped he “would be further along” than he is.

After some discussion about high school, Laura gathers the courage to ask about Emily Meisenbach, Jim's high school sweetheart and presumed fiancée. Jim calls her a “krauthead” saying that the announcement of their engagement was “propaganda.” Presumably unattached, Jim smiles at Laura and asks what she has been doing since high school. Williams says that this smile “lights her inwardly with altar candles.” The question, however, has made her nervous and she picks up a piece from her glass collection while considering how to answer. After further prodding from Jim, Laura confesses that she did take a business course but dropped out because of her nervous stomach. Now, she says, she spends her time taking care of her glass collection. She “turns away again, acutely shy.” Jim begins another speech about self-confidence, claiming that he was once lacking it too; as he said to Tom, he gained his confidence from public speaking. There is an implication that self-display in public can lead to confidence and a stronger sense of self, and the audience might consider it possible for the Wingfields to benefit accordingly from their own public

display, Jim does not consider that the public can also be a venue for humiliation.

In a pathetically humorous moment, Jim gloats, "Now I've never made a regular study of it, but I have a friend who says I can analyze people better than doctors that make a profession of it. I don't claim that to be necessarily true, but I can sure guess a person's psychology." Making new symbolic use of glass, Jim glances "unconsciously" (and narcissistically) in the mirror. Jim continues on—he is studying radio engineering because of his faith in the future of television. He believes that he is getting in "on the ground floor." "That's the cycle democracy is built on!" he says. The situation in America doesn't seem to have affected him the way it obviously affects the other characters, and Jim is able to retain his patriotic and optimistic opinion of America.

He turns the conversation back to Laura, asking again about her interests. Laura explains that she keeps a glass collection—"tiny animals made out of glass." Frank Durham explains that their significance lies in their symbolism. "Laura's glass animals, especially the unicorn, which is broken, symbolize the tenuousness of her hold on reality, the ease with which her illusion may be shattered." (Durham, 123) As the glass menagerie music resumes, Laura hands Jim a small glass unicorn. As if referring to herself, creating a link between herself and this creature, she says "Oh, be careful—if you breathe, it breaks!" In the line of conversation that follows, the unicorn continues to stand in symbolically for Laura. Jim, responding appropriately, says he'd better not touch it then because he is clumsy. Laura, however, has already given him her trust and places it in his hand. She confesses that the unicorn is her favorite piece. Like Laura, the unicorn is not like other animals of the "modern world." Both are almost like others with the exception of a "small defect" that keeps them apart. Jim says that the unicorn "must feel sort of lonesome." Laura doesn't deny that this position as an outsider isn't lonely; rather, she says that "he doesn't complain about it." The unicorn stays on the shelf with creatures without this defect and as Laura says, "They seem to get along nicely together."

Laura has also been able to get along satisfactorily among others.

Jim places the unicorn on a nearby table. Noticing that it isn't raining anymore, he opens the fire-escape door. A waltz can be heard coming from the dance hall and Jim invites Laura to dance. Laura is so caught off-guard by the invitation that she can barely breathe. "I'm not made of glass," Jim assures her. In a romantic moment, Jim teaches Laura to dance, but as the two move around the room they seem out of synch. Williams describes their dance as a "clumsy waltz." Jim suddenly bumps into the table and the glass unicorn crashes to the floor. Having finally experienced a romantic encounter like other girls her age, Laura says "Now it is just like all the other horses." In her most bold act yet, Laura gives Jim a nickname, saying, "It's no tragedy, Freckles." The horn has been broken off and the removal of this defect makes Laura and the unicorn "feel less—freakish." As if charmed by the transformation in Laura, Jim tells Laura that she is beautiful. While the tone is still romantic, something seems amiss when Jim says, "I wish you were my sister. I'd teach you to have some confidence in yourself."

Jim notes that "blue roses" is an appropriate nickname for Laura since she is not like everyone else, but Laura recognizes that blue is not the correct color for a rose. The most climatic scene of the play ensues. "Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy and turning away and—blushing," he says. "Somebody ought to kiss you, Laura!" He turns and kisses her.

Jim immediately apologizes to a dazed Laura. Despite his previous pronouncement of his ability to determine a person's psychological situation, Jim has no idea what he has done. Jim tells Laura that Tom may have made a mistake in bringing him here to call on Laura. He continues, "I can't take down your number and say I'll phone. I can't call up next week and ask for a date. I thought I had better explain the situation in case you—misunderstood it and—I hurt your feelings..." Laura begins to comprehend what has happened. Jim confesses that he is engaged to another girl. Since the elements of nature have

aply paralleled the states of the characters throughout, this element is now made internal, metaphorically—Laura is experiencing an “emotional storm.” In an attempt to complete the triangle of the private, natural, and spiritual experience, thereby presenting its indivisibility, Williams says, “The holy candles on the altar of Laura’s face have been snuffed out.” As she opens her hand, we see that she is still holding the broken glass unicorn. With her innocence and her faith shattered, she no longer has need for the childish glass animal. She gives it to Jim as a “souvenir” and returns to the Victrola.

Amanda enters the room with juice and a plate of macaroons. She notices the expression on Laura’s face but doesn’t comprehend what has happened. She says that she wants Jim to come over all of the time, but Jim says that he has to be going. Amanda assumes that he has to leave because of work, but Jim confesses that he is meeting Betty, the girl he goes steady with. “The Sky Falls” appears on the screen. Amanda notes that Tom never said anything about his engagement and Jim explains that “the cat’s not out of the bag at the warehouse.” In a final gesture representative of his inability to see beyond himself, he stops at the mirror on his way out.

When Amanda turns from the door, Laura is at the Victrola again. It seems that things are left as they were and the visit hasn’t brought about the happy transformation that Amanda had hoped for. Amanda is unable to believe that her son didn’t know anything about the engagement; after all, Jim is supposed to be his best friend at the warehouse. Ironically, she accuses Tom of living in a dream and manufacturing illusions. This accusation is particularly interesting as it draws attention to the universal escapism that all of the Wingfields practice. R.B. Parker elaborates:

Such escapism is seen as a weakness, and in the case of Jim and Amanda is rendered comically, but we are also clearly meant to sympathize with it; and it is important to recognize that it encompasses not only young Tom, escaping into daydreams and the movies, but also the

Tom who is remembering, the wandered forever trying to evade his past. Without such a balance, the play can easily degenerate into sentimentality. (Parker, 8)

The actions that ensue are unfortunately reminiscent of those of the first five scenes. Amanda and Tom argue and finally, Tom announces that he is leaving to go to the movies. In a final symbolic gesture, he “smashes his glass to the floor.” While Jim has caused irreparable damage, it is implied that Tom is truly responsible for the shattered family’s fate. He runs to the fire escape, again gripping the rail as if on a ship, a gestural indication of what is to come. Gilbert Debusscher suggests that “the short scene in which Tom leans on the railway may be a dramatic reconstruction of the last minute of the poet’s life before he escaped, as Tom is planning to do, from a world that had become too oppressive to bear” (Debusscher, 35), but we cannot be certain because this line of action comes to a halt here. Tom resumes his position as narrator and as he delivers his final monologue, the action is turned back over to Laura and Amanda who are inside together. Amanda is now said to exude “dignity” and to possess a “tragic beauty.” Their movements are again slow and “dancelike” as Amanda comforts her daughter. She stops to look one more time at the picture of Mr. Wingfield.

The audience is afforded with the unique opportunity of witnessing all three characters at once, one last time. “By typical use of his dramatic talents,” Lester Beaurline says, “Williams makes the audience conscious of several characters’ feelings at the same time, like a juggler keeping four balls in the air.” (Beaurline, 50) Despite Williams’s use of this technique, many critics have pointed out that the scenes with Laura and Amanda may be overemphasized. Benjamin Nelson says, “The story of Laura and Jim is simple and poignant, but it is neither the sole nor the central conflict in the play. Laura’s personal dilemma is part of a greater dilemma: the destruction—slow and remorseless—of a family.” (Nelson, 89) Thomas C. King describes a similar problem:

Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, though it has achieved a firmly established position in the canon of American plays, is often distorted, if not misunderstood, by readers, directors and audiences. The distortion results from an over emphasis on the scenes involving Laura and Amanda and their plight, so that the play becomes a sentimental tract on the trapped misery of two women in St. Louis. This leads to the neglect of Tom's soliloquies—speeches that can be ignored or discounted only at great peril, since they occupy such a prominent position in the play. When not largely ignored, they are in danger of being treated as nostalgic yearnings for a former time.” (King, 75)

Part of the trouble is that Tom's departure is revealed in a monologue rather than action on the set, since the departure of Tom has more to do with an emotional or existential journey than a physical one. We do not actually see Tom leave, but indeed, he leaves and never returns. “I didn't go to the moon,” he says. “I went much farther—for time is the longest distance between two places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box. I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for a last time.” Benjamin Nelson notes that “in part, the play is his attempt to overcome his fears, but we are left with no assurance at the conclusion that he has succeeded.” (Nelson, 91) Tom's decision to leave has made him like his father, and there are additional consequences. He is unable to forget about his family, specifically, about his sister, Laura. “Oh, Laura, Laura,” he cries, “I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candles out!” Tom painfully recognizes that his sister is out of place in the world, “For nowadays the world is lit by lighting”—tragedy, desperation, and war. The last image we see is Laura extinguishing the candles with her breath and finally, darkness. R.B. Parker points out that this lack of light is reminiscent of a previous scene:

‘Blow out your candles’ repeats, within the play, his earlier plunging of the stage into darkness by selfishly misappropriating the family’s electricity payment; and it can be argued that the uneasy jocularity of some of the projections and the element of overpoeticism in Tom’s final soliloquies...reflect not only regret and remorse but also a self-lacerating awareness that by abandoning Laura he is repudiating an essential part of himself.” (Parker, 12)

Tom’s disregard for the empathetic experience, the most human of experiences, has left him fragmented and his family shattered. He has not, after all this, been made whole by his new freedom, but by the offering up of private experience, what Tom has lost, the audience has gained.

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LESTER A. BEAURLINE ON THE EVOLUTION OF *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*

Evidence survives for at least four stages in the composition of *The Glass Menagerie*: (1) The sixteen page story entitled “Portrait of a Girl in Glass” (written before 1945 and published in *One Arm and Other Stories*, 1948), where attention is on Laura, the narrator’s sister.

(2) A sixty-part one-act play in five scenes, of which twenty-one pages survive in the C. Waller Barrett Library at the University of Virginia. It is clear from the existing fragments that Williams had the main lines of his play firmly in hand at this stage. Here the clash between Tom and Amanda, the painful relationship between Amanda and Laura, and the contrast between Jim and Tom have become as important as Laura herself. This script was probably written before Williams went to California to work on a movie script in 1943 and before he worked up a synopsis for a film named *The Gentleman Caller*.

(3) A 105-page play manuscript, now in the C. Waller Barrett Library at the University of Virginia. This complex document contains ten kinds of paper, is written on at least six different typewriters, and has four different kinds of handwritten pencil or ink revisions. It may represent about eight to ten layers of revision, but for the sake of clarity, I will refer to only the final stage of the third version: the manuscript as it stood when Williams sent it off to his agent in the fall of 1943. He called this the “reading version,” and it is very close to the Random House edition, published in 1945 and reprinted by New Directions in 1949. However, this printed edition (which unfortunately has gotten into the college anthologies) contains several errors and a few alterations. The long version of the manuscript is in seven scenes and is a development and expansion of episodes in the one-act version. At this stage the major emphasis in the play is on memory, Tom’s memory. It is a

play about growing up as Tom must recognize the fatal choice between Laura's glass animals and Jim's gross materialism.

(4) The acting version, published by the Dramatists Play Service in 1948 (and revised again sometime in the mid-fifties). This purports to be "a faithful indication of the way the play was produced in New York and on the road" by the original company. Many changes have been made in the stage directions and details of the dialogue. One new scene was added, and over 1100 verbal changes appear in the dialogue alone. I think that Williams is now finished with the play and that the fourth version represents his final intentions. Therefore a responsible editor of an anthology should *not* reprint the old "reading version," and a critic ignores the acting version at his peril.

Changes in Tom's last speech epitomize all the revision in the play, so it is worth examining a long passage that closes the "Girl in Glass."

Not very long after that I lost my job at the warehouse. I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box. I left Saint Louis and took to moving around. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. My nature changed. I grew to be firm and sufficient.

In five years' time I had nearly forgotten home. I had to forget it, I couldn't carry it with me. But once in a while, usually in a strange town before I have found companions, the shell of deliberate hardness is broken through. A door comes softly and irresistibly open. I hear the tired old music my unknown father left in the place he abandoned as faithlessly as I. I see the faint and sorrowful radiance of the glass, hundreds of little transparent pieces of it in very delicate colors. I hold my breath, for if my sister's face appears among them—the night is hers!

In the second draft (the one-act version), Williams heightened Tom's emotional tension between his necessary cruelty and his affection for the ones he is hurting. His cruel side comes out when he says, "Then I escaped. Without a word of goodbye, I

descended the steps of the fire-escape for the last time.” The incestuous implications of the speech become more explicit: “In five years time I have nearly forgotten home. But there are nights when memory is stronger. I cannot hold my shoulder to the door, the door comes softly but irresistibly open.... I hold my breath. I reach for a cigarette. I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger. For if that vision goes on growing clearer, the mist will divide upon my sister’s face, watching gently and daring to ask for nothing. Then it’s too much: my manhood is undone and the night is hers.”

In the third version, the speech is more integrated with the scene. Amanda had just shouted at him, “Go then! Then go to the moon!—you selfish dreamer.” So Tom begins his epilogue with “I didn’t go to the moon. I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places.” (We should recall that Amanda had asked Laura to wish on the moon before the gentleman caller came.) Another unifying detail was added at the end. Laura, in pantomime, blows out the candles, which like the moon have come to suggest her hopes, the romantic half-light, similar to the glow that came across the alley from the Paradise Ballroom. She had already blown out her candles in the second version, but in the third, Tom says, “anything that can blow your candles out! (LAURA BENDS OVER THE CANDLES) Blow out your candles, Laura!—for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura,—and so goodbye.... (SHE BLOWS THE CANDLES OUT. THE SCENE DISSOLVES.)” So the dialogue and action reinforce each other....

There are a hundred ways that the body of the play depicts Tom’s awareness of the essential hopelessness of the Wingfield family and the essential deadness of their beautiful memories. I will not explain how each detail came into the script; two more examples will have to suffice. One of the greatest moments in modern theater occurs when Amanda comes on stage to greet Laura’s gentleman caller. Nobody says a word for a few seconds; everyone’s eyes are fixed on Amanda’s dress—the old ball dress that she wore when she led the cotillion years ago. Before age had yellowed this dress she had twice won the cakewalk, and she had worn it to the Governor’s ball in

Jackson. The dress, at this moment, suggests the utter futility of Amanda's efforts to find a husband for her daughter. She defeats her own purposes; she cannot resist pretending that the gentleman caller has come to call on her, just as seventeen of them came one afternoon on Blue Mountain. Tom is shocked and embarrassed. The grotesque sight leaves Jim speechless, and he is a young man proud of his high-school training in public speaking. Meanwhile Laura lies in her bedroom, sick with fear.

Mr. Williams did not achieve such a theatrical triumph by writing with his guts or by pouring out his uncontrolled libido. In the short story, he tried to make Laura pathetic by dressing her in one of her mother's old gowns, and Tom is momentarily surprised by her appearance when she opens the door. In the one-act version, Amanda's memories of Blue Mountain are written into the script, and Laura is furnished with a new dress, but now she is lame. By the third version (possible in the second, too, but I cannot be sure because the relevant pages of the second version do not survive), Amanda wears the old dress and becomes a coquette. In the fourth version, Williams softens the effect slightly and adds a little more to the irony by a brief exchange between Tom and his mother. At the peak of Tom's embarrassment, after the pregnant pause, he says:

Mother, you look so pretty.

AMANDA. You know, that's the first compliment you ever paid me. I wish you'd look pleasant when you're about to say something pleasant, so I could expect it.

Then Amanda swings into her girlish chatter. These last additions seem to assure the audience that Tom is genuinely shocked but that he is trying to cover up his feelings. At the same time the audience has to have evidence that Amanda is not completely out of her mind. She can still recognize a hollow compliment, and she can return the jibe.

By typical use of his dramatic talents, Williams makes the audience conscious of several characters' feelings at the same time, like a juggler keeping four balls in the air. Each revision

puts another ball in the air or increases the specific pressure. We are never allowed to forget the tension between Tom and his mother, and the scene strongly suggests that Laura's anxiety and withdrawal may have been caused by her aggressive mother. The final image of Amanda in the Epilogue is that of a comforter and protector of Laura. She is dignified and tragic. But she is most vividly depicted in the middle of the play as a vigorous, silly, and pathetic old woman. Fearing that her daughter might become an old maid, she arranges the visit of a gentleman caller. Yet, she cannot resist the temptation to smother her daughter and relive her Blue Mountain days; she vicariously seduces the man herself. She has to keep bringing the dead but beautiful past into the present; Tom must go into the ugly but live future. He must break out of the coffin and leave his sister behind in darkness.

GEORGE W. CRANDELL ON CINEMATIC DEVICES

When confronted with an unpleasant situation at home, the character Tom Wingfield in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* typically responds by saying, "I'm going to the movies" (188). For Tom, the cinema provides both the impetus and a convenient excuse for escape from unpleasant company and inhospitable surroundings. In contrast with the Wingfield apartment, "one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers" (Williams 143), the movie theater provides Tom with both a temporary respite from the responsibilities of providing for his family and a refuge from the oppressive reality that distresses him. In the relative comfort and pleasant confines of the movie house, Tom delights in the visual pleasures that the cinema affords its viewers. Despite the remarkable frequency of Tom's trips to the movies, the proof of which is "a shower of movie ticket stubs" descending like rain from his pockets (Williams 166), critics have generally neglected to consider how Tom's vision and recollection of events in *The Glass Menagerie* are both a

reflection of the shaping influence of the cinema and, more importantly, an articulation of the dominant cultural ideology as expressed by the cinematic apparatus.

Of course, Williams's own close ties to the cinema and its influence upon him have not been ignored. Characterizing the young Tom Williams as "weak, timid, and introspective," Gilbert Maxwell, a friend of Williams since 1940, suggests that Williams went to the movies to escape "from a world of poverty and misunderstanding," and there took comfort in the "make-believe world of ... motion pictures" (xii). Benjamin Nelson attributes Williams's frequent experience of the cinema to a similar motive: "During the years in St. Louis, out of loneliness and the desire to escape from home, he spent much of his leisure time in movie theatres" (16). Although Williams would later (briefly in 1943) be employed as a screenwriter for a major Hollywood studio, Allean Hale believes that Williams acquired his knowledge of films during the formative years of his adolescence, and in a place that afforded Williams ample opportunity to do so: "St. Louis ... had more motion picture theatres per capita than New York City. Future biographers would assume that Tennessee learned his cinematic techniques from his six months at MGM, whereas he had spent twenty years at the movies before he went to Hollywood" (610). According to biographer Lyle Leverich, Williams's Hollywood employment was more repugnant than suitable to Williams's taste, but not without its positive impact: "While the experience left him with a distaste for art as a studio product,... he was in fact deeply impressed with the wide-ranging, often poetic freedom of film itself, and this would influence his writing of *The Glass Menagerie* as well as other of his major plays" (530). Anticipating Leverich's conclusion, George Brandt writes that "of all American playwrights" Tennessee Williams "has most effectively learnt the lessons in freedom that the cinema has to teach" (165), adding that *The Glass Menagerie* is "the most cinematic of Williams's plays" (181).

Brandt and Edward Murray, in particular, have examined many of the cinematic features evident in Williams's dramatic

work. While Murray focuses primarily upon film adaptations of the plays and Brandt directs his attention both to Williams's original screenplay, *Baby Doll*, and the plays, both authors agree that the cinematic techniques that Williams learned enabled him to go beyond the limits of conventional theater. As Brandt explains, Williams "aimed at overcoming the leaden immobility of the naturalistic set," attempting instead "to create on the stage the fluidity and the sense of simultaneity which the editing process can give to the cinema" (168). Certainly while Brandt and Murray demonstrate the importance of Williams's "cinematic imagination" (Murray 52), their studies nevertheless neglect to consider the special, cinematic role of the narrator and how Tom Wingfield's distinctive gaze reveals the extent to which *The Glass Menagerie* replicates the organizational structures of the classic cinema, which, in turn, reflect the ideology of a patriarchal society.

The cinematic influence in *The Glass Menagerie* is most clearly evident in the figure of the narrator. With the aid of this device, Williams duplicates the motion-picture camera's organizing point of view, adapts the shot-to-shot formation for the theater (fostering identification with a fictional character and replicating the cinematic process of suture), and adopts the patriarchal look that characterizes many of Hollywood's classic films: a man gazing at a woman.

Although the cinema and the theater differ in many fundamental respects, the importance of the narrator's cinematic function in *The Glass Menagerie* becomes readily apparent if we consider some of the connections between the two media, as Barbara Freedman suggests in *Staging the Gaze*: "Theater theorists might profitably examine how various aspects of the cinematic machinery—[for example] the voiceover, [and] the shot-to-shot formation—are fulfilled differently in theater" (68-69). If we add the motion-picture camera to Freedman's list of machinery, and consider its theatrical equivalent in *The Glass Menagerie*, we see that Williams's narrator functions in ways analogous to those of the camera in film. Most obviously, the narrator and the

camera both operate to provide the spectator with an orienting point of view, one with which the spectator is then compelled to identify. As we shall see, the narrator also serves as a stand-in for the spectator in the theater, assuming a subject position within the dramatic narrative, a function accomplished in film by means of the camera and the shot-to-shot formation. In his dual role as both narrator and character in the play, Tom Wingfield—similar to the camera—performs not only as the cinematic “eye,” but also as the cinematic “I” who sees (and speaks) within the fictive narrative of *The Glass Menagerie*.

By making the narrator an integral presence in the play, Williams not only facilitates identification with a particular point of view, thus duplicating one of the important functions of the camera in film, he also anticipates and addresses one of the difficulties inherent in theatrical production: the organization and control of both identification and point of view. As Freedman explains: “Whereas cinema encourages a more direct perceptual identification with the seeing eye of the camera, theater divides and disperses the possibilities of identification, in the process problematizing both identification and point of view” (68). Unable to reproduce exactly the effect of the camera, Williams nevertheless envisions a cinematic solution to a theatrical problem, substituting in the place of the camera a narrator who organizes and orchestrates what happens on stage. Although each of the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* appears to be an autonomous self, each representing a differing point of view, each is actually but a memory, a product of the narrator’s vivid imagination (at another level of enunciation, each is also the imaginative construct of Tennessee Williams). Prompted by Stark Young’s observation, “[t]he story, as we see it on the stage, all happens in the son’s mind long afterward” (505), Thomas L. King concludes that—in effect—“Tom is the only character in the play, for we see not the characters but Tom’s memory of them—Amanda and the rest are merely aspects of Tom’s

consciousness" (208). To the extent that Williams's audience accepts Tom's point of view as its own, Williams duplicates the function of the camera and the process of identification in cinema as described by Jean-Louis Baudry: "the spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself, than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees; this is exactly the function taken over by the camera" (295). By subsuming all points of view under one, and by facilitating identification with this single gaze, Williams approximates the camera's singular and authoritative point of view, at the same time limiting the possibilities of identification and point of view generally characteristic of the theater.

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GILBERT DEBUSSCHER ON AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN INFLUENCES

Though Williams expressed himself, sometimes quite candidly, about his private life, he was always reluctant to give information about his working methods. Yet he repeatedly mentioned the influence of three writers—D. H. Lawrence, Hart Crane, Anton Chekhov—and cited numerous others; from an examination of recent criticism it is possible to compile a list that includes Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Jean Cocteau, Federico Garcia Lorca, Eugene O'Neill, Harold Pinter, Luigi Pirandello, Bernard Shaw, August Strindberg, Oscar Wilde, and Thornton Wilder. I shall examine the effect on Williams's works of his acknowledged mentors and determine the guise of their presence in the plays. A recent investigation about the significance of Oscar Wilde in this context adds a new perspective on Williams's modes of reading and borrowing and on the subtle planes of intertextuality in his work.

D. H. Lawrence's influence on Tennessee Williams was documented by Norman J. Fedder¹ as early as 1966. Fedder's analyses of thirty years ago are still persuasive but his conclusions need revisiting now that the respective statures of the two artists are more accurately assessed. There is external evidence that Williams had read the works of D. H. Lawrence. In 1939 already he had manifested his admiration for the English novelist by visiting Lawrence's widow, Frieda, in Taos, New Mexico and by promising her to complete a play about her husband. The outcome was the one-act play *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* (1941).² A few years later, Williams's friend Donald Windham suggested that they dramatize Lawrence's short story "You Touched Me"; Williams responded enthusiastically and, as it turned out, did most of the work.

Williams's admiration for a writer often concerns the man as much as his ideas. Fedder has pointed out that Williams was attracted to Lawrence because of the Englishman's emphasis on sexuality: to him sex was a means of restoring a balance between the two antagonistic forces of the flesh and the spirit,

locked in a battle in which the British writer felt the intellect had dangerously gained the upper hand. Sex was also to be a liberating force opposed to the bourgeois Puritanism of the Victorian Age and of the American Genteel Tradition. As its apostle, Lawrence was part of a larger movement of liberation—social, political as well as emotional—born in the wake of Freudianism. It is therefore entirely possible that Williams's own insistence on the importance of sex derives as much from Lawrence as from the emerging Freudian revolution of which the playwright was to become a leading proponent on Broadway.

Beyond this convergence of views rooted in the *Zeitgeist*, there are, however, in Williams's and Lawrence's particular cases, a series of striking biographical parallels which may have intensified his feeling of kinship. The family backgrounds of both writers are very comparable. They were both born to hopelessly mismatched parents: a mother that insisted on propriety and decorum, a father whose misguided vital energy expressed itself in violent and bawdy outbursts. Both boys were ill-treated by their fathers which resulted in their turning away from these male models and embracing the attitudes of their mothers who despised their husbands as socially inferior. As children, both also went through a long period of illness which left them sickly or hypochondriac and required the mother's—and in Williams's case, also the grandmother's—intensive care and thus reinforced the maternal hold on them. Both men in later years came to realize that they did not really hate their fathers; instead, they had failed to understand them, mostly because they had been forced to adopt the prejudiced view of their mothers. Both were associated through adolescence or early manhood with hypersensitive young ladies who became their closest companions: Lawrence's early love Jessie Chambers, the real-life model of Miriam in *Sons and Lovers* and, on the other hand, Rose, the playwright's sister, the prototype of Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*. Finally, both authors were confronted with the alienating aspects of industrial civilization—Lawrence amidst the collieries of the English Midlands, Williams in the sordid urban wilderness of

St. Louis, Missouri, an environment which he hated the more since it contrasted starkly with that of his early childhood in rural Mississippi.

The author's note to *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* leaves little doubt as to what attracted Tennessee Williams to the English novelist: "Lawrence felt the mystery and power of sex, as the primal life urge, and was the life-long adversary of those who wanted to keep the subject locked away in the cellars of prudery" (VII, 56). The one-act play depicts D. H. Lawrence's last day in St. Paul de Vence. The portrait of the artist is not a flattering one as Lawrence emerges as an irascible man, a neurotic given to invective and abuse, essentially antagonistic to women. His relationship with his wife is compounded in equal measure of attraction and repulsion; in his last hours, Lawrence wishes to be left to die alone because, although a convinced advocate of the power of sex, he is also frightened of it when it is used by a woman to establish control over a man. The dying writer is confronted with not one but two women: his earthy, German-born wife and Bertha/Brett who worships him like a prophet and reproaches Frieda for having kept Lawrence "so much in his body" (VII, 68). An exchange between them exemplifies the flesh vs. spirit conflict and anticipates almost verbatim conversations between Alma and Jon Buchanan or between Maxine and Shannon in plays as diverse and distant in time and setting as *Summer and Smoke* (1948) or *The Night of the Iguana* (1961):

BERTHA: There's more to be known of a person than carnal knowledge.

FRIEDA: But carnal knowledge comes first.

BERTHA: I disagree with you.

FRIEDA: And also with Lawrence then. He always insisted you didn't know women until you had known their bodies. You just don't know. The meaning of Lawrence escapes you. In all of his work he celebrates the body. How he despises the prudery of people that want to hide it! (VII, 68).

Although presented as a proponent of sexual liberation, Williams's Lawrence is terrified of the destructive nature of the female in the sexual relationship. It is this fear that the play diagnoses as the cause of Lawrence's insistence upon the woman's subservience to the male and designates, unflatteringly in the prefatory note, as a "tangent obsession" (vii, 56). The accuracy with which the views of the actual Lawrence are presented has been repeatedly called into question. Williams admires Lawrence as a liberator from puritanical hypocrisy but the portrait is probably more revealing of Williams than of his real-life model. Fedder asks: "Is Williams praising or damning his hero?" (50). As in a premonitory answer, in a letter of 1941, Williams stated: "I make it primarily the story of a woman's devotion to a man of genius and a man's, a sort of modern satyr's, pilgrimage through times inimical to natural beings—a would-be satyr never quite released from the umbilicus."³ In this startling formulation Frieda and Lawrence relate to each other not only as wife and husband but also as mother and son. This reveals the ambivalent attitude of Williams: the virile husband rejects the tender wife, yet in his helplessness the son in him craves her motherly help. The internal conflict is informed by an Oedipal love/hate relationship which Williams, more than Lawrence, sees as the basis of all male/female bonds and is as such repeatedly echoed in his plays. Therefore, when all is said, *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* is not a document but a play and, recognizably, a Williams play: Williams is not a scholar or a literary critic but a passionate reader and an artist. His concern is not with objectivity, his aim is dramatic expressivity. His Lawrence is primarily a Williams character.

Much the same can be said, paradoxically for an adaptation, of *You Touched Me!*, the full-length play based on the Lawrence short story by the same title (without exclamation mark). The play is set in rural England during the second world war and deals with the sensual awakening of the delicate and sensitive Matilda by the returning soldier Hadrian. Their budding relationship is encouraged by Captain Rockly, the ribald father of the girl and guardian of Hadrian but it provokes the

immediate hostility of his unmarried sister Emmie. The playwright incorporated material from another Lawrence story "The Fox" in which a young man similarly arouses and marries a repressed spinster in spite of the opposition of the girl's female companion. Emmie has been preoccupied with the nightly raids of a fox into the neighborhood chicken-coops. In his stage directions Williams aligns Hadrian with the marauding animal. "There is something about him which the unsympathetic might call sharp or fox-like [...] an alert inquisitive look ... we will not say that he has red hair, but hair of that color would suit his kind of vital, quick awareness."⁴ But, again an un-Lawrentian measure of ambiguity creeps in when the playwright further adds: "Behind that quickness is something else—a need, a sensitivity..."

An identical ambivalence can be traced in another fox, the one that appears in a Williams poem, appropriately dedicated to D. H. Lawrence, the title of which "Cried the Fox"⁵ echoes that of the early one-act play. In the poem too the fox is the vibrantly alive creature but must, in order to preserve its integrity, keep ahead of the hunter and the pack. This is Williams's view, articulated in terms borrowed from Lawrence, of the individual threatened by materialistic, bourgeois civilization, the "wild thing" opposed to the reductive forces of conformity. But, where the Lawrence of *I Rise in Flame*, *Cried the Phoenix* insisted on being left alone in his final hour, the fox of the poem is said to feel lonely and desperate: Hadrian's looks also betray "a need [...] a sad patient waiting" (12). Williams's foxes harbour a softness, a tenderness which Lawrence and intransigence about masculinity where Williams shows sympathy and understanding for unavoidable compromise.

As Fedder aptly pointed out, the fox as representative of the flesh is opposed in Williams's bestiary to the moth, the fragile representative of the spirit. But, as in the case of the fox, an ambiguity colors Williams's conception: in the poem sympathetically titled "Lament for the Moths"⁶ "the lovely, velvety moths" share the same fate as the foxes in that they too are "by mammoth figures haunted." And thus, rather than

taking over a clear-cut Lawrentian triad of flesh/spirit/bourgeois civilization, Williams rewrote it in his own terms. This modified Lawrentian existential stance can be traced in most of the plays of the middle period from *Battle of Angels* (1940) to *The Night of the Iguana* (1960). Thus Val (*Battle and Orpheus*), Jim (*Menagerie*), John Buchanan (*Summer and Smoke*), Stanley (*Streetcar*), Alvaro (*Rose Tattoo*) are all aligned with the vibrant foxes while Myra/Lady, Laura, Alma, Blanche, and Serafina are their respective moths; in these successive plays the vicious forces of the establishment are represented among others by the sheriff and his lynching mob; Mr. Mendoza and the alienating factory environment; Mr. Gonzales, the violent owner of Moon Lake Casino; Mr. Graves, or Shaw and Kiefaber, the nemeses of Blanche; the Traveling Salesman who jabs Alvaro in the groin.

Beyond its general adherence to the triadic Lawrentian pattern which tends to accord greater prominence to the fox figure, an individual play may be so modeled as to recall situations from specific Lawrence works that emphasize the role of the moth instead. *Battle of Angels / Orpheus Descending* for instance can be regarded, first, as a play in which the fox, a young vagrant fiercely resisting conformity (Val) erupts into a chicken-coop (the secluded Twin River community), unwillingly awakens the emotions of "the delicate" (Myra/Lady and the other women) and is pursued and ultimately destroyed by the hunter, his companions, and their dogs (the sheriff and his men and hounds); yet, the play is also plausibly close to the plot of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in so far as it chronicles the story of "a woman [...] who has made an unfortunate marriage to an invalid husband [...] and is awakened to the joy of life by a dark lower class lover who has been connected in the past with a neurotically possessive woman [...]" (Fedder, 67). Thus also *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) has been compared with *Sons and Lovers*, for both works center on the relationships between a strong mother figure, a weak or absent father, an artist son, and an aborted love-affair between a delicate girl and a sturdy young man she is infatuated with. *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) has been likened to the short story "The Princess" in

which a delicate heroine is destroyed in a forced sexual encounter with a primitive man.

Each successive play has thus been paired off, not always with an equal degree of plausibility, with a Lawrence “model.” *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) constitutes a turning point in the evolution of Williams’s relationship to Lawrence. In it, Williams recycles, in part, the Lawrence material of *I Rise in Flame*, *Cried the Phoenix*; in so doing, he was turning for inspiration to his own recreation of the novelist rather than to the original, a symptom of the solipsistic movement in which Williams was engaged as he entered a period marked by psychiatric treatment. With *The Night of the Iguana* (1961), Williams ironically and deliberately changed allegiances, or, as Feder put it “got back” at Lawrence. One of the four main characters is named T. Lawrence Shannon, which a number of commentators have interpreted as “Tennessee’s Lawrence,” i.e. the playwright’s own version of his literary forerunner. I submit that, however much Lawrence contributed to shape or confirm Williams’s worldview, he was, from the start “Tennessee’s Lawrence,” that is a guide, an eye-opener, but that from the outset the message of the Englishman was filtered through the distorting prism of the American’s personal experience; however close they may have been in their emphasis on sex as a liberating, balancing force, however similar in their outlook on the conflict between flesh and spirit and on the themes, characters and metaphors that express it, Williams always remained at one remove from simple imitation. Because they regarded Williams as merely a Broadway entertainer, and not as an artist comparable to the canonical English novelist, Fedder and others failed to notice that Williams had appropriated Lawrence in order to make a dramatic statement entirely his own.

From Williams’s perspective, there was deliberate irony, although concealed in a tribute, in writing a play about Lawrence, the champion of sex as a life force, set during the last hours of his tubercular existence, thus turning it into an acknowledgment of ultimate defeat. Ironic distance is a hallmark of Tennessee Williams; it is not characteristic of

Lawrence. Williams could not then, for all his admiration for the Englishman, be an orthodox Lawrentian. Where Lawrence has little patience for anything but the glorious union of the sexes, Tennessee Williams shows much greater understanding and sympathy for fragmented people, who seek temporary refuge in a fumbling embrace. Where Lawrence is the stern judge of his characters, admitting only merciless light, Williams is a smiling accomplice of his, willing to settle for the glow of a paper lantern. And he is not the lesser artist for it.

Notes

1. Norman J. Fedder, *The Influence of D. H. Lawrence on Tennessee Williams*. (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).

2. Tennessee Williams, *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* in *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, VII, 54-75. Unless otherwise stated, references to Williams's plays are to the eight volumes of *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1971-92).

3. Quoted in Benjamin Nelson, *Tennessee Williams: The Man and His Work*. (New York: Obolensky, 1961, 87).

4. Tennessee Williams and Donald Windham, *You Touched Me! A Romantic Comedy in Three Acts* (New York: Samuel French, 1947), 12.

5. In *In the Winter of Cities* (New York: New Directions, 1956), 16.

6. *Ibid.*, 31.

ESTHER MERLE JACKSON ON THE ANTI-HERO

One of the most controversial aspects of the drama of Tennessee Williams is his use of an anti-heroic protagonist as an image of man. Williams appears to reject the Aristotelian concept of the protagonist and to substitute for it an anti-hero, the personification of a humanity neither good, knowledgeable, nor courageous. In Blanche, Alma, Brick, Kilroy, Val, Chance, and Shannon, we see this anti-heroic image of man. Even those figures who command some sympathy, characters such as Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* and Catharine—the victim of *Suddenly Last Summer*—may be described...as “non-beings.”...Williams claims that such is the image of modern man—poised as he is between the contrary imperatives of his world. As he examines humanity through

the patched glass of his synthetic myth, the playwright perceives a creature transfixed in a moment of stasis, halted at the point of transition in the process of becoming.¹...

Although contemporary dramatists accept certain aspects of the ethics of Aristotle, they do not feel that his definition of the hero is in every sense an accurate description of a virtuous man in the twentieth century. Arthur Miller, for example, points out that many aspects of Aristotle's system of ethics are today obsolete. The image of man in the twentieth century, writes Miller, must be rooted in an open system of values appropriate to a democratic society.² Tennessee Williams writes that the most pressing moral problem of man in the twentieth century is to avoid extinction: "to beat the game of being against non-being."³ The crux of the argument which has led to the modification of the Aristotelian hero lies in changes in the perception of experience, in the accumulation of new knowledges about a new hopes for the human species.

(...)

A review of the whole body of Williams' work would seem to indicate that the playwright has not as yet completely resolved the problem of reconciliation in his cycle of anti-heroic development. He has succeeded in stating the case against man, in describing his anti-heroic condition. Moreover, he has formulated the general outlines of a kind of virtue appropriate to this condition. His greatest achievement, perhaps, is his definition of present conditions of heroism. For in his drama the anti-hero engages himself to suffer the agony of conscience, to confront hidden truth, and to accept the heavy burden of metaphysical guilt...

If the willingness to engage inner conflict is the nature of heroism in the theatre of Williams, his organization of character is designed to reveal such action by exploring, in relation to the protagonist, the full range of possibilities affecting his moral choice. The anti-hero, in this sense, is not a man; he is a schematic presentation of extended moral possibilities. In each of his characters Williams presents a

composite image, a montage of the roles which together comprise the anti-heroic character. Alma, in *Summer and Smoke*, speaks of this view of character:

I've thought many times of something you told me last summer, that I have a *doppelganger*. I looked that up and I found that it means another person inside of me, another self, and I don't know whether to thank you or not for making me conscious of it!—I haven't been well.... For a while I thought I was dying, that that was the change that was coming. (Scene XI, p. 115)

In his presentation of character, Williams follows the method of exposition which in modern theatre is associated with the theories of Luigi Pirandello....

Pirandello attempted to provide for modern drama a concept of character consistent with the relative perspective of twentieth-century thought: to create an image of man in all of his complexity, in the full reality of his inner disharmony. It is important to observe that Pirandello's theory corresponds not only to the relative vision of artists such as Picasso, but also to that of the great creative thinkers such as Jung.¹³ Like Jungian psychology, Pirandello's theory defines character as a loosely unified grouping of identities, Pirandellian Man, like Jungian Man, is a configuration of masks. He is an image of man in search of a reconciling symbol, in need of a self above selves.

This pattern of organization, despite its intellectual validity, presents serious theatrical problems. How can such a concept of character be realized in the sensible form of the drama? European playwrights such as Brecht have solved this problem by introducing into the drama large quantities of discursive material. They explain the conflicted nature of the protagonist's character through the use of monologues, films, notes, and other "teaching devices." Americans such as O'Neill and Miller have also on occasion used such techniques. Although Williams makes some use of the interior monologue, he has been inclined to figure inner conflict in more theatrical terms. He follows the example of Shakespeare in revealing

character through schematic arrangement. Like Hamlet, Blanche DuBois reveals her inner nature by playing out her conflicted roles: schoolteacher, Southern belle, poet, sister, savior, and prostitute. Similarly, Alma, Brick, Quixote, Chance, Val, Shannon, and others play out a range of characters, as they don first one mask and then another.

Although it was interpreted by Pirandello, this idea of character development should be credited to Shakespeare. Indeed, it may be described as the “Hamlet organization”: for the anti-heroic Hamlet is perhaps the most effective theatrical example of this multiple concept of human personality. Hamlet is organized from simultaneous visions in much the manner of the modern anti-hero. Shakespeare rationalized his use of montage by attributing to his protagonist the consciousness of an actor.... [He] revealed the nature of Hamlet’s character by exposing the possibilities of *action* and *being* contingent upon a moment of choice. In the course of his time upon the stage, Hamlet plays many roles; he is alternately prince and jester, lover and knave, courtier and politician, poet and ribald jester.

A study of the work of Williams would seem to show that he takes this “existential” Hamlet as his point of departure in his organization of anti-heroic character. For he seeks to affirm in character the present; his protagonists have little real past and no hope for a future. They are locked within a moment of choice. The form of Williams is thus a record of a critical instant in individual destiny. The stage for action is consciousness: it is a consciousness filled with spectres who are in effect extensions of the self. This principle is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in *The Night of the Iguana*, one of his latest plays. Here, as in other works, Williams creates a mythical way station in his progression of understanding. To this “point” he brings a number of characters, each personifying a particular virtue or vice in the consciousness of the protagonist. The aged poet is at one extreme of the continuum. A man who has lost the will to live, he is countered by a young and eager girl. The energetic German family is posed against the casual Mexicans; the corrupt agent Latta against the anti-heroic Shannon; the saintly Hannah against

the “insatiable widow” Maxine. *The Night of the Iguana* is a kind of modern *Everyman*, a moment when the protagonist watches his own vices and virtues parade across the great stage of his consciousness.

A more subtle use of the Hamlet device may be seen in an earlier work, *The Glass Menagerie*. For Williams creates in this drama a conscious self: the observing and reflecting “Tom” who projects the flow of experience from his own recall. Within his stream of consciousness there exists another “Tom,” the acting self. As the play progresses, it becomes evident that each of the other members of Tom’s family represents a position in his pattern of understanding. *The Glass Menagerie*, like O’Neill’s *The Great God Brown*, is an exploration of life possibilities, a review of the roles conceived by an anti-heroic man. In *The Glass Menagerie* Williams conceives three of these masks: that of Amanda, the self of natural life; of Laura, the self of poetry and illusion; and the father, the self of action. Tom explains his choice of a life role in these words,

I didn’t go to the moon, I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places—....
I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire-escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps...
(Scene VIII, p. 123).

In *The Glass Menagerie*, as in the other major works of Tennessee Williams, the protagonist pursues his “odyssey,” his journey toward selfhood. Within the “Lyric instant,” the moment of escape from the corrosive life process, the protagonist conducts his search for a principle through which he may bring meaning to experience. He does this by exploring the alternatives mirrored within this image of his own consciousness. Williams thus examines a comprehensive theme of twentieth-century arts, the search for identity: the journey toward meaning. It is because of his perception of a moral crisis that Williams has abandoned more flattering images of man. Apparently shocked and frightened by the growing threat of

human annihilation, he suggests that the theatre cannot afford to exalt him, to praise and to commend his nature. He insists that the proper function of the modern drama is to expose man's hidden nature, to search out his motives, to discover his limits, and, ultimately, to help him to find a mode of salvation. There is little doubt that in his anti-hero Williams states the case against modern man effectively. However, he has been able to evolve only a limited resolution for his cycle of suffering. He concludes that the only hope for man is compassion. It is love that redeems the damned city of Camino Real and sets the "water to flowing again in the mountains."

The anti-heroic protagonist of Williams is designed to reveal the nature of suffering as it appears in the life of the twentieth century. He is intended as the object of pity and terror in the modern world. A question is often asked about this aspect of Williams' work: Of what meaning is the fate of his emotional, spiritual, and moral cripples? The answer given by Williams reflects the gradual usurpation of the pagan idea of tragedy by the Christian concept of human worth. For the Christian ethic holds every man a sinner, redeemable only through love. Similarly, it insists, as does Williams, that all men are anti-heroic; that these figures, no more than others, are guilty of the human condition. In this context, Williams' catalogue of transgressors in search of salvation is a true symbolism—his anti-hero, the very present image of man.

Notes

1. Williams, like Eliot and others among twentieth-century artists, accepts a dynamic theory of reality. Like post-Hegelians such as Bergson, Williams regards art as the image of process, and form as a "still" picture drawn out of the moving spectacle. See Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), pp. 25-27.

2. Arthur Miller, Introduction to the *Collected Plays* (New York, 1957), pp. 8-12.

3. Introduction to *The Rose Tattoo*, p. ix.

13. This Jungian language also seems to be employed by Pirandello. The relationship between Jung and Pirandello has not, to my knowledge, been fully explored.

RICHARD E. KRAMER ON SCULPTURAL DRAMA AND PLASTIC THEATRE

In his production notes to *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams introduces a concept that describes the theatre for which he was writing:

Being a “memory play,” *The Glass Menagerie* can be presented with unusual freedom of convention. Because of its considerable delicate or tenuous material, atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a particularly important part. Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn’t be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. The straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.

These remarks are not meant as a preface only to this particular play. They have to do with a conception of new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions if the theatre is to resume vitality as a part of our culture. (xix-xxii)¹

Williams is referring to a drama that was more than just a picture of reality: he insists that his ideal theatre make use of all

the stage arts to generate a theatrical experience greater than mere Realism. Though Williams never publicly discussed plastic theatre again, from *Glass Menagerie* on, his plays are very theatrical: his language is lyrical and poetic; his settings, “painterly” and “sculptural”; and his dramaturgy, cinematic (see Boxill 23-24; Falk 162; Jackson 96-97; Brandt 163-87).² His scenic descriptions draw on metaphors from the world of art and painting, and his use of sound and light is symbolic and evocative, not just realistic in its effects. In *Camino Real* and many later plays, for example, Williams consciously exploits non-realistic styles like expressionism, surrealism, and absurdism, which he explicitly calls upon playwrights to use in their search for truth. Indeed, Williams’s stage directions in the original script of *Glass Menagerie* called for decidedly plastic elements, including dozens of slide projections, film-like soundtrack music, and dissolving and fading lighting (none of which made it to the stage under Eddie Dowling’s direction).

(...)

Williams, already working with a three-dimensional stage, wanted a truly multi-dimensional theatre, integrating all the arts of the stage to create its effects. He did not want language to be the principal medium of his theatre, merely supported by a picture-frame set and enhanced by music and lighting effects. While there seems to be a connection here with Richard Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* [total work of art] concept, Wagner was talking about the director and production, but Williams pushes the idea back to the playwright and the creation of the text. Williams wanted all the so-called production elements traditionally added by the director and designers to be co-equal aspects of the play and part of the playwright’s creative process. Instead of merely composing the text of a play and then turning it over to a director and his team of theatre artists who will add the non-verbal elements that turn a play into a theatrical experience, Williams envisioned a theatre which begins with the playwrights who create the theatrical experience *in* the script because they are not just composing words, but theatrical images.

In a sense, Williams was harking back to the original etymological meaning of *playwright*. The word, we note, is not *playwrite*—it is more than a mere writer of plays. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides one definition of *wright* as “a constructive workman” and we still have the obsolete noun in words like *wheelwright*, *shipwright*, *millwright*, and *cartwright*—craftsmen who *construct* wheels, ships, mills, or carts. The obsolete verb *wright*, in fact, means “to build” or “to construct” as we can deduce from the past participle, the only form of the verb that we still use. *Wrought*, according to the *OED*, means “that is made or constructed by means of labour or art; fashioned, formed”; before that, it meant simply “created; shaped, moulded.” (Interestingly, the word *dramaturg*—or *dramaturge*, if you are Francophile—which was another word for playwright before it designated a separate theatrical professional, has a similar etymology from a Greek, as opposed to Old English, origin.)¹⁵ In other words, Williams was envisioning dramatists who, rather than just *writing* scripts, *wrought* them from all the materials that were available in the theatrical lumberyard. Then the tension—the “push-pull”—among these disparate arts would create the plasticity of the theatrical experience and, just as the viewer of a plastic painting has a three-dimensional experience from a two-dimensional work of art, the audience of a plastic theatre work has a theatrical experience beyond the mere image of actual life.

Today, plastic theatre is not a particularly rare application. It is what Meyerhold, Eisenstein, and Brecht were after, and directors like Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Peter Brook, and Yuri Lyubimov, and groups such as Théâtre du Soleil, Théâtre de Complicité, Ex Machina, Wooster Group, Mabou Mines, and Théâtre de la Jeune Lune do it all the time. Now, these artists are not strictly playwrights, though they function as auteurs, and the companies work as collaborative ensembles in creating their works, but that may be closer to what Williams had in mind than a conventional dramatist-director symbiosis. Certainly the plastic playwright would have to have more control over the production than Williams

managed to get in 1944 with Dowling. Even on Broadway today, however, there could not have been *M Butterfly*, say, or *The Invention of Love* without plastic theatre. What makes Williams's 1945 expression remarkable is that, first, he is often not regarded in such terms even though he wanted to be and, second, he was writing at a time when straightforward realism was the dominant style on American stages, and the Actors Studio—the creation, in part, of Elia Kazan and the nurturer of Marlon Brando, both part of Williams's early, defining success—was the paradigm for American acting and production.¹⁶

Notes

1. The same note appears in every published edition of the play, including the first: *The Glass Menagerie: A Play* (New York: Random, 1945) ix–xii.

2. To be precise, Williams did, in fact, refer to plastic theatre again in a published essay, but it was a reference to the preface of *Glass Menagerie*. He quotes himself in “People-to-People,” *New York Times* 20 Mar. 1955, sec. 2 (“Arts & Leisure”): 3.

15. Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, the association representing these professionals, prefers the Germanic form of the word to the French (because the inventor of the field, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, was German). Nonetheless, the etymology is the same: “a worker of plays.”

16. Ironically, in recent years there have been some productions of Williams's first plastic play, *Glass Menagerie*, with an eye to his original staging directions. Two such productions were in California: one at the Pasadena Playhouse (5 May–18 June 2000; directed by Andrew J. Robinson) and the other by the American Conservatory Theater at the Geary Theater in San Francisco (29 March–28 April 2002; directed by Laird Williamson).

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PAUL T. NOLAN ON THE MEMORY PLAY

For the past seventy-five years or more, playwrights have attempted to move beyond the traditional scope of the drama—to *show* an action—to deal directly with the source of action itself, the mind. The soliloquy of drama, once an embellishment, an aside, has become the basis of the entire play in such forms as the “dream play” and “expressionistic drama.” An interesting and important achievement in this search to stage directly the mind of man is the “memory play,” a term that has been in use by dramatic critics for only about twenty years. It is now commonplace to describe such plays as *The Glass Menagerie*¹ and *After the Fall*² by the term “memory plays”; but no critic, to my knowledge, has yet suggested that this is a separate form, built upon a different set of assumptions from the traditional drama-of-action and different, too, from such mind-searching plays as Strindberg’s *Dream Play* or Kaufman and Connelly’s *Beggar on Horseback*. The new “memory play,” unlike the dream play and expressionistic drama, is a projection of the conscious mind; and, unlike the traditional drama-of-action, it is concerned only with that action that is understood and retained in the mind of the protagonist.

The memory of a character has, of course, always been a part of drama. It is the memory of the Chorus that informs the audience of the events leading to the final catastrophe of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. A single actor’s memory, moreover, has long been a part of drama. Hamlet’s soliloquies are essentially his statements of his memory of the past. The memory of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is projected into a character that may be seen by the audience; Uncle Ben, as he is seen in the play, is Willy’s memory of him—not a character created from the person himself.

There is, however, a difference between “memories in drama,” either recalled or projected, and a “memory play.” In plays that merely use memory as part of the drama, the world of the drama is rooted in some kind of a real world beyond the characters themselves, a world shown or

suggested, against which the audience must evaluate the truth or falsity, accuracy or distortion of every act, speech, and memory.

In the memory play as a particular form, the world of the drama *is* the memory of a single character, the narrator-protagonist. Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and Quentin in *After the Fall* show the audience their memories, and that memory is all the world there is. The memory play is set in the conscious mind of the protagonist, and it stands aloof from outside testimony. If the play is true, the memory is true.

Tom Wingfield assumes the “truth” of his memory, but he recognizes that the world of his memory is full of distortions. He promises, in his opening speech, “truth in the pleasant guise of illusion,” but as he continues his opening narration, it becomes obvious that he is speaking of the relationship of the play to his memory, not of his memory to any fact beyond the theatre. The play, he suggests, has a “social background,” depression America; but beyond the fact that Tom’s memory was formed in turbulent times, the background is meaningless to the play.

“The play is memory,” Tom tells his audience. “Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.” One of the characters in the play, he suggests, came into his memory and remained there without distortion, “the gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.” “He is,” says Tom, “the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from.” The other characters in the play—the narrator, himself; Amanda, his mother; Laura, his sister; and “the larger-than-life-size photograph” of “our father”—clearly are characters of the memory. Even the character of the gentleman caller, Tom qualifies, is not wholly realistic; “But since I have a poet’s weaknesses for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long awaited but always expected something that we live for.”

(...)

The narrator in the memory play promises his audience only that he will show the people, the events, the cause-effect relationships that make up his memory. In *After the Fall*, it is suggested that in the process the audience will be shown how the character of the narrator-protagonist came to accept his memory and live with it; and in *The Glass Menagerie*, it is suggested that in the process the audience will be shown why the narrator-protagonist is taking leave of his memory—"Blow out your candles, Laura..." But in both plays, once the audience has accepted the world of the memory, all objective criticism in terms of economic theory, psychological realism, or philosophical logic becomes impossible, or at least fruitless.

The advantage to the playwright of the memory play is quite clearly that he can unroll his memory—the real history of his character—without having it edited, corrected, challenged. The reviewer for *The Village Voice*, who insisted that there is a one-for-one relationship between Quentin and Arthur Miller, saw *After the Fall* as a public confession of the playwright: "Quentin, at all times, remains Arthur Miller, questing among his moral flash-cards, muscling his way toward the perfect analysis...."³ Undoubtedly, the writer of the "memory play" will create a narrator-protagonist whose history closely suggests his own. Miller and Quentin both married three times; both had, for a second wife, a public performer who took her own life. Williams and Tom Wingfield both had fathers who, in one way or another, "deserted"; both had Southern-belle mothers and "psychologically crippled" sisters. To acknowledge these similarities, however, is to do no more than to say that a playwright must mirror the world that he sees; and the author of a memory play must work in terms of his own memory. He can see no other....

But it is an error to think that a memory play will succeed because of the private memories of the playwright. The memory play pleases for the same reason any other play pleases; it offers its audience an involvement in a world that

seems more real (or more attractive) than its own. The audience must judge whether or not to be concerned with the characters and their problems; but, unlike the audience of a play that pictures an objective world, the audience of a memory play is really unable to measure the subject against the portrait.

(...)

As a memory play, *The Glass Menagerie* is not essentially about other people, but rather about Tom's memory of other people. Even in the most tense conflicts between Amanda and Laura, the audience is aware of Tom's standing in the wings waiting; and after a scene is over, he will by a comment or gesture—"TOM motions to the fiddles in the wings"—remind the audience that it is unimportant as to what effect the scene has for them. It is only important what effect it had on him.

In the simplest terms, *The Glass Menagerie* sets forth Tom's "reasons" for his renunciation of the conventional goals of the society in which he lives. The play is his memory, and his memory—not a rational analysis of it—is his evidence. It is not necessary to accept the memory as a valid artifact of the deed. It is necessary that one accept the memory itself as a fact, the one fact of Tom's existence. Tom's world—from a distance "lit by lightning," the war in Europe—is his description, not his defense. The world beyond, in rags and at war, is beyond his responsibility, beyond his memory.

Notes

1. All citations from *The Glass Menagerie* are from the edition in Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd's *Masters of Modern Drama* (New York, 1962), pp. 989–1017.

2. All citations from this play are from Arthur Miller's *After the Fall* (New York, 1964).

3. Michael Smith, "Review: *After the Fall*," *The Village Voice*, January 30, 1964.

DELMA E. PRESLEY ON *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* AS
AMERICAN MEMORY

Once Laura blows out her candles and Tom finishes his concluding narration, there is little else to say. In words ringing with the eloquence of a poet, Tom says it all. The first response is to applaud the author for providing such an aesthetically pleasing experience. However, after the curtain calls have been made and we leave the imaginary world created by Williams, we may well discover that the play cannot be placed back on the shelf and easily forgotten. There is something about the pantomime of Amanda and Laura, something about the way Tom tells his story, that haunts us. In his closing monologue, Tom confesses that he was “pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise.” It is the same for many who have experienced the play. Tom so effectively shares his memory with us that we claim it as our own.

We claim the memory because much of it belongs to all who have lived in the twentieth century. Amanda reaches out to us because we recognize in her a sense of tradition that characterizes many reared in distinctive regions. Although her compulsive repletion of stories from her youth may appear foreign to many, her impulse to preserve her single-parent family seems as familiar as the morning newspaper. Laura and Tom have experienced modern life in typical fashion—in high school or in a temporary job, prodded perhaps by a parent who may be chagrined by offspring who sometimes escape responsibility or who sometimes search wildly for adventure (or both). And who cannot recognize Jim, that “nice, ordinary, young man”?

Since 1945 the play has been performed constantly by community theaters and major companies. Broadway revivals each decade provide directors with new challenges of staging, lighting, and interpretation. Actors and actresses measure their professional achievements by their roles in the play. The play itself has become a litmus test for directors, actors, and critics.

When Eddie Dowling played the role of Tom, he charmed the audience with his approachable manner. The audience, with fresh memories of the Great Depression and World War II, readily grasped the references to social events. James Daly's Tom in 1956 was down to earth and factual, allowing Helen Hayes to captivate audiences as Amanda. George Grizzard in 1965 was a calm and understanding Tom. In 1975 Rip Torn departed from tradition and punctuated the narrations with accusing gestures and tones, making many audiences uncomfortable. In 1983 Bruce Davidson, dressed in colorful sweaters played a handsome, blond Tom who was clean-cut and precise.

Each age has its own version of *The Glass Menagerie*. Tom of the 1950s reflects the placid Eisenhower years. In the 1960s it was Tom of the Age of Aquarius whose travels might well carry him eastward. The decade that began with protests over the Vietnam War, the 1970s, brought forth a defiant Tom battling against hypocrisy. In the 1980s Tom seemed more in tune with himself and reminded audiences of conflicts within the American family. The review of the 1983 production by Benedict Nightingale called attention to the relevance of the play to a generation concerned about good parenting:

Many good mothers have nagged their sons for smoking, and sulked when those sons insulted them, and wept and worried over their daughters, and encouraged and comforted those daughters when life was hurtful...[But her] good intentions ... make Amanda dangerous. They camouflage the constant intrusion of "I" and "we" into her conversation; they encourage you to overlook the extent to which her biases are manipulating and shaping an all-adult family; they disguise her unreflecting assumption that what was best for herself is best for her daughter, and what is best for her daughter should dictate her son's behavior.¹

The play's universal human appeal transcends regions, cultures, and nations. Tom's departure from home is like Mark

Twain's Huck Finn who seeks adventure in the West, Herman Melville's Ishmael who goes to sea, Dante who travels into the dark woods, Odysseus who sets his sails toward home. His journey in time—"the longest distance between two places"—is the sort of experience that transcends time. Yet Tom is very much part of a place, just as Huck belongs to the Mississippi and Odysseus to the Mediterranean. Tom's place happens to be St. Louis, Missouri—one of America's "overcrowded urban centers of lower middle-class population." Immediately as the play begins, one discovers how "American" the setting really is.

(...)

The world in which the characters live, move, and breathe is unmistakably that of the United States of the 1930s. In drama such verisimilitude lends the aura of authenticity, and in this regard Williams is paying his respect to Chekhov and the realists. Of more importance, however, is that William's plethora of Americana serves a larger purpose, one that readers and critics often overlook. This drama depicting the Wingfield family's moment of crisis is analogous to a larger drama being played out on the stage of American history.

While the characters are at home in the popular culture of America during the 1930s, they also embody traditions and trends that help make the analogy work. We can better understand the characters by placing them in the context of David Riesman's classic study of the American character, *The Lonely Crowd*. Most Americans have been influenced by two basic approaches to life: inner direction and other direction, Riesman explains. The inner-directed Amanda lives with a system of values implanted by her parents and authority figures of her community, and she gains a sense of meaning when she conducts her life according to these values. Amanda lives as though a gyroscope had been implanted in her being, and she may be temporarily disoriented by life; however, her "automatic pilot" returns her to her original upright position established by her traditional culture. Jim splendidly represents Riesman's other-directed man who operates as though he were

controlled by radar, constantly sending out signals and adjusting his movement to conform to his environment. Riesman finds that this type of individual characterizes especially the American middle class for much of the twentieth century: “shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval.”² Clearly this is the world in which Jim O’Connor aspires to live, and his radar seems to be in working order.

(...)

Set in “that quaint period, the thirties,” the play’s events occur when America’s middle class faced personal and social crises created by economic collapse. The set for scene 1 is described as an apartment in “one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower as warty growths in over-crowded urban centers.” The Wingfields live among the lower middle class, which the stage directions for scene 1 describe as the “largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society.” The entrance to their apartment is a fire-escape—a name with “a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation.”

He describes the times of the Great Depression as a painful moment “when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind.” Tom finds it ironic that the condition fundamentally was self-induced: “Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed, their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy” (5). They also were blind to the significance of the political rumblings from the European continent in the 1930s. Even in the United States there were clear indications of disorder, such as those “disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis,” But the population, bent on pursuing deceptions, could not grasp the meaning of such events. As though distracted by the rhythmical music of its nightclubs and bars, America seemed caught up in a frenzied

dance on the edge of its grave. In the world, however, the sobering reality of war had awakened the consciences of many. In his opening monologue Tom recalls: "In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion."

Notes

1. Benedict Nightingale, in *New York Times*, 11 December 1983.
2. David Riesman, with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 19.

TOM SCANLAN ON FAMILY AND PSYCHE

If in Williams the ideal of family harmony is reduced to brief gestures of kindness, the family itself is an arena wherein the life forces of sex and fecundity are at war with man's spirit. This would suggest that Williams is dissatisfied with the very conditions of existence (which he symbolizes in family life and family ideal). We can go so far as to say that for Williams the family is the primary expression of organized animal vitality antithetical to the life of the spirit. But we cannot go much beyond this generalization, for Williams does little to define the nature and content of this view. He accepts it rather unselfconsciously with no clear sense of the assumptions it entails. He concentrates, instead, on making the individual's painful relationship to his family vivid and theatrically evocative.

Williams's concern with the interior psychological state repeatedly takes him past the boundaries of the realistic theater which O'Neill accepted in presenting the Tyrone family and which Miller tentatively exploited in the Loman family. His is a drama which, in its emphasis on inner reality, moves further and more consistently than Miller or O'Neill toward the subjective.¹ We have nearly left the domestic drama in talking about Tennessee Williams—nearly, but not quite. For if he moves from realism and from the family, he never quite abandons either. Indeed, part of the peculiarity of effect which Williams achieves depends on the maintenance of those

connections. And in tracing their outlines, we are measuring the degree to which the realistic family situation continues to attract our playwrights, even those who are avowedly anti-realistic.

Williams's dramatic vision, as Esther Merle Jackson has usefully pointed out, can be seen to take its cue from the consciousness of one character in each play.² Looked at in this way, Williams is projecting a lyric moment of that character which is, for him, the play itself. The technical device Williams uses to justify such an effect—and it is significant here that Williams wants a realistic justification—would be the point of view of a character whose perceptions are not limited in, say, the Jamesian sense, but are distorted through memory, insanity, drugs, alcohol, or dreams. But even while we move into the bizarre or exaggerated situation emblematic of the gauzy mind of the protagonist, we are constantly aware that it approximates a realistic situation.

While Williams's family dramas are consistently more lyrical, looser, and more freewheeling than Miller's, they are not given over to the exploration of psychic irrationality. Nor do they exist primarily on the plan of symbolic abstraction or of idealization. Indeed, the whole matter of distortion—as important as it is to a precise understanding of Williams's tone—can be greatly overemphasized. Williams's plays, especially those dealing directly with the family, have a concreteness about them which suggests a calculated intensification of realistic conventions rather than a revolutionary break with these customs. Conversational prose speech, coherent and rationalized plot, everyday situations, and understandable motivation are not absent, but rather are slightly stylized to indicate the intense feelings they inadequately represent. Such exaggeration helps to emphasize the cruelty and destruction of family life. The reality of everyday family experience stands behind Williams's plays, and the effect of many of them depends of an audience saturated in realistic domestic drama³....

The major dilemmas of family life are imbedded in the dramatic action of Williams's plays, and the ideal that haunts

his characters is family-related. Moreover, those plays which have been most successful artistically have been those mostly about the family—the plays up through *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; *Camino Real* is the only exception.

In the earlier plays Williams dramatized the family world in a state of collapse; in later ones family collapse is antecedent to the action. These two situations are combined in *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams's first successful play (and probably his most popular one⁴). The play is a perfect fusion of the two subjects and so is a figure for Williams's entire career. In it the family is long lost and, also, we witness its struggle before it is lost. Williams captures the poignancy of family memories in a way all his own, without sacrificing the core of dramatic conflict which makes such memories less static.

The play is a prime example of Williams's artistry in establishing the relation between his own dramatic world and the conventions of realistic domestic drama to which his audience owes great allegiance, as he well knew. The play occurs in the mind of Tom Wingfield, who drifts in and out of the action both as narrator and participant in a peculiarly appropriate way. From the moment at the beginning when the scrim of the tenement wall dissolves and we enter the Wingfield's apartment, we are reminded of the household of so many family plays. The realistic convention of the fourth wall is evoked as Tom remembers his family.

Tom's evocation is self-conscious, for as "stage manager" he has control over the setting. But Tom is also at the mercy of his memories and irresistibly must relive them. The play keeps us poised between these two styles, these two times, throughout. This is, in fact, its strongest and most subtle conflict. Like Tom, we are continually tempted into the world of a realistic family struggle, but never allowed to enter it completely. The projections and lighting keep the effect slightly stylized during the scenes, the fragmented structure blocks us from too long an absorption in the action, and the reappearance of Tom as narrator forces us back to the present. It is Tom's final reappearance in this role, when the action of the memory play is completed, which releases the tension created between the

two styles and dramatizes, in a final rush of emotion, the irretrievable loss of the family which Tom can never escape.

Tom cannot shake the memory of his family from his mind; the dissolution of time and space in the play—that is, in his consciousness—heightens the importance of what he is remembering to make it the most significant thing about his existence. What he remembers—the bulk of the play—centers around two lines of action. The first is his desire to escape from his family just as his father had done before him: “He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances.”⁵ Tom, a would-be writer, is caught between a domineering mother and a stultifying warehouse job. He escapes to the porch, to the movies, to the saloon. And finally, in the end, we learn that he has followed his father out into long distances. The second line of action, the principal one, concerns his mother, Amanda, and her attempts to establish some kind of life for Tom’s crippled sister, Laura. Amanda pins her hopes on getting “sister” married, after Laura fails because of painful shyness to continue in business school. A “gentleman caller” is found, Jim O’Connor, “an emissary from the world of reality,” but all of Amanda’s hopes are crushed as he turns out to be already engaged.

(...)

In *The Glass Menagerie* Williams consciously manipulated his subject matter and his tone, playing off the oppressiveness of the family of security against a teasing stylized realism. He did not grapple with the assumptions beneath the conflicting claims of personal freedom and security, nor did he construct a dramatic action which defined them. Rather, he relied on the evocative power of family strife, running the risk of being merely agitated and pathos-filled as in the soap opera. His family victims are at their most vivid at those points where they are both caught up in their lyrical self-indulgence and at the same time aware of the difficult in communicating to those around them what they truly feel.

Williams does not test the family attitudes which are his subject. He has evoked family fears and frustrations without

probing them. But it is important to recognize the genuine, if limited, appeal of Williams's strategy. He has asked us to see his plays as artifice and as reports on reality. And he has used the artificial, "plastic" elements both to intensify and to relieve the intensity of the family struggles. This paradox is a most intriguing one. He has counted on our familiarity with the family drama, reminded us of it, and then eluded its more rigid restrictions. He has been a realist, if only in part, to refresh our response to the dilemmas of family life. His best plays remind us of our quest for relatedness and independence and so depend on, and contribute to, the very tradition of American domestic drama which he proposed to escape.

Notes

1. For an extended analysis of American drama in terms of its expressionist elements, see Louis Broussard, *American Drama: Contemporary Allegory from Eugene O'Neill to Tennessee Williams* (Norman, Okla., 1962).

2. Esther Merle Jackson, *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams* (Madison, Wis., 1965), pp. 26–42.

3. Jackson's book, the most suggestive and insightful yet done on Williams, argues the opposite point: Williams is an anti-realist whose work embodies—at one point she says it inaugurates—a third phase in the development of modern, expressionist form. *Ibid.*, pp. viii, 20–42.

4. Jackson, *Broken World*, p. viii, note 1.

5. Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* in *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams I* (New York, 1971), p. 145.

ROGER B. STEIN ON CATASTROPHE WITHOUT VIOLENCE

The Glass Menagerie (1945) was Tennessee Williams' first major theatrical success. Over the years he has written much, some of high quality indeed, but nothing better than this play which established him as an important post-war playwright. "The dramatist of frustration," John Gassner dubbed him in 1948 after *Streetcar*, but unlike most of his later plays, *The Glass Menagerie* projects not a series of violent confrontations leading

to catastrophe but a vision of lonely human beings who fail to make contact, who are isolated from each other and from society, and who seem ultimately abandoned in the universe.

What holds the play together are Tom's remembrances of things past, not plot or characterization. Tom, the poet-narrator and author's surrogate, called "Shakespeare" in the warehouse, organizes the drama symbolically through language and image. This is the "new plastic theatre" of which Williams spoke in his production notes, a revelation not through dramatic struggle but through the allusive power of the word, the accretion of symbolic clusters which bear the meaning, reinforced dramaturgically through lighting, music, the distancing devices of a narrator and, as originally planned, of screen images.

(...)

But *The Glass Menagerie* is built upon more than the poignant plot of illusion and frustration in the lives of little people. Williams has deepened the losses of individuals by pointing to social and even spiritual catastrophe. The time of the play is 1939, as the narrative frame makes explicit both at the beginning and the end. The life of illusion is not confined to the Wingfields alone. As Tom says, "the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind." What he calls the "social background" of the play has an important role. The international backdrop is Guernica and the song America sings is "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise," for the sober truth is that America is still in the depression and on the brink of war. The note of social disaster runs throughout the drama, fixing the lives of individuals against the larger canvas.

(...)

The experience of the 1930s did not turn Williams into a proletarian writer or social realist, but it did open up for him a darker vision of American life which he suggests to his

audience but which is denied to his characters, still “matriculating in a school for the blind”: a belief that the American dream is itself a sham and a failure. In his essay “The Catastrophe of Success,” Williams said that “the Cinderella story is our favorite national myth, the cornerstone of the film industry if not of the Democracy itself.” The social catastrophe inherent in *The Glass Menagerie* lies precisely in the fact that Laura is *not* Cinderella: the silver slipper does not finally fit, and Jim is not Prince Charming but one of the innumerable Americans who would soon be moving overseas in troop ships. As Tom says at the end, “for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura—and so goodbye....” The world which had been waiting for the sunrise burst with bombardments instead, and the lives of the Wingfields at the end are absorbed in the larger social tragedy.

Williams goes even further than this, however. The end of the play involves more than just the snuffing out of Laura’s hope: it is even more than social tragedy. It is a *Götterdämmerung*. For the candles and the lightning which close the play have appeared together before. We are told by Amanda that the candelabrum “used to be on the altar at the church of the Heavenly Rest. It was melted a little out of shape when the church burnt down. Lightning struck it one spring.” Amanda’s comment opens up another dimension of the drama, and reminds us that Williams, inheritor of a Southern religious tradition which includes writers like Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren, has persistently drawn upon the language of Christian symbolism to define his characters’ human situations. Amanda’s quiet comment is a far cry from the hysterical ravings of the defrocked Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon in *Night of the Iguana* about wanting “to go back to the church and preach the gospel of God as Lightning and Thunder.” The pervasive religious overtones of *The Glass Menagerie* never obscure the literal line of the story or seem self-conscious, as they frequently do in the later plays. Ultimately they try to locate the catastrophe at the end beyond human pathos and social tragedy.

JUDITH J. THOMPSON ON SYMBOL, MYTH, AND RITUAL

The fundamental theatrical concern of Williams, then, is to transform his personal emotions, as they are embodied in the particular and sometimes peculiar maladies, neuroses, and illusions of his characters, into recognizably universal feelings. He would rise "above the singular to the plural concern, from personal to general import" (III,4). Through the communal associations provided by mythical symbols and ritual patterns, Williams attempts to create in his audience an empathetic response to his characterizations of the lonely, the neurotic, the alienated, and persecuted, thereby evoking that shock of recognition by which the audience acknowledges as familiar the characters' psychic conflicts. As Williams describes the experience, "Our hearts are wrung by recognition and pity, so that the dusky shell of the auditorium where we are gathered anonymously together is flooded with an almost liquid warmth of unchecked human sympathies, relieved of self-consciousness, allowed to function..." (II, 262). A major function of Williams' symbols, then, is to form an emotional bridge with the audience, to create a drama so emotionally charged with the concrete universals of archetypal images that their realization breaks down the psychological walls of our separate selves, making the particular general, the strange familiar, and even the grotesque recognizable as but another dimension of the human condition.

Two types of symbols, concrete and transcendent, are used by Williams to evoke this communal response. Concrete symbols embody the psychic reality of the characters in substantial sensory forms, which appeal to the emotions through the physical senses, visual and aural. The subjective world of the characters is thus displayed on stage by the constructs or props of the set, by the significant gestures and movements of the actors, by the sounds of music, often the lyrical, staccato, or antiphonal rhythms of speech itself, and by the effects of light and color. They constitute what T. S. Eliot

has defined as the “objective correlatives” of states of mind or feeling, that set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts ... are given, the emotion is immediately evoked” (pp. 124-5). Thus, the objective correlatives of a character’s wounded psyche may reside in the furniture of the stage set: Laura Wingfield’s arrested development in the old-fashioned knick-knack case filled with tiny glass animals, Serafina Delle Rose’s repressed sexuality in an urn set in front of a small shrine, Alma Winemiller’s frigidity in the form of a massive stone angel, or Shannon’s infantile regression in a centrally placed canvas hammock. The emotions of nostalgia or memories of lost innocence may be evoked through music or by the uninhibited voices of children at play; the recurrent bleating of the unleashed goat in *The Rose Tattoo* reminds us of the necessity of fulfilling the physical present, while the “constant, dry, scuffling sound” of a lizard tied under a porch in *The Night of the Iguana* evokes the frustrations of unfulfilled desires. A character’s futile attempt to recapture the past may be embodied in his costume: in Amanda’s yellowed dress and her bouquet of jonquils, in Brick Pollitt’s bathrobe and crutch, in Serafina’s outgrown girdle, or in the defrocked Shannon’s clerical collar that will not stay buttoned. Finally, a character’s consciousness may be indicated by nuances of lighting, the rose-colored or shuttered light of dusk and very early daybreak embodying his dreams or fixation with the past, while brief moments of radiance may symbolize his confrontation with the present. These techniques, often used simultaneously, create an atmosphere in which the objective correlatives of the psychic wounds of the characters continuously bombard the senses and stimulate an intensely sympathetic response.

The symbols of transcendence are allusive rather than sensory; they are drawn from religious, mythical, and literary sources rather than from the phenomena of objective reality. Most significant, their function is not to anchor the psychic reality of the character in corresponding sensory forms, but to enlarge and expand our consciousness of his subjective world beyond the time and space of the particular dramatic situation

of the play. The nature and pattern of these symbols and their significance to *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Rose Tattoo*, and *Orpheus Descending* are the main concerns of this essay.

One of the most significant functions of these symbols is to give a mythic dimension or stature to the characters. Williams has said, "All my *great* characters are larger than life, not realistic" (*Playboy* p. 80). One purpose for making his characters larger than life is to universalize the particular and the peculiar, to find those analogues or archetypes in myth, legend, or fairy tale that will tap the collective unconscious and give archetypal meaning to personal plight. Williams rarely makes a one-to-one identification of a character with a mythical archetype, however, for his purpose is not narrowly allegorical but allusive. His characters are made larger than life through a method of multiple images (see Jackson, *Broken World*, pp. 83-5). Each is a composite figure drawn from fragments of pagan and Christian prototypes and their diminutive forms in fairy tale and comic strips. By using both romantic and ironic modes in characterization, Williams stresses the illusory nature of the character's mythical or godlike stature. Thus, Rosario in *The Rose Tattoo* is a composite of the Dionysian god, the popular film star Valentino, and the lecherous goat. Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is both Diana, goddess of the hunt, the moon, and nature, and "a cat in heat." The diverse images surrounding Chance Wayne in *Sweet Bird of Youth* include those of Adonis, the god of fertility (see Hays, pp. 255-258), Jack and the Beanstalk, a Christ figure, and an aging romance knight. Thus, even as Williams symbolizes the illusions, delusions, and romantic aspirations of his characters to transcend their human limitations, he continually invokes their instinctual animal nature and the flesh-and-blood needs which keep them earthbound.

The method by which Williams invests his characters with mythic dimensions is the story or recollection of the past, told usually by the protagonist about himself, at the beginning of each of these three plays. This story is often an elevated or exaggerated memory of an event or a relationship, invested with idyllic romantic, or religious overtones. It is because of

this memory, usually a vision of intense beauty, that the protagonists are often frozen or transfixed in the posture or attitude of looking backward, their emotional growth arrested, and their human dimensions inflated with romantic illusions of a once perfect condition.

Furthermore, the story itself is retold or dramatized in the course of the play. In essence, the dramatic events of the second half of each play are a reenactment of the story told at its beginning. Thus, Amanda's story of the seventeen gentlemen callers is reenacted by Laura and Jim in *The Glass Menagerie*; Serafina's idealized account of her transcendent relationship with her husband Rosario is reenacted by Serafina and Alvaro in *The Rose Tattoo*; the story of idyllic love and fertility in the wine garden between Lady Torrance and David Cutrere is reenacted by Lady with Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending*. The recurrent structure of a story told, then reenacted in a second version, is in itself an analogue of myth and ritual. The personal story assumes the dimensions of myth, its reenactment a ritual which parallels the events of the myth. However, unlike the ancient myths and rituals of initiation, fertility, and rebirth or resurrection which these stories suggest, the second version of the original story in Williams' plays rarely culminates in the celebration of fulfilled or realized aspirations.

The diminished myth or unsuccessful ritual which is reenacted reveals as ironic the relationship of mythic symbolism to character, theme, and structure in these plays. In short, Williams invests his characters with mythic stature only to divest them of it in the process of the play. The climax of each play, then, rests in an event of demythicization: that moment when the character is divested of his mythic or godlike dimensions, stripped of his illusions and delusions, and forced to recognize his human limitations, his animal instincts, and his inherently antiheroic nature. Furthermore, the symbolic moment of divestment is generally dramatized through the gesture of breaking, rending, or shattering the concrete symbol which has been identified as the objective correlative of the character's psychic reality. Thus, Jim's breaking of Laura's unicorn in *The Glass Menagerie*, Serafina's shattering the urn of

Rosario in *The Rose Tattoo*, Mitch's tearing Blanche's paper lantern from the naked lightbulb in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Shannon's freeing the iguana in *The Night of the Iguana*, Maggie's disposal of Brick's crutch and liquor bottles in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the crash of the suitcase filled with Casanova's mementos and the literal stripping away of Marguerite's clothes in *Camino Real* are all symbolic acts which divest the characters of their mythic dimensions, deflate their romantic illusions, and force them to confront a diminished or impoverished reality. Paradoxically, it is this moment which generally affords the character the opportunity to assume a new, more fully human, stature, in the expression of love, sympathy, or compassion with another. But for those who cannot or will not accept their self-limitations or the compromise of their lost Eden, the result is destruction or withdrawal.

(...)

The Glass Menagerie is one of Williams' most symbolically informed plays. The symbols—concrete, allusive, and evocative—are structured as to define a world which is at once existentially constrictive and metaphorically expansive. Even as the physical constructs of time and circumstance identify the characters by their human limitations, the metaphors through which their aspirations are expressed enlarge their individual dimension to those of archetypal stature and elevate their personal plight to universal significance.

The principal symbol in the play is, as the title suggests, the glass menagerie. It is specifically Laura's symbol, the objective correlative of her fragile, other-worldly beauty. Its stylized animal forms image her own immobilized animal or sexual nature, her arrested emotional development, and her inability to cope with the demands of a flesh-and-blood world. Given broader implications, the separate pieces of the glass collection reflect the fixed attitudes of all the members of the Wingfield family as well as their isolation from one another. Presented as crystallized forms in Tom's memory, each character is shown to be psychologically encased in a world of his own. Seeking

escape, refuge, or rebirth, each imagines different versions of a transcendent reality, themselves a collection of isolatos condemned to individual fragmentation and mutual misunderstanding. Finally, in its quintessential form, the glass menagerie is symbolic of stasis, that temporal mode central to the play's internal structure. The underlying structure of *The Glass Menagerie* is formed by a tension between the illusion of moving forward and the reality of moving backward, between dream and destiny, the two so perfectly balanced that the effect is the arrest of time. Within this frozen moment, however, resides the significant action of the play: a cyclical motion of repetition and recurrence, the acting out again and again of a single futile pattern.

The dynamic symbol of that recurrent pattern is Amanda's story of the courtship ritual, herein an ironic process of anticipation, momentary fulfillment, and subsequent loss, desolation, and disillusionment. As symbol, the story of Amanda and her seventeen gentlemen callers forms a paradigm of experience which underlies the structure of the entire play. Life is envisioned as a series of losses, beginning with innocent expectations of its infinite possibilities and ending in confrontation with its inherent limitations. It is indeed, this story told by Amanda at the beginning of the play which is re-enacted in its second half by Laura and Jim. Furthermore, every other event in the play repeats the process. A similar pattern of great expectations and subsequent despair informs the story of Tom, the aspiring poet whose dreams of life as a meaningful voyage end only in aimless drifting. Although Jim's ability to compromise with a diminished reality differentiates him from the other characters, the pattern also informs his story, for he is the high school hero—"The Pirate of Penzance"—who is reduced to a clerk in a warehouse, his romantic libretto exchanged for a paean to capitalistic enterprise. The pattern of anticipation, brief fulfillment, and subsequent loss is capsulized at the very beginning of the play in the message contained in the father's picture postcard: "Hello—Goodbye!" (I, 145), a microcosmic summary of the play's symbolic structure.



Works by Tennessee Williams

Dates are indicative of the first public appearance of the work, either as a publication or production, whichever first occurred.

The Vengeance of Nitocris, 1928.

Beauty Is the Word, 1930.

Hot Milk at Three in the Morning, 1930.

Cairo! Shanghai! Bombay!, 1935.

The Fugitive Kind, 1937.

Me, Vashya!, 1937.

The Magic Tower, 1939.

The Field of Blue Children, 1939.

Battle of Angels, 1940.

The Long Goodbye, 1940.

Moony's Kid Don't Cry, 1941.

This Property Is Condemned, 1941.

At Liberty, 1941.

The Last of the Solid Gold Watches, 1943.

You Touched Me!, 1943.

The Glass Menagerie, 1944.

The Purification, 1944.

27 Wagons Full of Cotton, 1945.

Stairs to the Roof, 1945.

Portrait of a Madonna, 1946.

The Long Stay Cut Short (or *The Unsatisfactory Supper*), 1946.

A Streetcar Named Desire, 1947.

Summer and Smoke, 1947.

American Blues, 1948.

One Arm, 1948.

The Case of the Crushed Petunias, 1948.

The Dark Room, 1948.

The Lady of Larkspur Lotion, 1948.

Ten Blocks on the Camino Real, 1948.
The Rose Tattoo, 1950.
The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, 1950.
I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix, 1951.
Camino Real, 1953.
Hello from Bertha, 1953.
Senso (or *The Wanton Countess*), 1953.
In the Winter of Cities, 1954.
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, 1955.
Something Unspoken, 1955.
Lord Byron's Love Letter, 1955.
Baby Doll, 1956.
Sweet Bird of Youth, 1956.
Orpheus Descending, 1957.
Period of Adjustment (or *High Point Over a Cavern, A Serious Comedy*), 1958.
Suddenly Last Summer, 1958.
Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen, 1958.
A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot, 1958.
Hard Candy: A Book of Stories, 1959.
Three Players of a Summer Game and Other Stories, 1960.
The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, 1962.
The Strangest Kind of Romance, 1960.
The Night of the Iguana, 1961.
Grand, 1964.
The Eccentricities of a Nightingale, 1964.
The Gnädiges Fräulein, 1965.
Auto-Da-Fé, 1966.
27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays, 1966.
The Mutilated, 1966.
The Knightly Quest, 1966.
I Can't Imagine Tomorrow, 1966.
The Kingdom of Earth (or *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*), 1967/1968.

The Two Character Play, 1969.
In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel, 1969.
Confessional, 1969.
Dragon Country, 1970.
The Frosted Glass Coffin, 1970.
Life Boat Drill, 1970.
Out Cry, 1971.
The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, 7 Volumes, 1971.
The Demolition Downtown, 1971.
Small Craft Warnings, 1972.
The Migrants, 1973.
Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed: A Book of Stories, 1974.
Moise and the World of Reason, 1975.
Memoirs, 1975.
The Red Devil Battery Sign, 1976.
Androgyne, Mon Amour, 1977.
Vieux Carre, 1977.
A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur, 1978.
Tiger Tail, 1978.
Where I Live: Selected Essays, 1978.
Clothes for a Summer Hotel, 1980.
Will Mr. Merriwether Return from Memphis?, 1980.
Steps Must Be Gentle, 1980.
Something Cloudy, Something Clear, 1981.
It Happened the Day the Sun Rose and Other Stories, 1981.
Now the Cats with Jewelled Claws, 1981.
The Traveling Companion, 1981.
All Gaul Is Divided, 1984.
The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond, 1984.
The Remarkable Rooming-House of Mme. LeMonde, 1984.
Stopped Rocking, 1984.
Collected Stories, 1985.
This Is the Peaceable Kingdom (or Good Luck God), 1994.

Spring Storm, 1996.

The Notebook of Trigorin, 1996.

Not About Nightingales, 1998.

And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens, 2002.



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Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Interpretations: The Glass Menagerie*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988.

Composed primarily of critical essays, this book addresses significant topics relevant to the work, such as psychological dynamism, symbolism, and evolution of the play. The essays are listed in order of their original publication dates. Also included are a chronology of the life of the playwright and a substantial bibliography of scholarship on the author and his work.

Bray, Robert, ed. *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*. Tennessee: Middle Tennessee State University, 1998.

In this annual publication, some of the most notable scholars of Williams and his work present current essays on a variety of topics.

Crandell, George W., ed. *The Critical Response to Tennessee Williams*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

A reference book, this volume highlights the evolution of the critical response to Williams's works. A bibliography is also included.

Crandell, George W. *Tennessee Williams: A Descriptive Bibliography*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994.

An assemblage of descriptions of all of the published works of Tennessee Williams, this book also reveals information about the process of revision evident in Williams's works. Crandell addresses not only Williams's plays and short stories, but also his interviews and journalistic works.

Falk, Signi. *Tennessee Williams*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1978.

Falk presents readers with a biographical background and analyses, which includes the relation of the characters to

each other and their function in Williams's own grand view. Critical comments and quotations give structure to these assertions.

Gross, Robert F., ed. *Tennessee Williams: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Twelve essays represent some of the most current critical examinations of Williams's lesser-known or recently released works. Particularly of interest in light of the subject of this guidebook, is the essay "That Quiet Little Play: Bourgeois Tragedy, Female Impersonation and a Portrait of the Artist in The Glass Menagerie."

Hayman, Ronald. *Tennessee Williams: Everyone Else Is an Audience*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994.

Renowned biographer and critic Ronald Hayman outlines the links between Williams's own life struggles and the painful and violent actions which recur in his plays.

Heintzelman, Greta and Alycia Smith-Howard. *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams*. New York: Facts on File, 2005.

A thorough bibliography, an analysis of over one hundred of Williams's works and a dictionary of related terms help readers orient themselves in the attempt to gain a broad understanding of Williams and his body of work. The setup of the book allows for quick reference.

Holditch, Kenneth and Richard Leavitt. *Tennessee Williams and the South*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2002.

This book illuminates Williams's lasting connection to the American South and demonstrates its influence on his work. Photographs of sites and real-life characters, coupled with quotations from Williams's own writings, serve as evidence of this bond.

Kolin, Philip C., ed. *The Tennessee Williams Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

Noted scholars have contributed entries on a plethora of topics pertaining to the author and his works. As the title suggests, the book is set up as an encyclopedia with topics such as art, race, and religion presented alphabetically. Information for further research is also provided.

Kolin, Philip C. *The Undiscovered Country: The Later Plays of Tennessee Williams*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002.

Kolin takes on the last two decades of Williams's work, a group of writings generally unexplored in Williams scholarship.

Leverich, Lyle. *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997.

Leverich, a producer of many of Williams's plays, was given access to previously unpublished manuscripts, documents, and personal correspondence belonging to Williams. He uses these materials to chronicle the first part of Williams's life, from childhood up to the success of *The Glass Menagerie*—a period during which, Leverich would argue, Tennessee Williams was still functioning primarily as “Tom.”

Parker, R. B., ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Glass Menagerie*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1983.

A selection of critical essays on *The Glass Menagerie*, these writings cover the first production through the film version, addressing topics such as influence, characters, and dramaturgy.

Presley, Delma E. *The Glass Menagerie: An American Memory*. Boston, MA: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990.

In a fresh and thorough examination of the play, Presley places the work in a historical context, underlining the relevance of the play, describing its reception, and most distinctly, placing the work in the context of the greater American consciousness.

Roudané, Matthew C., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Thirteen noted scholars provide their thoughts on topics such as the early life of the author, gender roles, and influence. A bibliography shows primary and secondary resources for continued study. Allean Hale's essay on Williams's early life functions as a backdrop; the subsequent essay by C. W. E. Bigsby examines the roots of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Stanton, Stephen S., ed. *Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977.

Another series of critical essays, this volume includes contributions by noted scholars such as Robert B. Stein, Gerald Weales, Esther Merle Jackson, and Nancy Tischler. Themes include Williams's approach to tragedy, morality, the anti-hero, and the search for God.

Tharpe, Jac, ed. *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.

A compendium of essays that covers the gamut of Williams's works, his major and minor plays, poetry, and short stories are all addressed. The book is meant to provide an objective view of these works, neither concealing flaws nor giving undue praise.

Thompson, Judith J. *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth and Symbol*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002.

Thompson explores the use of symbols and ritual in several of Williams's works. She references existentialist philosophy and the psychology of Jung to support her arguments, and shows how events that seem typical or domestic can have a new significance when considered in the context of myth.

Tischler, Nancy M., *Student Companion to Tennessee Williams*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Meant to introduce students to the work of Williams and demonstrate its relevance, this book includes a biography, a chapter on each of Williams's most well-known plays, and a bibliography. Each play is given an updated interpretation through either a psychological, sexual, or theological analysis.

Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1948.

This is the acting version of the play. An edition which differs significantly from the reading version, it contains numerous variations in dialogue and stage directions and also includes a scene absent in other versions.

Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*. New York: New Directions Books, 1999.

New Directions presents an edition of the reading version of the play—the version which Tennessee Williams is said to have preferred. This edition also contains an introduction by Robert Bray, founding editor of *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*.

Williams, Tennessee. *Memoirs*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975.

Published almost a decade before Williams's death, these memoirs contain the author's own words about his childhood, his career, his loves, his desires, and his struggles.



Contributors

Harold Bloom is Sterling Professor of the Humanities at Yale University. He is the author of 30 books, including *Shelley's Mythmaking* (1959), *The Visionary Company* (1961), *Blake's Apocalypse* (1963), *Yeats* (1970), *A Map of Misreading* (1975), *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975), *Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism* (1982), *The American Religion* (1992), *The Western Canon* (1994), and *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (1996). *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) sets forth Professor Bloom's provocative theory of the literary relationships between the great writers and their predecessors. His most recent books include *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), a 1998 National Book Award finalist, *How to Read and Why* (2000), *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (2002), *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited* (2003), *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (2004), and *Jesus and Yahweh: The Names Divine* (2005). In 1999, Professor Bloom received the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal for Criticism. He has also received the International Prize of Catalonia, the Alfonso Reyes Prize of Mexico, and the Hans Christian Andersen Bicentennial Prize of Denmark.

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Judith J. Thompson is the author of *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth and Symbol*. She is affiliated with the University of Kansas.



Acknowledgments

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