

**CROSSING THE MARGIN:
MINORITIES AND MARGINALITY IN THE DRAMA
OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

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Abstract

The thesis examines the development of the concept of minority in the plays of Tennessee Williams, as it transforms from minority as the identity of a certain group in his early plays, into an experience of marginality.

In The Glass Menagerie (1945), A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) and Suddenly Last Summer (1958) Williams' characters experience self-confinement within the body, which categorises them as identifiable minorities. Three versions of The Night of the Iguana will be pivotal in this thesis; the 1961 three-act version of Iguana finds the 'interior space' of the characters' confinement in conflict with 'the exterior space'.

In Williams' later plays, including Kingdom of Earth (1968), In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969) and Small Craft Warnings (1972), the concept of marginality becomes more abstract, concerning the characters' interaction with one another to create a space of liberation. The thesis defines this space as 'the circle of 'one-ness' which is formed between two marginalized characters who come together in order to be liberated from their own confinement. Over the course of these plays Williams widens this dramatic circle to operate on a collective level of unity that includes two or more characters.

The thesis ends with a discussion of Vieux Carré (1977), where Williams succeeds in dramatising the unity of these characters with the image of the loving God, and offering a return to the self as the source of salvation and liberation. By reading Williams' dramatic texts in relation to his use of stagecraft, including the visual and aural images, stage directions and the characters' movements on the stage, as well as their spoken words, the thesis aims to present a new framework for the study of Williams' dramatic work.

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For Mum, the beautiful and passionate Mouna Youzbachi.

I dedicate this piece...

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INTRODUCTION

WHO ARE TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' MINORITIES?

I don't think I have ever been conscious of writing with a theme in mind. I am always surprised when, after a play has opened, I read in the papers what the play is about ... it is a play about life what could be simpler, and yet more pretentious? You can easily extend that a little and say it is a tragedy of incomprehension. That also means life. Or you can say it is a tragedy of Puritanism. That is life in America. Or you can say it is a play that considers the "problem of evil" but why not just say life ... But the mysterious thing about writing plays about life is that so many people find them so strange and baffling. That makes you know, with moments of deep satisfaction, that you have really succeeded in writing about it (Tennessee Williams, 'Questions Without Answers' in Woods and Day, pp.25-27).

Given the above statement, the first question raised when discussing the concept of minority in Tennessee Williams' work is whether it was his intention to write about minority, or did he see all his characters as minorities? Although it is difficult to know exactly what was on Williams' mind, his words indicate that being a minority is a 'tragedy of incomprehension' that impedes a certain individual or group from fitting within a social structure. The question of minority is therefore about 'life',

which interested Williams throughout his dramatic career. This also gives his characters, as well as his plays, a universal aspect. It is limiting to think of Williams as only a 'Southern' or an 'American' dramatist; he is one of a few twentieth-century playwrights who tried through his drama to push the boundaries of communicating effectively through theatre. This is achieved partly by setting his plays away from the political and commercial centres of America, focusing on the Deep South and sometimes on unnamed, remote and fictionalised places, exploring marginalized and forgotten characters as a window into people's minds and hearts. Thinking of these characters as minorities does not conflict with this idea; they are not used by Williams as a means to identify minorities in a scientific way, but rather the characters help the playwright to develop this abstract concept onto a broad level of human experience.

Williams always refused to align himself with certain schools of thought or social movements, in an attempt to reach beyond the identity politics that became popular in the United States of America in the mid-1960s. In terms of minority, in all his drama post-World War II, Williams goes beyond issues of race and gender to examine the universal scope of the concept. When normalized ideas of personal and social identity were dominant, Williams made problematic the idea of the 'centre' by centralising what is usually marginalized. So, with his early plays of the 1940s and 1950s – The Glass Menagerie (1945), Camino Real (1953), Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955) – he offers an alternative to the kind of individualism promoted in post-war America with its emphasis on self-reliance and economic striving. In his later plays – In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969), Small Craft Warnings (1972), Out Cry (1973), Vieux Carré (1979) and House Not Meant to Stand (1982) – he shifts his concern from the individual to broader notions of

identity, to explore the notion of the relationship between the self and community. While it is possible to map the shift in American social life from 'individualism' in the late 1940s and 1950s to concerns with 'community' in the 1960s, it appears that for Williams it is dramatic experimentation, rather than social change, that was the driving force behind his changing portrayal of minority.

Williams continued to make reference to the historical moment (such as the references to World War II in The Night of the Iguana, 1961), particularly as it impacts on the representation of minority questions. However, it is not the concern of this study to provide a sociological account of minorities from the mid-1940s to the end of the 1970s, nor to analyse the different theoretical perspectives on the concept of minority that shaped the American mainstream, such as the Civil Rights movement or gay liberation movement. Rather the focus is how the concept developed within Williams' dramatic work. Nevertheless, the discussion will convey how Williams' characters responded to changing socio-cultural pressures, as will be evident in the following chapters. This will serve to demonstrate how from Williams' dramatic perspective the image of minority enforces a strong image of identity, which is specifically American while also universal.

The thesis analyses a number of Williams' dramatic texts that deal with the concept of minority in different ways. The importance of this concept lies in its development through three dramatic phases of Williams' career, from the mid-1940s until the end of the 1970s. Importantly, his theatricality and stagecraft are used to shift this concept from a simple philosophical or sociological meaning to one expressing real human experiences. In relation to Williams' later plays, minority questions will be discussed less in terms of an identifiable minority group and more explicitly in terms of the experience of marginality itself. The first idea

here refers to characters that are bodily marked and confined within their self, serving to categorise them as a minority. Although these identities can be related to the typical notion of minority in America in the late 1940s and 1950s, when white, suburban and middle-class identity was dominant, the primary interest lies in the way that Williams frames issues of self-confinement and freedom. This will be discussed in the first part of the thesis, which focuses on Williams' early plays up to the end of the 1950s.

In contrast, in the plays from 1965 until his death in 1982, the concept of minority is developed in more metaphorical ways. Williams starts to explore the experience of marginality in all its complexity in relation to a small group of characters alienated from their social world and suffering from varying degrees of anxiety. Here the concept of minority has become more abstract, relating to how characters interact with one another to create their own space of liberation; this place will be referred to as 'the circle of 'one-ness'. The use of the word 'circle' does not refer to the 'centre' in a conventional sense, but signifies the circularity of the minority experience in these plays, where characters project their anxiety onto each other and have no choice but to go on within this endless circle of anxiety. Particularly in Williams' later plays, they are often able to find liberation from within an experience of entrapment. This idea is central to the third part of the thesis.

William's 1961 The Night of the Iguana will be looked at as a turning point and a pivotal text in Williams' development of the minority issues, in terms of the transitional structure by which it is framed. Accordingly, the middle part of the thesis is dedicated to a close study of this play, with its three developmental drafts from short story to full-length play. Here in Iguana, more so than any of his

earlier plays, the representation of minority operates on an interrelation between the characterization and the way the play is constructed spatially.

Reading Williams' dramatic texts in relation to the development of the concept of minority will be based on a decoding of Williams' use of theatricality and stagecraft. This will include reading the visual and aural images, stage directions and the characters' body language, as well as their spoken words. A significant emphasis will be given to decoding the characters' physical movements on the stage as implied by the stage directions in the plays. Here the main concern will be the vertical and horizontal movements of the characters on the stage, in order to read their confinement and marginality in relation to the physical space of the stage itself. It is important to go beyond the printed text to read the stagecraft involved, especially as Williams emphasises stage performance, body language and theatrical techniques in his drama. Understanding his plays in terms of performance requires more than simply examining the stage design, architecture, acoustics and lighting: it also has to deal with Williams' creative use of theatrical space.

The central argument of this thesis is that Williams' use of the stage is vital for understanding the development of the concept of minority in his dramatic work. This is mainly because Williams moves away from the 'plastic theatre' and realism of his early plays to use certain visual techniques in Iguana that externalise and project the confinement of the characters onto the stage itself. In his later plays, the minority question starts to operate on characterization in relation to the way the play is set up spatially. To realise this, Williams uses dramatic forms which develop silence as a way of defeating linguistic entrapment and emphasise the body as the focus of the experience of marginality. By using the stage to visualise this

experience, Williams challenges the confines of theatrical space to present what is marginalized in life.

Little has been written on this subject as the question of minority is rarely discussed as the focal point of Williams' drama. Thus, as a conceptual framework for the thesis, this introduction will explore this concept as it is discussed in Williams' scholarship and as it is addressed by Williams himself in his memoirs and letters, before moving on to examine key examples of his plays. The originality and significance of this thesis lies in the way the minority question is explored as a developing concept in Williams' drama, helping to bring together and draw out other themes in his work. Although the minority question is tackled in a variety of ways throughout Williams' career, I will argue that these different minority groups still have something in common. As Williams developed as a dramatist he shifted his understanding of minority as *an identity* of a certain group of characters to one of *an experience* of marginality. To parallel this development, my thesis shifts its focus from *characterization* in Williams' early plays to the *action* of characters in relation to the space on stage.

No extensive study has been completed on minority groups as a specific category in Williams' work. In some research, 'minority', though the word itself is not used, is alluded to within a racial, regional or social context. The critic Darryl Erwin Haley, for example, refers to something similar in his on-line published dissertation 'Certain Moral Values: A Rhetoric of Outcasts in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1999). Haley's main concern is the poetic aspect of Williams' plays; he views Williams' characters as outcasts within his dramatic poetics and argues that 'Williams' plays outline a struggle between the moral values of non-conformists, who are outcasts because they cannot, or will not,

conform to the values of the dominant culture; and conformists, who represent that culture' (preface). For Haley these outcasts 'do not suffer because of the actions or circumstances that make them outcasts but because of the destructive impact of conventional morality upon them' (preface). He distinguishes between three types of outcasts: religious, sexual, and fugitive. Examining Williams' characters within this struggle with the conventional finds its echo in Patricia Grierson's 'An Interview with Margaret Walker Alexander on Tennessee Williams' (1995). Walker perceives that most of Williams' characters are not 'accepted in the strict Victorian sense of the word. As far as caste and race are concerned ... He liked all sorts of people' (Grierson, p.588). Both arguments share the view that there is a kind of rejection which Williams' characters experience.

However, there is an extensive body of research on Williams' work that focuses solely on the prominence of characterization, theme and setting of his work. Although the word 'minority' is not used in referring to Williams' characters, words such as 'confinement' and 'fugitive' are employed. For instance, Tom Wingfield is seen by Joseph K. Davis in 'Landscapes of the Dislocated Mind' (2002) as one of Williams' fugitives: a 'modern individual who is artistic in impulse and temperament' (Tharpe, 1977, p.195), while Louise Blackwell depicts Sebastian in 'Tennessee Williams and the Predicament of Women' as a 'sexual misfit' (Martin, p.105). Donald P. Costello in 'Tennessee Williams' Fugitive Kind' (1977) argues that all Williams' plays, full-length and one-act, 'continue the fugitive image and play variations on it'. So, Blanche of A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) is seen the 'consummate fugitive' and Alma in Summer and Smoke (1948) is the fugitive who 'reaches for something beyond earth' (Stanton, p.110). In Camino Real the 'quintessential fugitive in literature, Don Quixote' is viewed as

one of a parade of fugitives ‘who refuse[s] to face the realities of earth’ (Stanton, p.111). Catharine of Suddenly Last Summer (1958) is made into a fugitive by being committed to an asylum (p.112), while Hannah of Iguana is a fugitive also, as are the other central characters in Iguana.

The obvious link here is to the 1959 film The Fugitive Kind, an adaptation of Williams’ play Orpheus Descending (1957). Here the word ‘fugitive’ is an important word for thinking about the attempts of its characters to escape entrapment. Costello argues that in the play ‘to surrender to the evil earth is [man’s] major sin; to continue the fugitive flight is what Williams asks’ (Stanton, p.110). This is developed by Costello who quotes Williams’ words about the play in a New York Times article: it is ‘about those two kinds of people, those who are of the earth, who accept the “prescribed answers that are not answers at all” contrasted with his four protagonists, those who “continue to ask” the “unanswered questions that haunt the hearts of people” those who are – in a key phrase of the play – “the fugitive kind”’ (p.110). Here to be a fugitive is to be absent from the earth by maintaining a sense of heavenly idealism; Costello’s argument is that the concepts of earth and heaven dominate Williams’ work, but the line which separates the two is one of ‘answered/unanswered questions’. Although Costello discusses only Orpheus Descending, he comes closest to the argument that this thesis makes about minority; the characters in Williams’ early plays can be viewed as yearning for heaven in their struggle to maintain their idealised self (including Blanche in Streetcar). In contrast, characters who are content with the earth (like Jim in Menagerie and Stanley in Streetcar) are not those who are content with unanswered questions, but rather those who are content with their ‘self’. This is not to imply that they are the central characters in the plays, as they still suffer like others in the

need for self-affirmation. However, in Williams' later plays a reversal is suggested in the concept of heaven and earth as the chapter on Kingdom of Earth (1968) will convey.

Costello concludes his article with the words of Lady Torrance in Orpheus Descending: 'I do not know the answer; I just know corruption ain't the answer' (Orpheus Descending, p.49, in Stanton, p.110). Here there is a kind of surrender suggested, but in his later plays Williams' characters do not give up but actually achieve a kind of liberation, as this thesis will go on to demonstrate. These later characters cannot be considered fugitives as they achieve the idea of 'oneness' in a new vision of liberation. There is a great deal of generalization in Costello's argument, particularly in his conclusion that 'no happy escape from the earth is possible, and so most of the fugitives remain, questioning and lonely; or they find madness or despair or death' (Stanton, p.122). Costello's argument falls short at this point, as he does not suggest an outlet or escape for these fugitive characters.

Thomas P. Adler also refers to Williams' characters as 'fugitive kind' in his chapter 'Tennessee Williams in 1940s and 1950s: Artist of the Fugitive Kind' (1994). Adler's argument is based on Battle of Angels (1940) as a play which introduces all of the motifs that become central in Williams' work:

a romantic valorisation of the poetic misfit or dispossessed outsider; an almost Manichean duality in the pattering of imagery and symbology ... the necessity for breaking free from the shell of self and responding compassionately to others (Adler, 1994, p.132).

Like other critics, Adler's argument is based on one example and he does not see this concept developed in other plays. The concept of minority is not developed in Adler's criticism, but rather noted as a characteristic of one play. C. W. E. Bigsby's 'Entering The Glass Menagerie' (1997) is the best example of this focus on a single play, specifically Camino Real. Bigsby is one of the few critics to use the term 'marginal' to refer to Williams' characters. He thinks that the play stages the 'dispossessed and the marginal wholly through fictional characters who are never allowed access to the tangible world of tortured humanity, acting out their romantic scenarios entirely in the fictive world which is their protection against time but which also defines the limits of their possibility' (Roudané, p.41). In this way, Bigsby views fiction as a 'consolation' and 'imprisonment' (p.41). Although the word 'imprisonment' is crucial to this thesis, it will be looked at in a different way, and read as a developed concept from the 'imprisonment' of the self into the 'imprisonment' within the physical space or stage of the play. This is explicit in Iguana (discussed in Chapter Two), and will be also developed in the reading of Williams' later plays (in Chapter Three).

William Kleb also reads Williams in terms of marginality in 'Marginalia: Streetcar, Williams and Foucault' (1993), as a 'kind of imaginative prefiguration of [Michel] Foucault's theory'. He claims that:

Williams' plays construct ... the same shifting ontological landscape mapped out by Foucault; situated at the margin where death, madness, and sexuality intersect and interact, they focus, as does Foucault in his most important texts, on the struggle to control (through the power of knowledge and the manipulation of 'truth') a definition of the Same and Other (Kolin, 1993, p.27).

Kleb views Williams' theatre as 'inviting a psychoanalytic response', and gives Streetcar as an example where 'although Stanley and Stella subjectify Blanche as a manageable sign linking sexual abnormalcy and mental disorder, the audience, relieved, can now focus simply and safely on the psychosexual pathology of Blanche DuBois and her creator ... condemned to the theatre-like asylum' (p.41). In short, Kleb finds Williams using his drama as a form of self-therapy; here it is Williams who is viewed as entrapped within himself, not his characters. Bigsby has the same view in resorting to Williams' life, arguing the playwright turned to writing as it is 'only in his work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, for the actual world is less intense than the world of his invention and consequently his life ... does not seem very substantial' (Roudané, p.32). However, while these readings are helpful, these critics do not elaborate on Williams' entrapment to relate it to his characters.

This view links to Williams dealing with many taboos in his drama. Ted Kalem in 'The Angle of the Odd' (1962) argues that many Americans regard Williams as an 'erotomaniac', for whom the mildest epithets are 'sick' and 'decadent' (Kalem, p.53). He is also described as:

the master of the mood. Sometimes it is hot, oppressive, simmering with catastrophe (Streetcar, Cat) at other times it is sad autumnal, elegiac (Menagerie, Iguana) to achieve it, he uses the full orchestra of theatrical instruments: setting, lighting, music, plus the one impalpable, indispensable gift, the genius for making an audience forget that any other world exists except that one onstage (Kalem, p.53).

Some critics see Williams' vision as dark and dull, originating from his subconscious which is always read in relation to Williams' homosexuality. This has led to suggestions of a crisis within American culture revolving around fear and paranoia of homosexuality. David Savran in Communities, Cowboys and Queers (1992) is one of the critics who relate the subconscious to the structure of Williams' plays:

composites of short and fragmentary episode, each dramatising a complex and elusive moment ... comprises a double spectacle, one (the "heterosexual") occurring on a bright screen while the other (the "homosexual", the more vibrant and productive of the two) takes place in the gloomy, subtextual private galleries, onto which the glare from the cowboy pictures and other sensational and sentimental narratives is reflected (Savran, p.78).

According to Savran's view there is a kind of 'binarism' between 'the political and the sexual' as well as 'the public and the private' which he considers crucial for 'normative constructions of gender during the 1940s and 1950s' (p.80).¹

This binarism suggested by Savran classifies Williams as a member of a minority in John Waters' introduction to Memoirs (2006): 'Williams didn't fit into his own minority' (Waters, p.x). The phrase 'own minority' here refers to Williams' 'type' of homosexual, one who did not realise he was gay as he never seemed 'gayly-correct', and his 'sexual ambiguity and confusion were always made appealing and exciting in his work' (p.x). Waters bases this view on Williams' own

¹ Here the reference is to the 'nonmilitancy of the homosexual rights movement in the early 1950s' where the texts of the emerging gay rights movement and the plays of 1940s and 1950s that were considered sympathetic to 'problem of homosexuality, were written in the language of remorse' (Savran, p.87).

words: 'My type doesn't know who I am' and 'even if the sex lives of his characters weren't always healthy, they certainly seemed hearty' (p.x). Unlike Waters who proceeds no further, Savran explores the development of Williams in the later stages of his career when he redefines 'the male homosexual subject, by conceiving of him less as a positivity than a kind of absent (offstage) presence (like the idea of God) - like Skipper, or Jack Straw and Peter Ochello' (Savran, p.109). So for Savran, by 1955 Williams was able to:

protect this homosexual subject from the "torrent of lies and distortions" that overwhelms him on the commercial stage only by displacing him, or not by allowing him to speak since the only language he was permitted to speak was the very one that ensured [Williams'] abjection and his marginalisation (Savran, p.110).²

However, Savran falls again into the same trap as Waters with his view of Williams' work as a projection of this 'abjection' of his homosexual self. Allean Hale, one of the leading scholars on Williams, in 'Two on a Streetcar' (1989), has a different view of this: 'when [Williams] discovered that he had contracted "crabs" from a sexual partner, he typically converted his shame into a play, using both roaches and body lice in The Lady of Larkspur Lotion' (Hale, p.35). Meanwhile, in Tennessee Williams in Provincetown (2007), Kaplan suggests that Williams kept 'his sexual life separate from the writing he intended to have published or performed. This reinforced his sense of himself as someone who maintained the advantages of outsider status, even as he worked to entertain and be accepted in mainstream society' (Kaplan, p.85). For Kaplan, this 'outsider status' works for

² Savran thinks that by 'appropriating the language of convention (and subtly turning it against itself), and by absenting the homosexual subject (and drawing attention to his absence) Williams is allowed not only to speak, but virtually to reign over the commercial theatre of the 1940s and 1950s' (Savran, p.110).

Williams as a 'homosexual and as an artist' (p.86); according to Kaplan's argument, there is a public image which Williams uses to reflect his own private self-image. As a writer he does not find it a problem to deal with his homosexuality through his work, which classifies him as a personal writer, a fact which Williams admits in David Frost's The Americans (1970): 'I'm very personal as a writer'; 'yes. I don't mean to be, I just am. Unavoidably' (Frost, p.35).

In spite of this admission, however, in Albert J. Devlin's Conversations with Tennessee Williams (1986) it is claimed that Williams 'never found it necessary to deal with [his homosexuality in his work] ... it was never a preoccupation of [his], except in [his] intimate, private life'. He 'thought homosexual writers were in the minority of writers. Nobody's yet made a correct census of the actual number of homosexuals in the population of America' (Devlin, p.344). This is linked to Dotson Rader's view in Tennessee Williams: An Intimate Memoir (1985), who mentions the same word 'minority' in relation to Williams himself (Rader, p.271).

This perspective leads to the identification of a duality within Williams' characters which classifies them as minorities. For instance, in Ted Kalem's 'The Angle of the Odd', a profile of Tennessee Williams, the term 'minority' is absent but the article tackles related concepts. To illustrate further, Williams' characters are viewed on a 'journey over a symbolic landscape amid the strife-torn dualities of human nature. The duel is between God and the Devil, love and death, the flesh and the spirit, innocence and corruption, light and darkness, the eternal Cain and the eternal Abel' (Kalem, p.60). Due to these oppositions, Williams 'belongs with this triumvirate of disquietude in the minority tradition of naysaying in U.S. Letters' (p.60). Diana Cafagna in 'Blanche DuBois and Maggie

the Cat: Illusion and Reality in Tennessee Williams' (1997) views Williams as caught within what Hugh Holman has called 'a union of opposites, a condition of instability, a paradox' (Hugh Holman as quoted by Peggy W. Prenshaw, 'The Paradoxical Southern World of Tennessee Williams' (1977), p.5, in Martin, p.119).

Developing the view that Williams' theatre was a way of fulfilling his own desires, David Mathew's argument is relevant in his dissertation 'The Ritual of Self-Assassination in the Drama of Tennessee Williams' (1974). For Mathew, Williams' characters are 'dreamers' who 'find solace in both the dreams which come from drugs and those dreams that have no narcotic source'. The common denominator in each of these characters is that their dreams are an 'alternative to reality' (Mathew, p.285). So in Menagerie the three characters are seen as a cast of dreamers; meanwhile Blanche in Streetcar drinks to 'immerse herself in the dream which has become reality to her'; Serafina Della in The Rose Tattoo (1952) hides herself 'from the truth about her late husband by her passionate dreams of their sexual activities'; and Brick in Cat withdraws from reality via alcohol (Mathew, p.287). Maher Ben Moussa in 'The Re-Invention of the Self: Performativity and Liberation in Selected Plays by Tennessee Williams' (2001) refers to Williams' characters as 'marginals'. For instance, Blanche is one such character who is 'doomed to a tragic end because she is not able to leave the margin and live again according to the norms of the society' (Moussa, p.43). He relates this to the 'arbitrariness of the social conventions that judge people by their appearance', and Blanche is seen a 'victim of deviation from what we label normal' (Moussa, p.43). Moussa relates the 'normal' to societal expectations and 'public image'.

Savran argues that 'desire [in Williams' work] is provoked by differences in race, ethnicity, social class, and age' (Savran, p.125). He states that

‘Williams ensures the palatability of these desires for a culture ill at ease with the blurring of the lines of demarcation between races and social classes’ (Savran, p.125). However, this argument falters as the dilemma Williams’ characters face does not lay within this ‘demarcation’, but rather in their struggle to project this desire out of the self onto the exterior space which suppresses and condemns it. This will be highlighted later in this thesis in the discussion of Iguana.

Like Savran, Adler argues that Williams denies any ‘acquaintance with political and social dialectics’ and ‘attaches to himself the designations Humanitarian and Revolutionary’ (Adler, 1995, p.649). Adler refers to The Red Devil Battery (1988) as a play which castigates ‘several social wrongs: the racial superiority and bigotry against ethnic groups [and] class insularity’. However, this is related to his view of the play as an explicit foray into socio-political drama (Adler, p.650). Abha Singh in Contemporary American Drama (1998) argues that ‘Williams is not as concerned with erosion of moral, social or spiritual values as he is with psychological disjunction and fragmentation’ (p.65).

It is worth mentioning at this point that it is not possible to consider Williams as a playwright of minorities without questioning whether he contextualises them within a specific culture. Williams is viewed by some critics as being unlike contemporaries such as Arthur Miller in his exploration of ‘the social law’ (Popkin as quoted in Jan-orn, p.54). Chalermisrie Jan-orn in ‘The Characterization of Women in Tennessee Williams’ Work’ (1979) argues that this view is unfair, as Williams ‘is not interested in the social law but the moral society

and universe where a person can live happily without being demoralized and dehumanized', exploring 'universal' rather than 'social' problems (p.54).³

As the correspondence held in The Fred W. Todd Tennessee Williams Collection in The Historic New Orleans Collection confirms, Williams uses the term 'minority' not to refer to his own characters, but rather in a general context. For example, in a letter to Paul Bigelow in 1943, Williams uses the word minority in relation to the violence between 'service-men and zoot-suiters where the warfare on other minorities is not yet organized, but the L.A. queens ... have nearly all "gone underground" anticipating its out-break' (Devlin and Tischler, 2000, p.458: my emphasis). In 1956, to Harold Clurman and Robert Whitehead, he writes 'I felt sort of isolated, as if I stood in one corner and you two in another. This sort of situation predicates the possibility of a play-production full of contention and dissention and so forth with the author an embattled minority faced by a pair who see eye to eye but not as clearly as he naturally sees it' (p.639). Haley's theory of 'outcasts' (discussed earlier in this chapter) reflects Williams' perceptions of minority as expressed in his letter to Joseph Hazan from Acapulco, Mexico in September 1940:

the people here [he refers to the people at Acapulco in Mexico] are of two classes, those who are waiting for something to happen or those who believe that everything has happened already. That is the Americans and other outsiders. Their life is lying about the beaches usually in a hypnosis induced by strong drink and hot sunlight and lack of any exertion (Devlin and Tischler, 2000, p.283).

³ John Gassner argues that 'Williams is different from his contemporaries because of his different background' which differs in its insularity from that of the 'urban playwrights such as [Clifford] Odets and Arthur Miller, who were attuned to sociological analysis and regarded personal problems in the light of social conditioning and economic conflict' (Gassner as quoted in Jan-orn, pp.54-55).

However, although Williams uses the term 'outsider' in this context only, he does not develop it in relation to his dramatic characters. Thus it is difficult to contextualise Williams' own concept of minority, because he never uses the term to refer to his work.

This thesis will offer an original reading of this concept by moving away from a biographical approach to Williams in order to focus on his stagecraft. Nevertheless, certain autobiographical elements will feature in the discussion in relation to Williams' interest in the father figure. On an autobiographical level, this can be read to stem from Williams' constant attempt to regain his own father's trust which he could not achieve in real life. The theme of the father figure is given priority in the dramatic works of concern in the thesis, where it plays a significant role in the dynamics and development of the minority question. This will be analysed in relation to the development of the idea of the father figure from a personified image of God into a more abstract image of Him. With his early plays, the image of God follows the pattern of the personified image. There is an image of the absent Godlike father who abandons these characters and contributes to their self-entrapment, such as the personified image of the Godlike father figure of Mr. Wingfield in Menagerie. While in his early plays this is focused on a specific character, in his later plays this concept is increasingly developed into an abstract image.

Paul Rosefeldt in The Absent Father in Modern Drama (1995) argues that the 'father is an imposing figure in many of Williams' plays from Big Daddy to God the Father in Iguana', and that the overpowering figure of the father in Williams' works can best be accounted for by Williams' 'early impressions of his own father' (Rosefeldt, p.26). Williams' letters and memoirs suggest that Williams

had a contradictory attitude towards his father, who was 'the unseen but frightening presence in his childhood' (p.24). Williams himself recounts that: 'often the voice of my father ... was harsh and sometimes it sounded like **thunder**. He was a big man ... and it was not a benign bigness. You wanted to shrink from it' (Williams as quoted in Rosefeldt, p.40: my emphasis). This may explain Williams' constant use of the image of thunder and lightening in his work, which symbolises the image of God as the source of light that can liberate Williams' early confined characters. With the failure of his characters to achieve this light, Williams starts to question this idea. Last Summer constitutes a point of departure, where the personified image of God is turned into the abstract God of Wrath, and the characters begin to project their own faults and errors onto this image. This is developed later in Iguana in the form of Shannon's 'senile delinquent' God who 'brutally punishes all He created for his own faults in construction' (Iguana, p.52). I will argue that in his later plays Williams moves beyond the experience of marginality by dramatising the 'one-ness' with God as the source of his characters' salvation and liberation.

The transition in the way Williams views his God is reflected in the way in which he portrays his characters in their relation to God. Theological questions are developed in parallel to the development of the minority concept through Williams' dramatic career. This needs to be distinguished from formal religion though, as Williams did not hold to institutionalised theology. For instance, when asked about his conversion to 'Roman Catholicism' by David Frost in 'Will God Talk Back to a Playwright', Williams defines God as the 'Whoever is **responsible** for the universe. Including us'. There is a sense of relying on this God to whom Williams resorts at 'odd moments of compassion' (Frost, pp.33-34: my

emphasis).⁴ This is to imply that the centre is dominated by this God-like father. To illustrate further, using the term 'minority' demands the existence of certain norms that are confirmed by those who represent the centre. However, there is an absence of the majority who can represent the centre in Williams' plays.

For example, we cannot consider Jim O'Conner in Menagerie, or Stanley in Streetcar in this way; they fight for the centre as they would fight for territory. Williams' plays take the form of a struggle between those characters who can survive and those who do not. There is no centralized or majority category in his plays, but we cannot deny the existence of a certain dominant presence that keeps pushing these minority groups to the margin and reinforcing social norms, which results in the subordination of the minority groups. This idea is more explicit in his later plays where all his characters are marginalized. In this sense, Williams' plays do not provide definitive answers about the occupier of the centre or a definite image of the majority; the centre is always left empty at the end of the play. Streetcar ends as Stanley 'stands at the foot of the steps' (Streetcar, p.226) with the centre remaining unoccupied. The fact that this centre is not staged in Williams' work is related to the absent Godlike father image, as this thesis will explore.

To conclude this introduction, the thesis exemplifies an original and perceptive approach to the concept of minority in Williams' drama. It aims to demonstrate that Williams, by the end of his dramatic career, was successful in creating a type of dramatic character ready to achieve liberation.

⁴ So before the play opening Williams 'will go into a room alone and kneel down and pray' (pp.33-34). He believes that the importance lies not with 'where' to communicate with God, as he can 'kneel down by the bathtub', but rather with the act of communicating (Frost, 1970, p.33).

CHAPTER I

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' EARLY PLAYS: THE IDENTIFIABLE MINORITIES



early plays and how this relates to the question of identifiable minority. This reading of Williams' identifiable minorities is developed through three phases of Williams' early dramatic career: the late 1940s, early 1950s, and then late 1950s. **Poster designed by the author using shots from Tennessee Williams' early plays to visualise the idea of identifiable minorities (Postgraduate Festival at the University of Leicester, 2007).**

As the purpose of this chapter is to explore chronologically the development of the concept of self-confinement in relation to identifiable minorities, I will examine the plays in which this development is most prominent: *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). I propose in this introductory part of the chapter to look at the span of Williams' early plays and highlight aspects that critics have focused on, and how the concept of identifiable

CHAPTER I, PART I

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' EARLY PLAYS: THE IDENTIFIABLE MINORITIES

We're all of us locked up tight inside our own bodies. Sentenced - you might say - to solitary confinement inside our own skins (Tennessee Williams, Where I live: Selected Essays by Tennessee Williams, Woods and Day, p.76).

Tennessee Williams' words here invoke the concept of self-confinement within the body which categorises his early characters as identifiable minorities, spanning his plays from the 1940s to the early 1960s. For these characters, the body is identified with what is considered a physical flaw, which marks it as peculiar and different to others.

In this chapter, I will analyse the entrapped self in three of Williams' early plays and how this relates to the question of identifiable minority. This reading of Williams' identifiable minorities is developed through three phases of Williams' early dramatic career: the late 1940s, early 1950s, and then late 1950s. As the purpose of this chapter is to explore chronologically the development of the concept of self-confinement in relation to identifiable minorities, I will examine the plays in which this development is most prominent: The Glass Menagerie (1945), A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) and Suddenly Last Summer (1958). I propose in this introductory part of the chapter to look at the span of Williams' early plays and highlight aspects that critics have focused on, and how the concept of identifiable

minority features in Williams' early plays. I will demonstrate that Williams' early characters are identified as minorities because of their inability to achieve the self-acceptance which can liberate them from their entrapment, and strengthen them to adapt to the hostility of the exterior space.⁵

The three plays dramatise variations of the entrapment within the self: which I will call the 'crippled self', the 'idealised self' and the 'insane self'. This entrapment operates on three levels: the body, exterior space, and the mind. In Menagerie we are introduced to the stages of creating this self-confinement, through the character of Laura Wingfield who is confined within her crippled self. She exemplifies the entrapment within the body, being peculiar and different to others; this classifies her as an identifiable minority. Then, in Streetcar, this entrapment is developed into a confinement within the space of the play. Blanche DuBois embodies a minority figure confined within her genteel Southern idealised self. Her idealised self derives from the illusion of her status as a character of the aristocratic 'Old South', whose ideals contrast with her experiences of New Orleans as a city of immigrants. Blanche's inability to adapt herself to the death of the aristocratic South makes her feel out of place in New Orleans. Thus, space is prominent in formulating Blanche's self-confinement; she identifies her self with Belle Reve, her Southern family's plantation.

Last Summer is the third play to employ self-entrapment as its central theme, particularly the entrapment of Catharine Holly's mind and reason. Her vision of the truth about her homosexual cousin Sebastian, within which she is entrapped, takes a form of fluctuating mental space which categorises Catharine as 'insane'. The play dramatises a well-defined and clearly evolving central action:

⁵ The concept of exterior space means here the outside world of the theatrical stage, and it will be a main focus of Chapter Two of this thesis.

that of the liberating of the self from entrapment. This develops a conflict between the self and the exterior space, which will be further discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Although the nature of these characters' entrapment differs respectively, they still have shared ground. For example, they are all subjected to rejection from others. This makes them project onto their selves the anxiety which results from such rejection. Although retreating into the self offers a means of escape from feelings of rejection, the self continues to confine them in its isolation. This rejection operates through the lack of communication between these characters and others. Moreover, the three plays are interrelated as the next play picks up from where the last one ended. The fate which Amanda fears awaits Laura is visited on Blanche, a version of the old maid 'living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife' (The Glass Menagerie, p.16), who in turn ends up in a mental institution similar to that which entraps Catharine in Last Summer.⁶

'Self-confinement' is the cornerstone on which the concept of identifiable minority operates in Tennessee Williams' early characters. The word 'self' appears in his correspondence, conversations and memoirs where Williams distinguishes between two different aspects of the self: the 'public self' and the 'natural being' (Harrington, p.67). The first refers to the 'somebody you are when you have a name' and is referred to as 'a fiction created with mirrors', while Williams wrote in a short essay 'On a Streetcar Named Success' in 1947: 'the only

⁶ This is a reference to Amanda's words to Laura in Menagerie on the future that waits for her if she does not receive a gentleman caller: 'what is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South - barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife! Stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room - encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest - eating the crust of humility all their life! Is that the future we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of' (The Glass Menagerie, p.16).

somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you that existed from your first breath and which is the sum of your actions and so is constantly in a state of becoming under your own volition' (New York Times, cited in Harrington, p.67). Williams' words, published four days before the New York opening of Streetcar, imply that the real self is the 'unseen and the solitary' one, while the 'public self' is the one created by society. He uses an image of mirrors to depict this self as a fictitious reflection of what is real. The same division of the self is mentioned in David Kaplan's thoughts on Williams in Tennessee Williams in Provincetown (2007), a publication which includes a chapter entitled 'Public and Private'. However, Kaplan defines 'sexual behaviour and sexual identity' as a private matter in 1940s America, where 'onstage and off ... in particular homosexual behaviour, was usually discreet in both spellings of the words: not spoken about and not connected to the rest of a person's life or identity' (Kaplan, p.85). Here, Kaplan relates the 'private self' directly to Williams' homosexuality.

However, in this chapter the examination of the self is not read in relation to the figure of Williams himself (as it is in Kaplan's study), but rather in relation to Williams' early female characters' confinement in order to understand the development of the concept of minority throughout Williams' early career.

Although a socio-political reading of the three plays is not relevant here, nevertheless, it is significant to relate them to the time they were written; as this context impacts on the representation of the minority question within the socio-cultural framework of the plays. In 1940s America, many women replaced men in the workforce after they had gone to war, changing the shape of the society somewhat, while World War II changed the order of world power with the

emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers. Williams stated:

our contemporary American society seems no longer inclined to hold itself open to very explicit criticism from within. This is what we hope and suppose to be a **transitory condition** that began with the Second World War. It will probably wear itself out, for it is directly counter to the true American nature and tradition. But at the present time it seems to be entering its extreme phase, the all but complete suppression of any dissident voices. What choice has the artist, now, **but withdrawal into the caverns of his own isolated being?** (Woods and Day, p.35: my emphasis).

Although he sees this period as transitional, it is still shrouded with the ‘complete suppression’ that pushed artists like Williams to withdraw into an ‘isolated’ existence. This contrasts with the shift in the national picture, with America having emerged from World War II as a superpower. Fear of communists and those considered ‘un-American’ led to suspicion of anyone who did not fit into the boundaries of normality. Williams shifts from the prevailing social and political tensions by refraining to talk about America as a superpower. Instead he focuses on ‘isolated’ characters (including the three female characters in his early plays), the nation’s minorities and tensions within Southern culture which were marginalized during this period of his earlier plays of the 1940-50’s.

While women were enjoying a degree of independence in the workplace during World War II this did not continue into the post war years with many women returning to domesticity. This is one reason why Williams’ female

characters are very often isolated or confined within the space of the plays. Through his characters Williams might be projecting his own entrapment within a paradox: 'an urge to become part of his society' linked to the 'fear of conforming to the meaningless drudgery of familial obligation' (Martin, p.119). Diana Cafagna in 'Blanche DuBois and Maggie the Cat' (1997) views this paradox as leading Williams to 'dramatize his Southern characters' necessary illusions in facing the grim realities of twentieth-century life, so in much of his early work this paradox of choice sits squarely on the shoulders of his female protagonists', who seek 'a means of survival or escape' (p.119). Eric Johns in 'A Word for Blanche' (1949) reads this escape in relation to 'death and desire', which he views as 'opposites in the vocabulary' of Williams where 'desire is an escape from death, a means of forgetting it' (Johns, p.115). Like hate and love, death and desire 'are often indistinguishable, because the boundaries which separate them are so vague' (p.116).

Johns argues that while Williams' early heroines 'are trying to escape death, or their conception of death', they unconsciously embrace it in the form of 'desire, for desire is the guillotine set up in their hearts' (p.116). Johns' view is relevant to Blanche, while Laura does not have this conflict but remains confined within her self. Meanwhile in Last Summer, it is not the female character who embraces death in 'the form of desire', but rather its male protagonist, Sebastian. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955) Maggie is not a victim of her desire but 'a warrior' who fights the illusion of the Pollitt family (Martin, p.122). Unlike Blanche who 'floats like a moth toward a candle', Maggie has a 'vengeance for truth' (p.123), and it is this very truth with which she confronts Brick towards the end of the play: 'Oh, you weak people, you weak, beautiful people! - who give up - what you want

in someone to take hold of you' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.165).

However, C. W. E. Bigsby, in A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama (1984), argues that Williams' females 'opted for neither truth nor illusion but for the need to resist', and while Maggie in Cat 'uses truth, Blanche uses illusion' (Bigsby, p.131, in Martin, p.120). Nevertheless, the female characters' resistance to the truth maintains their entrapment: the more they resist the more they are confined. Peggy Prenshaw in 'The Paradoxical Southern World of Tennessee Williams' (1977) elaborates this view, arguing that Blanche, Alma (in Summer and Smoke (1948), revised as The Eccentricities of a Nightingale, (1965) and Laura 'represent the last of the Southern ladies. Mothlike, sensitive, and fragile in a way that is ultimately self-destructive, they are portrayed as romantic idealists undone by a graceless and callous age' (Tharpe, 1977, p.12). Unlike Alma in Summer and Smoke, who gives up her dreams 'about beauty to become a whore at a train station, Blanche withdraws into the decayed parlour of the old Southern aristocracy with unexpected dignity' and ends with seeking 'promised salvation at the hands of strangers' (Martin, p.128).

Susan Neal Mayberry in 'A Study of Illusion and the Grotesque in Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1983) draws on this argument to conclude that the pervading theme of Williams' drama 'involves the tension between truth and mendacity, the gradual stripping away of pretence with the ultimate consequences' (Mayberry, p.359). She perceives his characters as escapists who ignore their tension by 'effecting a facade of illusion' (p.359). Thomas F. Van Laan in "'Shut Up!" "Be Quiet!" "Hush": Talk and Its Suppression in Three Plays by Tennessee Williams' (1999) calls Williams' early characters: 'sensitive',

‘delicate’, ‘poetic misfit[s], given to dreaming’ (Laan, p.244). Although his descriptive words imply that these characters contribute to their own confinement, he maintains that these characters live in conflict with ‘harsh reality’ and its demands to which they cannot adapt. He views most of Williams’ full length plays prior to Period of Adjustment (1960) as dramatisations of ‘an aggressor-victim pattern of action’ (p.244). These plays include Menagerie, Cat and Last Summer. His reading sets the characters in these plays against an ‘adversary’ who unlike these characters succeeds in adapting to the ‘demands of a harsh reality’, and which reduces ‘his or her ability to experience compassion, if such adaptation has not produced utter brutality and viciousness’ (p.244). So, according to his argument this ‘adversary’ is privileged above the other characters by having the ability to adapt to the ‘harsh reality’. However, this view stands in contrast with the aims of this thesis. This is because in each of the three plays which will be discussed in this chapter there is no real ‘adversary’, as there is no ‘central’ character as such. This is to imply that Williams’ concern in these plays is not to present a tension between those who are ‘centralized’ and those who are not, but rather that his emphasis is on how his early characters are identifiable as minority figures.

The sociologist Erving Goffman’s view in his book Stigma (1963) is helpful at this stage to understand this concept of identifiable minority. He relates the question of minority to the body’s signs in terms of mental illness and forms of tribal stigma. Although Williams never uses the word ‘stigma’ to refer to his characters, nevertheless there is a reference in his letter to Audrey Wood, from the Trade West, Florida, on March 1941. Williams refers to the fire phobia of Val in Battles of Angels (1940) as a ‘psychopathic stigma’ (Devlin and Tischler, 2000, p.309). Here the term ‘stigma’ is related to the scarred body of Val. Goffman has

the same view, and explains that the term stigma originated from the Greeks who used it 'to refer to **the bodily signs** designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier' (Goffman, p.1: my emphasis). As well as providing its linguistic origin, Goffman defines stigma as a term which refers to 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting' as it stigmatises 'one type of possessor' to 'confirm the usualness of another, and therefore is neither creditable nor discreditable as a thing in itself' (p.3). This attribute is a bodily mark which can be 'discrediting' enough to cause someone to be classified as different from the others who are not stigmatised. However, for Goffman, this goes beyond the question of difference, reducing the stigmatised person from a 'whole' and 'normal' person to one who is 'tainted, discounted' and handicapped (p.3).

The idea of being 'discounted' evokes the concept of 'mutilation' which Louise Blackwell in 'Tennessee Williams and the Predicament of Women' (1977) suggests is pervasive in Williams' early plays. She argues that in his early plays Williams features women 'as major characters', while after 1961, she thinks that:

Williams' doubts and fears about his own artistic powers have grown, his faith in sexual adjustment as the key to the meaning of life has waned; none of his more recent females attain happiness through lasting sexual relationships; some are not even concerned with such happiness; all suffer from physical or emotional **mutilation** (or both) (Stanton, p.100: my emphasis).

The obvious link here is to Slapstick Tragedy (1966) where Williams includes two of his one-act plays: The Gnädiges Fräulein (a parable of the artist's struggle that is

set in a seedy Key West boardinghouse), and The Mutilated (about the rivalry between two New Orleans prostitutes). The mutilation of the body is never elsewhere placed directly in the narrative of the early plays, but is only alluded to. For instance, in Last Summer Sebastian's corpse is scarcely described and the threat that Catharine will be mutilated by the lobotomy operation is left open at the end of the play.

Bodily abomination is viewed by Goffman a natural destiny for stigmatised individuals: 'we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination ...' (Goffman, p.5). According to my reading, in the case of Williams' characters, such discrimination operates on the cycle of rejection within which they are entrapped. For example, Blanche's rejection of her homosexual husband is re-projected onto herself by Stanley's and Mitch's rejection of her. The same pattern of rejection is repeated in Cat, with Brick's rejection of Skipper, which entraps Brick with a sense of guilt. In fact, Williams' early characters do 'close their eyes to the needs of others' because they 'find some trait in those around them that disgusts them', yet the way out of this is the 'limitless compassion' which is achieved by ceasing to be so obsessed with the 'evil' in the self or others, that denies 'the possibility of the good' (Stanton, p.139). The characters pass judgments on each other's faults, which disgust them until they reject each other. So, the cycle of rejection takes this form:

Self → other → disgust → self

It is interesting that Williams dramatises this form of self-imprisonment through the female characters in his early plays. He admits that he 'had a great affinity with the

female psyche'; he likes women more than men as they respond more to him (Rader, p.271).

Elmo Howell in 'The Function of Gentleman Callers: A Note on Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie' (1970) agrees with this view and interprets that Williams' Southern 'women are doxies or fallen ladies and his men the vulgar bullies of hillbilly origin' (Howell, p.84). On the other hand, Robert Emmet Jones in 'Tennessee Williams' Early Heroines' (1961) maintains that critics 'have agreed that' Williams' heroines are 'his finest creation' and 'to them, as representatives of certain Southern types, Williams has brought much insight' (Hurrell, p.111). He furthers this argument by classifying Williams' women into two categories: 'the relics of the moribund tradition of gentility in which Williams himself was reared ... who prefer living in the illusive and legendary world of something that never really was – the mythically cavalier Old South; and the healthy, uncultured, basically sensual women' (Hurrell, p.11).⁷

Other critics like Kenneth Holditch, and Richard Freeman Leavitt in Tennessee Williams and the South (2002) read this idea in relation to statements made by Williams' female characters. For example, when Amanda realises that the gentleman caller is engaged, she says 'yes I know – **the tyranny of women!**' (Menagerie, p.94: my emphasis). This phrase has been viewed by Holditch as a comment on Williams' own life (Holditch and Freeman, p.20). So, through his female characters Williams conjures those women who were significant in his life:

⁷ The Civil War was destructive to the Southern landlord system with the fall of the social system which was based on 'slavery' ruled by 'many cultured, wealthy aristocrats' (Hurrell, p.111). With the fall of the plantation system, Southern aristocrats were faced with three alternatives: 'migrate west and start again', 'retire from active life in the New South', live in a world of false values' or 'accept the changes the war had made and conform to the new society' (Hurrell, p.111).

his mother Edwina is revived by Amanda and his sister Rose by Laura.⁸ This leads Gassner to read the plays in relation to Williams' 'uncanny familiarity with the fluttering of the female heart', where the finest roles he wrote were for women (Holditch and Freeman, p.22). He views this in the light of Williams' 'duality of gender', alien from his family situation which makes him 'sympathetic and empathetic with women' (p.22).

According to his letters, conversations and memoirs, Williams had a different attitude though. He thinks that 'women are closer to life, really; they're more naked, more like naked life ... women seem to me organically closer to love, which is where life is' (p.22). He delineates how his experience of women surfaced in his drama. There is a succession of grasping mother figures in Williams' work: Amanda of Menagerie, Violet Venable of Last Summer, Alexandra in Sweet Bird of Youth (1959), and Flora in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore (1964). Reading a number of Williams' plays, John Timpane in 'Weak and Divided People: Tennessee Williams and the Written Woman' (1989), questions the nature of what he views to be Williams' 'identification' with women. It is not enough for Timpane to suggest:

Williams' women are like himself – American, Southern, liminal, "mutilated", sexually compulsive, given to drugs and alcohol, mendacious, and so forth. Nor will it be enough to let pity speak for itself, to repeat with many critics that the typical Williams plot involves "the defeat or destruction of a highly pitiable protagonist" (Schlueter, p.171).

⁸ Williams in a newspaper interview said of his mother 'she had the gift of gab ... I still find her totally mystifying - and frightening. It's best we stay away from our mothers' (Brown, 1992, p.118).

Timpane argues that his female characters ‘call on the viewer to regard a true pluralism of possibilities – which almost includes ambivalence and repulsion’ (p.172).

This ‘ambivalence’ originates from the characters’ transitional nature. For instance, most of Williams’ females are viewed by Timpane as characters in transition: ‘from youth to age, from integrity to degradation, from illusion to disillusion, from sexual certainty to sexual confusion ... while his men are set or decided with a corresponding loss of scope’ (p.175). I would argue, his women are not defeated by the male patriarchal dominance, and this has advantages over feminist readings which always view Williams as anti-feminist. Although this chapter does not attempt to adopt a feminist reading of Williams’ work, still it is important to the context of the chapter to emphasise that Williams’ females are destroyed by their own images of the selves within which they are confined. Timpane interprets their ‘own predilection for destruction by their own desires’ (p.175), while for Johns, they are ‘the passive pawns of social forces ... in an age of commercialism and tawdriness’ (Hurrell, p.116).

This causes Williams’ females to resort to disguising their real selves; this is at least applicable in the case of the three female characters discussed in this chapter, especially Blanche in Streetcar. Goffman views this disguise as the effort of the one stigmatised ‘to keep the stigma from looming large’ by concealing it. It is what Goffman calls an:

important aspect of the “assimilative” techniques employed by members of minority ethnic groups; the intent behind devices such as change in name and change in nose shape ... to restrict the way in which a known

about attribute, obtrudes itself into the centre of attention, for obtrusiveness increases the difficulty of maintaining easeful inattention regarding the stigma (Goffman, p.103).

Here Goffman relates the idea to the context of ethnic minorities. Meanwhile Williams' females also resort to this 'covering' as they do not have self-acceptance. So Blanche powders, bathes constantly and never exposes herself to the naked light. These are techniques of self-disguise, a self-defence mechanism which maintains her isolation, as the third part of this chapter will demonstrate.

Yet Goffman suggests a turning point:

the isolating, incapacitating experience, often a period of hospitalization, which comes later to be seen as the time when the individual was able to think through his problem, learn about himself, sort out his situation, and arrive at a new understanding of what is important and worth seeking in life (p.40).

In the light of Goffman's argument, alienation is significant. Although alienation offers an uncomfortable existence, it does help the confined characters to become liberated from the self viewed as a prison. While Williams' early characters remain entrapped, as I argue later in the thesis, starting with The Night of the Iguana (1961) up to his later plays, Williams' characters strive to be liberated from the self. This shifts the question of minority into an experience of marginality, as Williams' later characters are subjected to spatial isolation from society, which provokes the reappearance of their real selves: that is to say the 'natural being' that Williams himself described. Despite suffering from varying degrees of anxiety, the later characters are able to begin the quest for their liberation, as the following chapters

will show. However, before discussing this development, it is first important to examine a representative sample of Williams' early entrapped female characters.

CHAPTER I, PART II

THE GLASS MENAGERIE (1944)

Winner of the prestigious New York Drama Critics Circle Award, The Glass Menagerie (1944) was Williams' first dramatic success and brought him recognition as one of the most highly-regarded American playwrights. The early stages of the play's composition began with Williams' one-act play Summer at the Lake (1937), the short story 'Portrait of a Girl in Glass' (1941), and the one-act play Portrait of a Madonna (1944).⁹

The full length play with its seven scenes was written in 1944. It is a 'memory play' narrated by Tom Wingfield, who is also a character in the play. He is an aspiring poet, but is forced to work at a shoe warehouse in order to support his mother Amanda, and his crippled sister Laura after their father left them behind. Amanda is a genteel Southern belle, who talks frequently about the tales of her youth in Blue Mountain, Mississippi, and about her seventeen gentlemen callers. She is disappointed that her daughter Laura, who wears a brace on her leg, is painfully shy and finds a retreat in her glass menagerie collection. Tom is a dreamer who finds his solace in movies and alcohol. The main action of the play revolves around the arrival of the gentleman caller, Jim O'Connor, to the

⁹ The latter two are often read as being based around the life of his sister Rose, who now becomes a character in the 'family play' he was conceiving about a sensitive sister and brother: victims of a drunkard father. His working title for this play was 'Hawk's Daughter' or 'The Spinning Song' (Hale, 1989, p.36). However, The Pretty Trap, subtitled A Comedy in One Act is an unpublished version of Menagerie 'that has a happy ending'. Williams notes on 'the title page that it is "derived from a longer work in progress, The Gentleman Caller' (1943) which has a 'lighter treatment and a different ending' (see Brian Parker, 'Foreword to The Pretty Trap', Tennessee Williams Annual Review, 2006, p.3; the previously unpublished play appears in the 2006 issue of this journal).

Wingfields' apartment. He is invited by Tom for dinner (at his mother's persuasion) to get his sister a husband after she drops out of Business College. The play ends with the dreams of the Wingfields shattered by the realisation that Jim has a fiancée, Betty. So Tom decides to leave home, following his father's footsteps.

The play is set in Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1937 during the Great Depression. This period is still shrouded by the impact of World War I, when the economy was collapsing and the ultimate 'faith in individual initiative and the self-made capitalist was shaken. Just as in the late nineteenth century the aristocratic code of the father who could rise to fame and fortune through self-determination was giving way to the image of the company man' (Rosefeldt, p.39). This has been duly linked to the play by Thomas Allen Greenfield in Work and the Work Ethic in American Drama 1920-1970 (1982) as a direct 'attack on the modern system of the work and the middle class that succumbs to it as can be found anywhere in post-war American drama' (Greenfield, p.120). Yet, Williams does not dramatise this 'modern system', but rather *how* this system contributes to his characters' self-detention. This links to Williams' concern, as discussed in the previous chapter, in reading the minority characters on a psychological level and not on an explicitly socio-political one.

For Anne Fleche in Mimetic Disillusion: Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and U.S. Dramatic Realism (1997), Menagerie represents 'a U.S. culture caught in an **existential freeze frame**, and [Williams] is just as worried about the possibilities for remedy' (Fleche, p.81: my emphasis). Here the words 'freeze' and 'frame' suggest an image of a stuck culture, which Williams dramatises in Menagerie by the image of his three characters' self-confinement.

They all share the need for someone or something to liberate them, as they are too weak to break away from their confinement by themselves. They need a role model to follow, and this is presented in the play through the image of the ‘gentleman caller’ for whom they all wait.¹⁰ Williams describes ‘exactly what is a gentleman caller’ as the ‘one who stays a **short time**’ (Brown, 1992, p.118: my emphasis). This suggests that any relief the gentleman caller could bring is only temporary, suggesting a sense of falsehood to the liberation he can offer to Williams’ three confined characters in Menagerie. As this chapter will demonstrate, Jim, the gentleman caller, represents the false hope of liberation for the Wingfields.

In the persistent attempts of critics to relate the play to Williams’ personal life, the play is always viewed as the most autobiographical of his works, where Tom stands for Tennessee, ‘Amanda is Edwina Williams; and Laura is based on his beloved sister, Rose, who underwent a lobotomy’ (Buckley, p.16). With this play Williams is viewed as having held ‘a mirror up to memory and caught upon it the breath of three lives: his mother’s, his sister’s and his own’ (Kalem, p.55) and, for Otto Reinert in Modern Drama: Nine Plays (1962), a play ‘in the modern democratic tradition that assumes that serious drama can be made of the sufferings of **small people**’ (Reinert, p.449, in Howell, p.85: my emphasis). In my reading, the play is indeed about small people who are like the tiny ornaments, the glass menagerie confined within their selves: Amanda within a mental space of the decayed Southern past, Tom with his unfulfilled dreams and adventures, and Laura within her crippled self. However, the main focus of this chapter is on Laura who is given a limited voice in the play. Her constant silence is seen by Thomas F. Laan in “‘Shut Up!’ ‘Be Quiet!’ ‘Hush’: Talk and Its Suppression in Three Plays by

¹⁰ The ‘gentleman caller’ is a term which refers to the suitor who visits a lady for marriage’s proposal in the ‘Old South’.

Tennessee Williams' (1999) in the lack of 'lengthy self-expressive speeches' (Laan, p.247). This silence will be viewed as a symptom of her self-entrapment, which identifies her as one of Williams' early minority characters.

The concept of the identifiable minority in this play is oriented towards Laura's self-imprisonment, particularly in terms of her body. The play introduces stages of creating this confinement through Laura's crippled self. Williams uses plastic theatre techniques (music, screen and light) to externalise the experience of Laura's confinement but also to parallel her vulnerability and fragility. The arrival of Jim at the Wingfields' apartment is viewed as a metaphorical violation and invasion of Laura's body, and this part of the discussion will close by considering the impact of this invasion on the framing of Laura's self-confinement in Menagerie. This will be read in relation to the liberation which is implied in the credo of 'Rise and Shine', and in its representation of theological concerns which have a significant role in the dynamics of the question of minority in the play.¹¹

Laura's self-entrapment is not caused by her physical limp, but rather by her negative self-image. For Eric P. Levy in "'Through Soundproof Glass": The Prison of Self-Consciousness in The Glass Menagerie' (1993), the effect of this self-consciousness is to make Laura 'intensely protective of her self-image, and to shield it from exposure to anyone outside the home' and so gradually she 'has no life outside preoccupation with her own vulnerability' (Levy, p.530). This vulnerability operates through her crippled self, by which she identifies her body until she seems 'a little peculiar to people outside the house' (Menagerie, p.48).

¹¹ 'Rise and Shine' is a term used in Menagerie. It is Amanda's motto of receiving the morning of every single day. In Scene Four, the first thing we hear Amanda calling is 'Rise and Shine! Rise and Shine' (Menagerie, p.28).

This implies that the Wingfields' apartment is the space where she is accepted and outside of which she is labelled as 'peculiar' and 'different from other girls' (p.47).

The Wingfields' apartment offers her a kind of protection; visualised on the stage by the description of the setting 'flanked on both sides by **dark, narrow alleys** which run into murky canyons of tangled clotheslines, garbage cans, and the sinister latticework of neighbouring fire escapes' (p.3: my emphasis). This implies that there is a sense of ambiguity and darkness outside the apartment. With the detailed description of daily life such as 'garbage' and 'clotheslines', a sense of everyday suffering that prevails in this unknown area outside the apartment maintains the image of the protection offered within.

This suggests that the setting offers a spatial freedom and relief from the entrapment that operates within their own selves, as is the case here with Laura. On this reading, they do not develop any kind of conflict within the space. The image of the fire escape which is 'part of what we see', staged with its landing and the 'steps descending from it', functions as an accessible spatial escape and outlet (p.3). However, described as 'accidental poetic truth for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation', space is used in the play to give an illusion of reality – as suggested by the words 'poetic truth'. It is an illusory spatial means of liberation for the characters who suffer from self-entrapment, as the words 'burning' and the 'fire of human desperation' imply. The fire is the striving for individualism, implicit within the description of the setting in the stage directions:

the Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast
hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units ... the apartment

faces an ally and is entered by a **fire escape**, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire escape is part of what we see – that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it (p.3: my emphasis).

The words ‘hive’ and ‘conglomerations’ suggest a kind of unity, where the Wingfields are part of this section of American society which avoids ‘fluidity and differentiation’ in order to exist and function as ‘**one interfused mass of automatism**’ (p.3: my emphasis). Gradually from the opening raising of the curtain, as the play unfolds it is revealed that there is no ‘one mass’, but rather there is individualism in this ‘hive-like conglomeration’. Therefore, the play is not one of a group’s unity – that is to say the Wingfields’ unity – but rather a drama of confined selves. However, the characters in the play live the illusion of this ‘one interfused mass’ that is inspired by the spatial setting. This illusion is maintained by their inability to face their own individual self-entrapment within the unity.

Like the menagerie – ‘the scores of transparent glass animals’ which are seen in ‘an old-fashioned whatnot in the living room’ – the three characters are placed together in the Wingfields’ apartment, living the illusion of unity (p.4). Although the collection of glass is always referred to as Laura’s, it is a visual image of all three characters. For example, in Scene One, Laura is described in the stage directions as ‘washing and polishing **her** collection of glass’ (p.11: my emphasis). The use of the possessive pronoun ‘her’ maintains this ownership. However, as the play unfolds the parallel between the glass menagerie collection and the entrapment of the three characters becomes explicit. In other words, as Fleche explains, the word ‘menagerie’ means ‘mixture’ and comes from ‘ménage, the word for

household and household management. Etymologically, then, it suggests less the presence of animals than the logic of human **spatial arrangement**, a logic that covers its threat of **mixture and contamination**' (Fleche, pp.86-87: my emphasis).

In this reading, these characters are living the illusion of unity; as Amanda puts it: 'we have to do all we **can to build ourselves up**. In these trying times we live in, all that we have **to cling to is - each other ...**' (*Menagerie*, p.31: my emphasis). However, they fail to fulfil Amanda's suggestions of clinging to each other, and actually reject each other. This originates from their being preoccupied within their own identities, blinding them to see beyond the self. Laura rejects Tom's dreaming self: 'all this time at the movies' (p.26), while he rejects Amanda's legendary past: 'you'll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly – babbling old – witch' (p.24). Amanda rejects Laura's crippled self: 'never use that word ... why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect – hardly notice' (p.17).

Meanwhile, like the glass, the characters are transparent to each other. For instance, in Scene Five Amanda asks Tom 'is my head so transparent' and this confirms that they are transparent to each other (p.40). This transparency is maintained by the use of the plastic stage technique, with the use of the screen and the characters' thoughts appearing as a legend on it. When Amanda talks about her past in Blue Mountain, a screen legend appears saying: 'Ou sont les neiges d'antan?' (p.9).¹² However, Williams uses plastic theatre techniques (as he mentions in the production notes to the play which precede the printed text) to conceptualise the drama as a 'memory play', which 'because of its considerably

¹² Meaning 'Where are the snows of yesteryear', a quotation taken from a poem by François Villon and an expression of nostalgia.

delicate or tenuous material' justifies 'atmospheric touches and subtitles of direction' ('Production Notes', Menagerie).¹³

In addition to these plastic techniques, the interior setting of the apartment suggests the characters' transparency. In other words, there is no actual spatial boundary between the rooms: for instance, the living room is separated from the dining room by a 'wide arch or second proscenium with **transparent faded portieres**' (Menagerie, p.4: my emphasis). So, the faded look and see-through nature of the portieres maintain this transparency, where what takes place in any one of the rooms can be easily seen from the others. There is also the kitchenette, which suggests another image of transparency within the apartment.

Furthermore, these characters are a menagerie as all are driven by 'instinct', which Amanda refutes as 'something that people have got away from! It belongs to animals' (p.34). However, for Tom 'man is by instinct, a lover, a hunter, a fighter'. The three characters all operate on instinct: Amanda is a fighter who survived after her husband abandoned her; Tom is a hunter who seeks adventures; and Laura is a lover who falls in love with the hero-image of Jim from high school. Yet, Amanda denies this instinct and this makes her the least similar of the three within the menagerie.

For these three characters to be liberated from their self-entrapment, they need to 'Rise and Shine', in the words with which Amanda welcomes the morning of every single day. Here the credo implies two actions: the physical act of

¹³ Williams chooses the occasion to reject the 'straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speaks exactly as its audience speaks' as everyone 'should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art', because '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 merely present in appearances' (quoting Williams' production notes in C. W. E. Bigsby 'Entering The Glass Menagerie', in Roudané, p.33).

rising and the metaphorical act of shining. However, although Amanda initiates this credo, she works against it. On the one hand, she always tries to maintain Laura's seating position, as her daughter is not allowed to rise. For instance, in Scene One when 'Laura rises' Amanda asks her to 'resume her seat', and she adjusts again to the 'sitting down' position (p.7). On the other hand, Amanda also monitors Tom's physical actions and movements. She watches him with 'hawklike attention to every bite' he eats (p.6). She tries to control the way he eats, talks, acts and thinks. She uses imperative verbs: 'chew', 'don't push' 'stop that shouting', and 'lower your voice' (p.21). However, Tom rebels physically against Amanda's control by laying down his fork, pushing his chair or shouting, whereas Laura passively accepts her control. So in Scene Two, realising as Amanda 'appears on the fire escape steps', Laura 'catches her breath, thrusts the bowl of ornaments away' and 'seats herself stiffly before the diagram of the typewriter keyboard' (p.11). She resumes the seating position out of fear of Amanda, who always feels agitated when she sees Laura not seated. Her seating position gives Amanda space to feel more responsibility for Laura. This responsibility springs from her illusion of superiority over Laura's crippled self, while she herself is entrapped within her own faded Southern genteel self. Her children perceive this entrapment, so the moment she starts talking about her past they know 'what is coming' but they let her tell it as 'she loves to' (p.7). Levy has the same thought, as he views that Amanda uses 'others as mirror to reflect the self-image with which' she wishes to identify. On the other hand, he suggests that Laura and Tom fear 'that through relation to others they will be reduced to mere reflections, trapped in the mirror of the other's judgment' (Levy, p.529).

Laura is aware that her confined self is transparent to the others, because her self-expression is monitored and observed by Amanda and Tom. Afraid that Laura will 'be an old maid', Amanda monitors her daughter's self-expression; from the very beginning of the play she asks her to 'stay fresh and pretty' as it is 'almost time for [the] gentlemen callers to start arriving' (p.10). Consequently, Laura 'nervously echoes her laugh' and 'slips in a **fugitive** manner through the half-open portieres and draws them gently behind her' (p.10: my emphasis). The word 'fugitive' suggests a retreat to hiding her own self which is so visible to Amanda. By retreating to the faded and transparent 'portieres', Laura fails to shield the visibility of her confinement. The contrast established in this stage direction between her act of slipping and the effect of a 'shaft of very clear light' which 'is thrown on her face' connects to the 'Rise and Shine' credo (p.10). Williams' use of theatrical technique demonstrates how Laura can shine under the influence of the physical light but cannot rise physically. This is as a result of Tom's and Amanda's constant attempts to keep her in a seating position to maintain her self-confinement, visualised by her constantly 'clenched hands' and 'panicky expression' (p.20).

Her bodily clenching is a reflection of her own holding onto her crippled self, which she cannot open up out of the fear of rejection. On the one hand, Amanda does not accept Laura's crippled self, as it implies that she has just to stay home, while she should prefer her daughter to study or to find a husband. When Laura tells her that she is crippled, Amanda tells her 'never to use that word' as it is a taboo word for her (p.17). Tom is more realistic about Laura's crippled self than Amanda: 'Laura seems all those things to you and me because she's ours and we love her. We don't even notice she's crippled any more' (p.47). For him

Amanda has to 'face facts', which for Amanda constitute a difference 'from other girls' which is to Laura's advantage.

This rejection of Laura's crippled self escalates when she is out of the apartment. For instance, at school she is more conscious of her disability than when she is at home, where 'her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys', 'she broke down' and was 'sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash room' (p.14). This is mainly because Laura is not strong enough to free herself from her self-confinement, so she projects it onto her body through illness. These symptoms represent her subconscious revolt against her self and her rejection of this self. She resorts to non-human objects as she feels freer with them to express herself than she does around people. So, she quits the Business College and goes to the 'art museum', 'bird houses' and 'the Jewel box, that big glass house where they raise the tropical flower' (p.15). However, Laura does not tell Amanda the reasons for this, as she is not strong enough to express herself to her mother.

This is because Amanda tries constantly to reconstruct Laura's own bodily self-expression. For example, realising in Scene Five that Laura's chest is flat, Amanda stuffs Laura's bosom with 'two powder puffs' (p.52). She will be a 'pretty trap' and she can be the 'prettiest' she will ever be, but this prettiness is fake as it is a reflection of Amanda's own self image. To illustrate further, in preparation for meeting the gentleman caller in Scene Six, Laura wears a dress that is 'colored and designed by memory' (p.51: my emphasis). Here the word 'memory' suggests that Amanda revives through this dress the image of her youth in the South, when she used to meet her own gentlemen callers. Amanda tries to adjust Laura until 'a fragile, unearthly prettiness' comes out in her. The way her body is presented makes her acquire a kind of fragility: that of a 'piece of translucent glass touched

by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting' (p.51). This is because the light is an artificial one, coming through the 'colored paper lantern' which conceals the 'broken light fixture in the ceiling' and highlights the falsity of her self-image (p.51). Asked by Amanda to look at herself in the mirror, Laura sees the unreality of her reconstructed identity.

Levy views this mirror as a symbol of Amanda's 'judgment of her', that aims to 'provide, by contrast, a flattering self-image for Amanda' and confirms in Laura a 'sense of her own inferiority' (Levy, p.530). Moving slowly towards the long mirror, Laura 'stares solemnly at herself' and a 'wind blows the white curtains inward in a slow, graceful motion and with a faint, sorrowful sighing' (*Menagerie*, p.53). This sighing parallels Laura's own anxiety that is expressed through her 'troubled look', 'swaying' and 'shaking'. It results from the conflict between her self-image and the one which Amanda tries to represent to Jim. This anxiety is increased when Laura realises that she used to know him at high school. She 'sways slightly', resorting to the chair which she catches hold of. This is paralleled in the music, which becomes 'ominous' reflecting Laura's own anxiety: she knows that the way she is represented by Amanda is different from her real self of which Jim is aware. She tries to avoid meeting him and tells Amanda that she has to excuse her as she cannot 'sit at the table' with him (p.55).

However, pushed by Amanda to meet him, the symptoms of Laura's seclusion are developed by Jim's arrival. When Amanda insists on her opening the door, Laura 'returns through the portieres, darts to the Victrola, winds it frantically and turns it on' (p.57). By doing so she projects her own anxiety, and as a direct result of feeling vulnerable seeks refuge in the Victrola. Then the 'faraway, scratchy rendition of "Dardanella"' softens the air and gives her strength to move

through it'; ultimately she 'slips to the door and draws it cautiously open' (p.58). With the caller's arrival, Laura becomes more conscious of her disability. This is visualised by her body as she utters 'a low moan', and adopts a panicky gesture with her fingers knotted, her movements those of 'retreating' 'trembling' and 'stiffness'. Thus, when Amanda invites Laura to come to the table dinner with Jim, a legend on the screen reads 'terror'. She appears on the stage 'quite faint, her lips trembling, her eyes white and staring, and she moves unsteadily toward the table' (p.65). This parallels the summer storm outside which is 'coming on abruptly', where the 'white curtains billow inward at the windows and there is a sorrowful murmur from the deep blue dusk' (p.65). Here the storm reflects the anxiety inside Laura, who feels exposed in Jim's company. The tension is escalated towards the end of Scene Six, with Laura clenching her hand to her lips with a shuddering sob.

Asked by Jim about her cold hands, he sets himself in contrast to Laura. He tells her she has to play 'a little hot swing music' instead of the classical piece, in order to warm her up. Laura avoids this by retreating to the Victrola where she 'catches her breath and darts through the portieres like a frightened deer' (p.58). Her fear originates from her feeling of being vulnerable to Jim who starts to violate her body by touching her hand. When he extends his hand to her, she 'touches it hesitantly' (p.58). This hesitance springs from her fear of being violated. At this point Jim realises Laura's weakness: that she is 'a shy girl' who cannot communicate with others. She represents a good opportunity for him to practice what he learned in the public speech course, and he tries to build up her self-image. Her movement on stage shifts from darting to walking, and by the beginning of Scene Seven Laura has adopted a seating position with her 'eyes wide and mysteriously watchful' with the lamplight bringing out 'the fragile, unearthly

prettiness which usually escapes attention' (p.67). In the glow of this light Laura seems more vulnerable to others, as the word 'fragile' connotes. When Amanda asks Jim to go to Laura in order to keep her company, she hands him a candelabrum that 'used to be on the altar at the Church of the Heavenly Rest' (p.70). This implies an image of resurrection, where Jim symbolises a saviour for Laura who will liberate her from her self-confinement. When he enters the dining room carrying the candelabrum Jim can be interpreted as a catalyst who can aid Laura's liberation. In Scene Seven, Jim starts to adopt special techniques to achieve this.

First, he tries to make her feel more comfortable with herself; he makes her move from sitting 'nervously' upon the sofa to sitting on the floor. Then she starts to open up by telling him that she knew him in high school. During his conversation with Laura, the 'terror' which was the legend on the screen at the beginning is changed into a singing voice off-stage. This reflects Laura starting to be more comfortable with herself in Jim's presence. However, as the dialogue unfolds, it is clear that for Jim the 'incident is apparently unimportant' while for her it is 'the climax of her secret life' (p.70). This is to imply that her 'secret life' starts to unfold and, as it does, Laura develops freer physical movements. Instead of her 'stiffness', she 'rises', 'crosses' and 'crouches' and her shyness dissolves 'in his warmth' (p.77). She talks about her disability which makes her feel embarrassed when she goes into the auditorium at school: 'it was so hard' for her 'getting upstairs' with the brace on her leg which 'clumped loud like thunder' (p.75).

Gradually, Laura starts to come under Jim's influence by sharing with him her identification with the glass menagerie. When Jim asks her about what she has been doing since high school, she reaches for a glassy piece 'to cover her

tumult'. Laura devotes her energy and time to caring about her own glass menagerie. She describes them as 'little articles' and 'ornaments' which are 'little animals made out of glass' and 'the tiniest little animals in the world' (p.82). They are so delicate that they can be broken by one's breath. Like them she should be held gently as she is fragile and can be broken easily. With the unicorn standing for Laura, by placing him on the table away from the other horses, Jim plans to make Laura experience something which can liberate herself during his presence. Inviting Laura to dance, through which he tries to liberate her from the inferiority complex that derives from her leg-brace, he 'holds his arms towards Laura', 'taking her in his arms', 'swings her into motion', and gradually she is liberated from her bodily stiffness (p.85). However, this is not entirely successful: he is described in the stage direction as moving her 'about the room in a clumsy waltz' till they bump into the table and see 'the glass piece on it fall to the floor' (p.85).

It is not only Jim's 'clumsy waltz' which breaks the glass piece, but rather it is the temporary status of the liberation which she experiences with Jim. This is visualised by the breaking of the horn of the unicorn. Here the unicorn visualises Laura, where she projects her own confined self onto its horn. Her crippled self makes her identify with the unicorn, which is identified among the other animals by its horn. By losing its horn, the unicorn starts to become like the others. Laura accepts this as she tells Jim that she will imagine that the unicorn 'had an operation' to remove the horn and make him feel less 'freakish' (p.86). After dancing she feels less different, as she is temporarily liberated from her feelings of entrapment.

Her acceptance of her self as 'different' is developed by Jim's words that 'being different is nothing to be ashamed of' (p.87), encouraging her to free

herself and feel more comfortable with people. Ultimately by kissing her, Jim tries to build her confidence up to make her 'proud instead of shy' (p.88). However, the act of kissing can be read as a violation of her personal space. The kiss is intended to prove Jim's success in building up his own self-esteem, or to demonstrate his superiority over Laura. This is demonstrated by his reaction after the act of kissing: his attitude flips suddenly and he returns back to his realistic attitude towards life. He starts talking about 'peppermint' in a similar way to talking about the chewing gum at the beginning of the scene.¹⁴ This provides a way for him to tell Laura about Betty, his fiancée. This parallels a change inside Laura, as she resumes the swaying movement to grip the arm of the sofa. Her physical movements on the stage visualise her retreat back to a state of confinement.

Laan notes that on realising Jim cannot see her anymore '[Laura's] speech breaks down completely; she can respond only with the faintly delivered and broken question'; gradually she stops talking altogether until 'she speaks only in a visual and gestural symbol' (Laan, p.249). On the other hand, Jim is described 'oblivious' and entrapped in 'his own comfortable being' (*Menagerie*, p.90). This as comfort is achieved by his success in liberating Laura from her self. Realising that Jim is engaged, Laura 'places the unicorn' in his palm as a souvenir. Laura knows that she can no longer identify with this broken unicorn as it has become like other horses, and she prefers to be different. On one level this difference will maintain her sense of confinement, but this act can be read in relation to Laura's view of Jim as one of the glass collection. Like the Wingfields, he is a glass ornament and his self is transparent to others. Laura recognises that he is entrapped because he thinks only of himself. Levy supports this argument, holding that Jim is

¹⁴ At the beginning of Scene Seven, Jim talks in the same way about the chewing gum and about the 'fortune made by the guy that invented the first piece of chewing gum' (*Menagerie*, p.72).

preoccupied 'with his own self-image', and the only difference is that, while 'Laura identifies as the victim of self-consciousness, Jim identifies as its beneficiary. The fundamental function of his love for another is to enhance his love for himself' (Levy, p.535). It is this self-love which makes him take the public speech course to be able to express himself. This does not make him superior to others, though he admits that his self is still in the process of liberation.

This recognition is read by Bigsby as a kind of acting where Jim is a 'huckster for success', reading the dashes in his words as 'momentary hesitation as he reaches for a language adequate to the self-confident role he wishes to project'. Eventually, Jim leaves with more self-confidence; he 'stops at the oval mirror to put on his hat' and 'carefully shapes the brim and the crown to give a discreetly dashing effect' (Roudané, p.40). Jim seems to be admiring himself, and Levy argues that he is 'defined by mirrors and self-consciousness and his 'concern is tainted with self-interest', using Laura as 'mirror in which to reflect a flattering image of himself' and 'her sense of inadequacy as a means to magnifying his own positive attributes' (Levy, p.534). Thus, his departure indicates Jim as a dramatic catalyst who temporarily liberates Laura from her self-entrapment. Nevertheless, Jim cannot continue in his relationship with Laura because he cannot play the role of saviour, as he himself has not achieved his own self-acceptance.

Towards the end of the play, Laura retreats back to her confined self where her only reply is 'yes' to her mother's instruction to wish Jim luck. She readopts the 'crouching position' beside the Victrola while Amanda tries to comfort her with words. The act of crouching brings into the argument the image of Williams' father-like God to whom he kneels down at odd hours (as discussed in

the previous part of the chapter).¹⁵ Retreating to God is visualised by the kneeling down position which is a constant image in Williams' early plays. Here Laura's crouching position can be read as an act of kneeling down to Williams' God, to whom she resorts by approaching her father's Victrola. This is mainly because the image of this God follows the pattern of the personified image of the father-figure, Mr. Wingfield, who abandons the characters until they doubt his existence.

According to Thompson, as quoted by Paul Rosefeldt in The Absent Father in Modern Drama (1995), the father's name 'which juxtaposes "wing" and "field" shows how a symbol of transcendence is fused with an image of mundane reality' (Rosefeldt, pp.41-42) visualised by his 'blown-up' and 'larger-than-life-size' photograph (Menagerie, pp.4-5). The immensity of the photograph (suggested by the words 'larger than life') implies a kind of almightiness; and, with its being hung up on the wall, a kind of heavenly ascendancy is suggested. Michael Paller in Gentlemen Callers: Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality and Mid-Twentieth-Century Drama (2005) views in this photograph an escape from the Wingfields' desperate situation, as the man in it is smiling forever because 'he is up and left with no more than a two-word postcard: hello-Goodbye' (Paller, p.37-38).

Rosefeldt refers to Tom as the son who lives in a 'present world which is a wasteland and a prison house, a world of constrictions and confinements filled with artificial objects that are corroding and turning into junk, lost and alienated' (Rosefeldt, p.37). He develops this idea to suggest that Tom feels like other sons of absent fathers 'compelled to bring back the father to follow in his path' and he 'seeks to recreate the father through doubling him, searching for him, creating

¹⁵ Here the reference is to the previous part of this thesis on 'Who Are Tennessee Williams' Minorities' where it is cited that before the play opens, Williams 'will go into a room alone and kneel down and pray' (Frost, pp.33-34).

surrogate fathers' (p.42). It is important to question whether Tom's escape by the end of the play follows the steps of the father figure who abandons them. The absence of the father contributes to Tom's own confinement: he is entrapped with the image of this father-figure which makes him sacrifice his self to follow in his father's steps. The father is not only absent but he is also in a constant state of flight. His postcard 'acknowledges his presence, then closes his discourse', while his smile in the 'larger than life size photograph on the mantel' 'haunts his son [Tom] and points out the path of escape' (pp.40-41). Tom becomes a reflection of his father by following his path, but he never finds him 'for the path to the absent father is endless road' and 'he has to find another father figure to replace him as the ideal father' (p.43). This implies that the absence of the father leaves a vacuum that 'propels the dramatic action to create doubles for the father' who 'comes in the form of a savior [sic] figure ... the miracle that will replace the father' (p.43). This figure can be read into the character of Jim.

With Jim's arrival, Amanda recreates the meeting with the father, Mr. Wingfield, as she wears the same dress she wore when she met him: 'she wears a girlish frock of yellowed voile with a blue silk sash ... this is the dress ... I had ... on the day I met your father' (*Menagerie*, p.53). She also brings out her wedding silver to serve him. Jim represents for Tom the saviour father who can take responsibility for the family, so that Tom can be free to pursue his dream of adventure. Furthermore, Jim brings to Laura the light which temporarily liberates her. Laura's temporary liberation from her confinement lies within the metaphorical action of shining.

In Scene Five: 'The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise', the word 'sunrise' implies two actions: rising and shining. The second action is associated

with Laura. She is like the 'large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling' in the Dance Hall which would 'turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbow colours' (p.39). The image of the 'delicate rainbow' is a parallel to Laura who is always shrouded with a light that is vague and deceptive. She needs a lasting light in order to shine. Although Jim is positioned as the light force by carrying the candelabrum towards Laura in Scene Seven, he provides her with a 'flickering light' which is vague and impermanent. This kind of light cannot provide Laura with the lasting shining, so Jim is unable to bring a real light to her life. Instead, she needs to find this light of faith in her self.

To realise that, she needs to be enlightened by the glow of lightning. This is implied in Tom's final words in the play: 'for nowadays the world is **lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura – and so goodbye**' (p.97: my emphasis). The word lightning suggests the concept of a God of thunder and lightning, which echoes Williams' perception of God as discussed in the previous chapter. This symbolises the image of God as the source of light who can liberate Laura from her confinement. There are few details given about God here, although closing the sentence with the word 'goodbye' implies that God has abandoned His creatures. So the way to God is not suggested in the play. Nevertheless, Laura's image in blowing the candles out symbolises her refusal to accept the vague light. Positioned in the sentence within brackets, '[She blows the candles out]', Laura is left confined in darkness by the end of the play (p.97).

The failure to achieve liberation lies within the contradiction of Amanda's credo 'Rise and Shine'. Robert L. McDonald in "“By Instinct”: The Problem of Identity in The Glass Menagerie' (1997) supports this argument by viewing that 'in the same breathy gestures with which [Amanda] begs Tom to

engage life with enthusiasm, to “Rise and Shine”, she seems perversely dedicated to keeping him subordinate to her’ (McDonald, p.61). This subordination is read in this chapter as a feature of Tom’s presence within the group as the household man of the family (see Menagerie, p.30), but when Tom’s mother accuses him of selfishness he becomes ‘unhinged and typically shouts some thin defence of himself’ (McDonald, p.60). This is because, unlike Laura, Tom’s self-liberation hinges on the act of rising, which he is aware he will not realise: he says, ‘I will rise – but I won’t shine’ (Menagerie, p.28). Here ‘rising’ is a metaphorical act of moving towards his unfulfilled dreams of adventure and individualism.

However, by the end of the play Tom fails to liberate himself and is still entrapped by his family’s memory and by Laura whom he feels ‘touches’ his shoulder. He thinks he may be able to leave Laura behind him, but he finds he is ‘more faithful’ than he intends to be. Moving out of home, his escape fails to liberate him from his self imposed confinement. He keeps up his routine: namely, smoking, going to movies and drinking. He reaches ‘for a cigarette’, crosses ‘the street’, runs into ‘the movies or a bar’, then buys a drink and speaks to ‘the nearest stranger’ to find anything that can blow out Laura’s candles (p.97). In this sense, Tom cannot be considered as either a centred character, liberated or one of the majority, because the characters in Menagerie are all pushing each other towards confinement.

The characters prevent each other from being liberated out of their need to hold onto each other – like the menagerie collection – in order to survive. Amanda claims: ‘we have to do all we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is – each other ...’ (p.31: my emphasis). It is the characters’ need to be part of a unified group which confines

their identities in the play. In this way, the image of the menagerie is inseparable from understanding the theme of self-confinement in the play. Nevertheless, the play suggests that the first step towards self-liberation is the moving out of and breaking away from the unity of the group, which proves to be illusory.

Menagerie closes with Amanda's final words to Tom: 'Go, then! Go to the moon – you selfish dreamer!' (p.96: my emphasis). Amanda's statement questions whether Williams envisages for his characters a way out of their self-confinement towards the moon. In other words, does the way out of the self lie in lifting away from the earth towards the heavenly moon, and does this suggest that liberation is found in escapism or elevation? In fact, this way out of the self towards the moon is developed through the plays that followed Menagerie, but, as I will later argue, Williams' characters do not really achieve their liberation until his later plays.

The first step towards the way to the moon is the movement out of 'home' and all its implications of security, protection and unity. This is developed in A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) through the character of Blanche DuBois who has lost her 'home'. Blanche faces the destiny which Amanda expects for Laura: 'stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room – encouraged by one in-law to visit another - little birdlike women without any nest – eating the crust of humility all their life!' (p.16). In order to discuss this, the next part of this chapter questions whether the possibility of self-liberation lies away from the home. As I will show, Williams' early characters after Menagerie fall into other kinds of confinement.

CHAPTER I, PART III

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (1947)

The Pulitzer Prize and Drama Critics Circle winning play, A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) brought fame and success to Tennessee Williams. After The Glass Menagerie went into rehearsals in the winter of 1944, Williams started upon a play whose first title was Blanche's Chair in the Moon and which can be seen as an early version of Streetcar. He wrote only one scene where Blanche is seen in a hot Southern town 'sitting alone in a chair with the moonlight coming through a window on her, waiting for a beau who did not show up' (Memoirs, p.86). Williams stopped working on it when he became depressed and, written in 1945-46, Interior: Panic is 'believed to be the only extant one-act version of A Streetcar Named Desire'.¹⁶

In Streetcar, the concept of identifiable minority is oriented towards Blanche DuBois' self-confinement. Blanche represents a minority figure confined within her genteel idealised self. Blanche's inability to adapt herself to the death of the 'Old South' makes her feel out of the place in New Orleans with its sordidness and the stark vulgarity of its residents. Thus, space is prominent in formulating Blanche's self-confinement. This is caused by the identification of her self with Belle Reve, her Southern family's plantation. Arriving in New Orleans, Blanche's idealised self becomes torn between two conflicting spaces: the exterior space, Stanley's apartment in New Orleans, which is a representation of the new

¹⁶ Interior: Panic, a previously unpublished play is published in the 2007 issue of Tennessee Williams Annual Review. The full-length version of the play with eleven scenes was written in 1947 (see Bray, 2007, p.3).

capitalistic South with its cosmopolitan ‘intermingling of races’, and the fluctuating mental space of Belle Reve representing the faded ‘Old South’. This originates from the conflict between Blanche’s ‘Victorian upbringing’ with its ‘constant romanticizing’, and the ‘post-Civil war industrialism’ of New Orleans, which pushes her to escape into ‘the recesses of a lonely isolation’ as she represents ‘a proud symbol of the doomed aristocratic south refusing to settle for the new industrial squalor’ (Martin, pp.120-23).

Here, great emphasis will be placed on interpreting Stanley’s violation of Blanche’s idealised self. This violation will be read by examining Blanche’s use of her voice to project her own self-entrapment on others and on the exterior space around her. This discussion will conclude by looking at the rape scene in relation to Blanche’s disposal of her idealised self until she is completely confined. Blanche’s liberation lies in her own self-realisation; with her failure to achieve this realisation, the play does not offer a way out of her confinement.

The overall argument will be approached by a close reading that decodes the stage directions; reading physical and spoken language as well as visual and aural images. The chapter will close by considering the impact of Blanche’s self-confinement on the framing of the concept of identifiable minority in Williams’ early plays.

Streetcar dramatises the arrival of Blanche DuBois, a fading Southern belle, to the Kowalskis’ apartment, where she meets her sister, Stella and her husband Stanley. As the play unfolds, we can trace a series of confrontations between Blanche’s Southern gentility and Stanley’s brutality. These confrontations reach a peak when Stanley reveals Blanche’s promiscuous past to Stella and when

Mitch falls in love with Blanche and plans to marry her. Stanley's ultimate triumph over Blanche is achieved by his raping her while Stella is at the hospital giving birth to their baby. The play ends with Blanche committed to a state mental institution after her story of rape is refuted by everyone including her sister Stella.

The 'two-storey corner building on a street in New Orleans' (*Streetcar*, p.115), has two spatial areas: the downstairs level and an upper space. The spatial movements of the characters will be read in relation to these two levels, recounting a symbolic parallel where the upper spatial level stands for the idealised and pure image of the self and the lower part symbolises animal physicality and sexual desire. The 'faded white stairs' which 'ascend to the entrances of both' areas (p.115), suggest with the use of the word 'white' an image of purity and an area of escape to which Blanche retreats whenever she feels confined within the physicality of the ground level of the Kowalskis' apartment or when the action gets heated. Her vertical spatial movement on the stairs will be read later in this part of the chapter in relation to her confinement in Kowalskis' apartment. This symbolises an image of conflict between Blanche and the space.

Her appearance in a white 'suit' with a 'fluffy bodice' and 'white gloves' as if she were arriving at a 'summer tea or a cocktail party in the garden district' can be seen in opposition to the cosmopolitan spirit of the city with its 'easy intermingling of races' (p.115). Described as 'incongruous to the setting', Blanche is set in conflict with the spatial setting from the very beginning of the play.¹⁷ This maintains her image as a minority-character who is not part of New Orleans' 'intermingling of races'; Jan-orn Chalernsrie in 'The Characterization of Women in Tennessee Williams' Work' (1979) supports this argument, stating that

¹⁷ The city offers Williams a unique space where the Southern dominance (i.e. Blanche) becomes a minority.

arriving in Elysian Fields Blanche stands apart from the ‘sordidness of the place and people, the chaotic style and the intermingling of races’ as it is ‘downed in all kinds of noises’ where the residents do not talk quietly but rather ‘shout, below, holler and swear openly’ (Jan-orn, p.57). This is contrasted with Blanche’s preceding image of Elysian Fields which as the name suggests, according to Greek mythology, is a ‘place where one who had led a good life on earth could spend his life after death happily ever after’ (p.56). Realising this conflict between space and her idealised self, Blanche tries to escape by taking long hot baths and tries to ‘dull her senses to these things by becoming intoxicated’ (p.58). The very act of bathing is an attempt to wash away her sordid past and tainted morality in order to maintain the illusion of her idealised self. Although this provides her with temporary relief, it actually continues her self-entrapment.

From the very beginning of the play, the spatial openness of the Kowalskis’ apartment makes Blanche sit ‘in a chair very stiffly with her shoulders slightly hunched and her legs pressed close together and her hands tightly clutching her purse’ (Streetcar, p.119). Her body language and movements suggest she is trying to protect herself from this spatial violation. Gradually as her ‘blind look goes out of her eyes’ she ‘begins to look slowly around’ as she starts to examine the place in order to know how to defeat it (p.119). First she resorts to liquor by pouring herself a ‘half tumbler of whisky’ in order to pull her fragmented self together. This is implied in her words: ‘I’ve got to **keep hold of myself**’ (p.119: my emphasis). So, she experiences self-fragmentation which is maintained by the lack of the spatial boundaries at the apartment where there is ‘no door between the two rooms’ (p.124). The lighted interior which looks like one indefinite entity makes these two rooms ‘not too clearly defined’ (p.118).

Blanche's second technique is avoiding the light bulb, a spatial item which entraps her in the apartment. Here light is developed from the physical light of the bulb into the metaphorical light of truth and reality that highlights her real self by exposing her ageing features which she tries to disguise. John D. Hurrell argues in Two Modern American Tragedies (1961) that for Blanche this 'reality is an electric light bulb which is too blinding to be endured', so 'everything must be seen by candlelight which never shows the shabbiness and horrors of the present' (Hurrell, p.115). He develops this by claiming if 'a light bulb is a symbol of reality in the plays of Tennessee Williams', so 'the candle' is a symbol of escape (p.115). This view of escape is present in Blanche hanging the Chinese lantern with coloured paper to diminish the age wrinkles of her real self. Joseph Riddle in 'A Streetcar Named Desire: Nietzsche Descending' (1987) reads this in relation to shade as 'Blanche lives in a world of shades, of Chinese lanterns, of romantic melodies that conjure up dream worlds or perversions turned into illusory romances or alcoholic escape, of time past' (Riddle, p.17, in Martin, p.122). So, Blanche prefers the shade that provides 'magic' instead of 'reality', and she tries to 'give that to people' by misrepresenting 'things to them'. She does not want to represent the truth of herself, but what 'ought to be [the] truth' (Streetcar, p.204). This springs from her unwillingness to accept her age and her sexuality, and she builds a different self: 'what ought to be' the true self; she ends up with a self that is a reflection of her real self.

Blanche is conscious of the way she looks (the way she represents herself) and seeks approval from others by asking 'how do I look' (p.144). This originates from the fact that she does not represent her real self but rather a 'look' of this self, an illusory image of her fragmented self, and she tries to check how far

this image is perceived by others and how real it looks. For example, she tells Stella 'you haven't said a word about my appearance' (p.122). She expects Stella to ask her questions, Stella realises this 'little weakness' of Blanche, so she tells Stanley to 'say something nice about her appearance' and to 'admire her dress and to tell her she's looking wonderful' (p.132). However, unlike Stella, Stanley refuses to discuss 'looks' and 'appearance' with Blanche, but rather he tries to violate her idealised self until she feels entrapped within it. This violation operates through his constant staring at Blanche and his act of checking on her.

Blanche feels violated by the very act of looking, so she tells Stella: 'don't you look at me, Stella, no, no, no, not till later, not till I've bathed and rested' (p.120). However, Stanley keeps on staring at her, so with his first appearance she tries to draw involuntarily back from his stare. The act of staring establishes his territorial relation to the place, so he checks everything including her. He wants to see the paper, ask questions, 'appraise' things, and 'make an appraisal' of her and what she owns. To achieve that, he shoots 'the question that pries into the very personal life of Blanche' (Jan-orn, p.60). He asks her what she teaches and about her past marriage. By doing that he has 'touched her most sensitive past - her marriage, the suppressed pain which has been lurking in her imagination all the while' (p.60). Talking about her past and her marriage, Blanche feels confined. This is visualised in Scene One the moment her 'head falls on her arms', and she 'sinks back down' (Streetcar, p.130). Stanley's violation of Blanche reaches its peak in this scene when he pulls 'open the wardrobe trunk' jerking out 'an armful of [her] dresses' (p.134). Belle Reve is identified with her 'solid-gold' dress, 'fox-pieces' and her 'costume jewellery' and 'bracelets of solid gold' in this trunk (pp.133-34). She reflects on how the touch of 'his hands insult them' and she

‘will burn them’ (p.139), because she considers it a violation of her self as identified with Belle Reve.

For Stanley, Belle Reve is ‘details’ and ‘papers’, and he wants the ‘legal papers connected with the plantation’, while for Blanche it is the lost home which she struggled for till it slipped from her fingers piece by piece (p.138). It is transformed gradually in her mind into a graveyard where ‘all but’ her and Stella ‘have retreated’ (p.140). It ‘should finally be this bunch of old papers’ in Stanley’s ‘big, capable hands’ (p.140). This is to imply the image of Stanley’s hands as the bodily violator of her self. Here Blanche’s self is identified with this bunch of old papers and the ‘love-letters’ and ‘poems’ written by her dead husband. These papers represent the dead ‘Old South’ to which she tries to hold in order to confirm her self in contrast to the brutal nature of Stanley.

Blanche’s act of bathing is her first self-defence mechanism. She builds her own sanctuary with the bath that she requisitions at the beginning of the play. She is always ‘soaking in a hot tub to quiet her nerves’ whenever she feels her self is degraded (p.133). In other words, she reacts to the dirt and the vulgarity to which she is exposed in the Kowalskis’ apartment by bathing herself. For example, in Scene Three, when she is exposed to the ‘poker night’ with its dirt and the physicality of its players who do not have enough Southern courtesy to ‘get up’ for her, Blanche decides to bathe. She tries to elevate herself up from this physicality in order to maintain her illusory idealised self. Moreover, with her constant bathing, Blanche tries to revive the look of this self. So, after bathing, she tells Stella ‘a hot bath and a long, cold drink always gives [her] a brand-new outlook on life’ (p.192).

Blanche uses her voice as another means of self-defence. For instance, she projects on Stanley all words that reduce him to a savage animalistic brute. She views Stanley as 'common', 'sub-human' and a 'survivor of the Stone Age' who grunts, swills and gnaws (p.163). She tries constantly to assert her superiority over his 'downright' nature which is in conflict with such things as 'art - as poetry and music - such kinds of new light' (p.164). Consequently this starts to feed her idealised self by giving her the illusion of being superior to him. Through her verbal abuse of Stanley, she maintains this illusion. She resorts to this abuse after she fails to gain Stanley's approval. For instance in Scene Two, when asking 'how [does she] look', Stanley makes it clear to her that he does not 'go in for' compliments 'to women about their looks' (p.137). So, failing to achieve approval, Blanche uses verbal abuse as a defence mechanism, especially after she is exposed to Stanley's constant rejection.

Feeling entrapped by this rejection, Blanche adopts the same technique using words to project this entrapment on Stella. For example, when Stanley hits Stella in Scene Three, Blanche gets Stella's clothes and 'guides her to the outside door and upstairs' (Streetcar, p.152). By taking her upstairs spatially, Blanche tries to elevate Stella metaphorically away from the sexual brutality and physicality of Stanley, but implicitly she tries to project on Stella her own self-entrapment by playing the role of the saviour. So, her assuring words: 'Stella, Stella, precious! Dear, dear little sister, don't be afraid' are subconsciously directed to herself (p.152). Maher Ben Moussa in 'The Re-Invention of the Self: Performativity and Liberation in Selected Plays by Tennessee Williams' (2001) argues that Blanche tries to drag her sister to share with her the 'idealised past world' which she wants to relive in order to confirm her belief of the unbearable

of the present world (Moussa, p.28). He looks at Stella as a companion who Blanche needs in this revival, and ‘also [she needs to] get Stella’s confirmation that her illusion can be turned to reality’ (p.29). However, Moussa’s argument relates this to Blanche’s internal conflict between illusion and reality. So, for Moussa, her dilemma is that she has ‘to compromise between her private and public identities’, which leads to a ‘state of polarization and conflict that living with the two identities entail’. He adds that ‘Blanche is torn between the two extremes of her identities: her burning desire and the puritanical tradition in which she was raised’ (p.32). The present study goes further than this dual-identity conflict and views Blanche’s use of her voice when talking to Stella as a means of confinement which makes her vulnerable to Stanley.

Gradually, Stanley starts to be threatened by Blanche’s influence on Stella. This situation worsens when Stella is taken by Blanche up to Eunice in Scene Three. For the first time in the play, Stanley ‘breaks into sobs’ shuddering and stumbling (Streetcar, p.153). Realising that his ‘baby doll’s left’ him, he loses his stability. This stems from his fear that he will lose Stella. So, he projects his own fear through sound by shouting and bellowing her name in front of the building until she comes down to him. However, whilst shouting, Stanley does not ascend the stairs; this embodies metaphorically his association with the lower area which visualises his animal physicality and sexuality to which he succeeds in dragging Stella by the end of the scene. With ‘heaven-splitting violence’ Stanley bellows ‘STELLAHHHHH!’ (154), and the capital letters emphasise the act of shouting here as a means of objection to Blanche’s attempt to project her self-

entrapment onto Stella.¹⁸ Stella responds to this cry by descending the stairs to him; they both ‘come together with low, animal moans’, then Stanley ‘snatches the screen door open and lifts her feet and bears her into the dark flat’ (p.154). The act of lifting her up visualises Stanley as the one who can elevate Stella by, ironically, taking her down to her physicality and sexuality. Blanche realises that she is defeated in her effort to elevate Stella as she runs back to Stanley rather than kept at Eunice’s apartment. Consequently, Blanche fails to project her own self-entrapment on Stella. This is visualised by her inability spatially to enter the ‘dark entrance’ of the flat; she ‘catches her breath as if stuck’ rushing down to ‘the walk before the house’ (p.155).

Following this scene Blanche starts to feel more confined within her self. In Scene Four she tries to convince Stella that her life with Stanley is something which she has to ‘get out of’ (p.158), and the reference is implicitly to herself as she feels entrapped, but Blanche tries to play the role of the saviour who will free Stella. So she suggests ‘the way out’ by getting ‘hold of some money’ or contacting Shep Huntleigh.¹⁹ On her side, Stella feels that she is ‘not in anything’ she wants ‘to get out of’ (p.158). That is because, unlike Blanche who operates by rejecting Stanley’s brutality and physicality, Stella tolerates it. She realises that poker is his pleasure and ‘people have got to tolerate each other habits’ (p.158). It is also ‘brutal desire’ which ties them together. This is visualised in the poker night; when Stella comes down to Stanley he ‘falls on his knees on the steps and presses his face to her belly, curving a little with maternity’ until her eyes go blind with

¹⁸ Stanley’s act of shouting is powerful in the 1951 film which was directed by Elia Kazan and featured Marlon Brando, Kim Stanley as Stella and Vivien Leigh as Blanche. It is made into a shouting contest in the New Orleans Tennessee Williams festival in April 2007.

¹⁹ Blanche used to go out with Shep Huntleigh at college. She ran into him ‘on Biscayne Boulevard, on Christmas Eve’, and he has ‘oil-wells’ all over Texas (*Streetcar*, p.159). It is not clear in the play whether he is a real character or he just exists in Blanche’s mind.

tenderness as she catches his head 'and raises him level with her' (p.154). Stanley addresses Stella's brutal desire since he thinks it will be 'all right' between them again 'after [Blanche] goes' (p.195). As such, he revives in her mind the noisy image of their brutal desire:

it's gonna be sweet when we can make noise in the night the way that
we used to and get the coloured lights going with nobody's sister behind
the curtains to hear us (p.196).

Stella used to love 'having them coloured lights going' until Blanche arrived in New Orleans (p.199). Here the 'coloured lights' stand in contrast to the white purity to which Blanche tries to hold, as it stands for her genteel Southern past. She wants Stella to be elevated spiritually from her sexual brutal indulgence with Stanley. By doing so Blanche is using Stella to maintain her own illusory idealised self. To achieve this Blanche uses words to revive inside Stella the image of Belle Reve with its white columns from which Stanley 'pulled' her. She reminds her of their upbringing in Belle Reve which Stella has forgotten as she stands 'waiting for him [Stanley]! Maybe he'll strike [her] or maybe grunt and kiss', and she pursues her in order to hold onto 'some tender feelings' and not to 'hang back with the brutes' (p.163).

Overhearing her at the end of this scene, Stanley realises that Blanche's voice is her means of projecting her self-entrapment onto Stella, so he tries to quieten her down. Although Stanley adopts this technique before this scene, it escalates later in the play. For instance, in Scene Three, hearing Blanche and Stella laughing, Stanley asks them to 'cut that conversation' and 'to hush up' (p.147). However, told by Stella that it is 'my house and I'll talk as much as I want

to', Stanley adopts violence in order to silence Blanche (p.147). When Blanche turns the radio on in the same scene, Stanley jumps up 'crossing to the radio, turns it off' stopping short at the sight of Blanche. Here the radio is used as a visual metaphor of Blanche's voice rebelling against Stanley's act of hushing. In other words, although he warns her to turn it off, she turns the knob on the radio and 'it begins to play "Wien Wien, nur du allein"'; she waltzes to the music with 'romantic gesture' while Mitch moves 'in awkward imitation like a dancing bear' (p.151). Felicia Hardison Londré in 'A Streetcar Running Fifty Years' (1997) agrees with this view, arguing that the radio 'galvanizes Stanley into aggressive action' as he sees Blanche 'has lured his wife and his best friend into her orbit' (Roudané, p.55). However, Stanley's violence increases when Blanche succeeds in attracting Mitch. So, in Scene Three, ignored by Mitch, Stanley stalks 'fiercely through the portieres into the bedroom' snatching the radio and tossing it out of the window (Streetcar, p.151). Stanley feels intimidated by the romance between Blanche and Mitch; he realises that Blanche uses Mitch to confirm through him the image of her idealised self which puts her in a superior position to Stanley.

Here Mitch functions as a factor through which Blanche maintains her self image in the Kowalskis' apartment. He is the only character who approves of Blanche's idealised self. For example, in the poker night, Mitch's courtesy makes him stand up for Blanche. Through him Blanche tries to revive and hold together her illusory idealised self. Mitch is described in the stage directions as 'glancing back at Blanche', 'coughing a little shyly' and he has an 'embarrassed laugh' (Streetcar, p.146). Mitch represents for Blanche what we can call a manageable self, which Blanche says has 'a sort of sensitive look' which is vulnerable (p.146). This vulnerability results from the fact that his 'mother is sick', which revives in

the mind of Blanche the image of Belle Reve and its association with death. Mitch represents the saviour whose kindness she needs after she realises that she is defeated by Stanley. However, meeting him in most of the scenes spatially before or 'at the steps', a visual image of them being entrapped together is suggested. He is unable to elevate her on a metaphorical level. This is mainly because in her relationship with him, Blanche operates by consciously adopting her idealised self. For instance, in Scene Six when she asks him to have a 'night-cap' and 'leave the lights off', she 'lights a candle stub and puts it in a bottle' (p.177). She avoids the light as it metaphorically spotlights her real self which she tries to hide.

Accordingly, Stanley adopts tactics to uncover this self by dispossessing Blanche of her idealised self image. Asked whether she 'knows somebody named Shaw' who 'is under the impression he met' her in Laurel at a hotel called the Flamingo, Blanche realises that Stanley has discovered her past along with the reality of her self (p.167). As a reaction her face displays a 'faint shock. She reaches for the cologne bottle and dampens her handkerchief' to touch it to her temples (pp.168-69). She resorts to the 'cologne bottle' as a visual means of purifying her self.

Gradually she develops her voice as a self-defence mechanism in order to maintain her idealised self image. She starts to shift her voice from talking into 'laughing', 'screaming' and giving 'piercing' cries. These cries are developed in Scene Seven into singing a 'saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley's speech' (p.186). Her singing parallels Stanley's words through which he uncovers her illusory idealised self to Stella. He tells Stella that 'she's been feeding [them] a pack of lies' (p.186).

Blanche's real self, which Stanley uncovers, is a 'downright loco' as she is 'told by the mayor to get out of town' and 'they kicked her out of the high school' (p.188). However, Stanley fails to make Stella condemn Blanche as she 'pulled the wool over' her eyes as much as Mitch's. Stella's non-acceptance of Stanley's words about Blanche is visualised by her body language; when he 'comes up and takes her by the shoulder rather gently', she 'gently withdraws from him' (p.190). So, failing to get Stella's expected rejection of Blanche after what she hears, Stanley realises that he cannot defeat Blanche. Consequently, he starts to use his voice against her. He starts shouting at her to 'get OUT of the BATHROOM! Must I speak more plainly' (p.191). On her part, Blanche defends this violation by singing with 'little breathless cries and peals of laughter' in the bathroom (p.188). Calling her a 'canary bird', Stanley realises her singing is a self-defence mechanism, so he uses the same technique to defeat her (p.191).

However, Blanche's indifferent attitude to Stanley's words and her continually displaying illusory idealised self escalates his anxiety. He projects this anxiety onto the physical objects by jerking 'open the bureau drawer' slamming it shut and throwing 'shoes in corner' (p.167). This is because he cannot force his violence on her because of Stella standing between them. However, this violence is increased in Scene Eight when Stella comments that he is 'too busy making a pig of himself' and he has to 'go and wash up' as his face and fingers are disgustingly greasy (p.194). Using these words such as 'pig', 'disgustingly' and 'greasy', Stanley realises that Blanche has succeeded in projecting her voice as a self-defence mechanism onto Stella, who starts echoing her words. It is the first time in the play where Stella refers to Stanley in these animalistic terms. So, he 'hurls a plate', 'a cup and saucer at the floor' (pp.194-95). By the end of the same scene,

Stanley augments the use of violence in hushing Blanche up: he bawls at her when he talks to Mac (his friend in the bowling team), 'QUIET IN THERE' (p.197). The use of the block capital letter enforces this violence. In return, Blanche starts to use laughter and smiling as a way to defeat his constant hushing up and violence; always defensive, this in fact maintains her self-entrapment.

This entrapment develops out of her fear of being caught between two extremes: namely, death and desire. This is oriented towards the image of 'home', which is developed in her mind from the place of protection onto a place 'where dying old women remembered their dead men' (p.206). This originates from her loss of Belle Reve, and her attitude to the image of her dead husband.²⁰ She tells Mitch 'have you ever had anything **caught in** your head? Some words, a piece of music? That goes relentlessly on and on in your head' (p.201: my emphasis). She refers to the 'polka music' which they played when her dead husband shot himself, and which resounds in her head when she is distressed. After the truth about her is discovered by Stanley, this image of death changes from a fluctuating mental space into a fixed image which she verbalises. So she tells Mitch: 'there now, the shot' [that killed her husband], 'yes, now it's stopped' (p.202). The idea of spatial protection for Blanche offers an alternative to death and takes her away from desire. However, realising that her time is over at the Kowalskis' apartment after she is given the bus ticket back to Laurel, Blanche starts to be haunted by the image of death.

²⁰ Blanche's ex-husband commits suicide after Blanche has confronted him about his homosexuality. Although it is not explicit in the dramatic text that he was gay, there are some hints subtextually: 'there was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate-looking' (*Streetcar*, p.183). Leaving most of her sentences about him incomplete, Blanche feels guilty for rejecting his homosexuality.

This image of death is visualised on the stage by the blind Mexican woman who carries ‘bunches of those gaudy tin flowers that lower-class Mexicans display at funerals’ (p.205). Gary Harrington in ‘The Smashed Mirror: Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire’ (2002) observes that Blanche is the only one who has any contact with the Mexican woman or ‘recognise[s] her presence’, as Mitch makes ‘no response’ to her arrival at the door. Harrington suggests that the Mexican woman can be taken as ‘an embodiment of the guilt Blanche feels regarding her past’ (Harrington, p.69). It is suggested that she is a conjured image of Blanche’s entrapment within death, staged spatially in Scene Nine when ‘the Mexican woman turns slowly and drifts back off with her soft mournful cries’, and Blanche ‘goes to the dresser and leans forward on it’ (Streetcar, p.206). The voice of the Mexican woman reminds Blanche of death, and so following its disappearance, Blanche is caught by the image of desire as opposite to death. This image of desire is visualised by Mitch’s sexual advances on Blanche, when he places ‘his hands on her waist and tries to turn her about’ (p.206).

Foster Hirsch in ‘A Portrait of the Artist: the Plays of Tennessee Williams’ (1979) views Blanche’s sexuality as a way of transforming herself: ‘a movement of desire into a death wish, into self-annihilation’. Hirsch argues that it is a way of ‘punishing herself for her betrayal of her homosexual husband’, like Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955) who ‘betrays his friend Skipper when [he] reveals that he is homosexual’ (Hirsch in Martin, p.124). It is not only Blanche’s betrayal of her homosexual husband, but also her projection towards the same pattern of rejection which pushes her towards self-annihilation. In other words, Blanche’s rejection of her homosexual husband is re-projected onto her by Stanley’s and Mitch’s rejection of her. They both pass judgment upon her as her

promiscuity disgusts them. When she asks Mitch to marry her, he tells her: 'you're not clean enough to be in the house with my mother' (*Streetcar*, p.207).

Asking her for what he has 'been missing all summer', Blanche realises that Mitch is trying to push her to the edge of desire. In other words, by rejecting the chance to marry her and secure her a home (which can offer her spatial protection), Mitch pushes Blanche to the alternative extreme which is desire. So, she starts to scream and 'cries wildly' until he 'turns and goes out of the outer door, clatters awkwardly down the steps and around the corner of the building' (p.207). Here, she uses screaming as a way of projecting her despair as she 'suddenly rushes to the big window with its pale blue square' (p.207). Her entrapment is visualised by her falling to her knees at the end of the scene.²¹ For the first time in the play she adopts this downward position which parallels her descent to her real self, the self being in a low position as she can no longer maintain the facade of her idealised self.

After being confronted by Mitch, her idealised self starts to disintegrate. In Scene Ten she tries to confirm and hold onto this self by wearing a 'solid and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliant set in their heels' (*Streetcar*, p.208). Placing 'the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table', Blanche's act of looking at the mirror symbolises her visualisation of this self as she looks at the reflection and assesses it (p.208). Here Blanche shifts from using singing and screaming towards 'murmuring' to address this reflection by talking 'excitedly as if to a group of

²¹ Blanche's falling to her knees parallels Stanley's actions earlier in the play. Stanley in Scene Three 'falls on his knees on the steps and presses his face to her [Stella's] belly, curving a little with maternity' (p.154). By falling to his knees Stanley resorts to the physicality and the sexual instinct of Stella. This is visualised by him pressing his face to her belly; the next morning Stella's 'hand rests on her belly, rounding slightly with new maternity' at the beginning of Scene Four (p.156).

spectral admirers' (p.208). These admirers are imagined by Blanche as a way through which she can seek self-acceptance of this idealised self. So, after a short monologue in the same scene, she 'tremblingly' lifts 'the hand mirror for a closer inspection'. Here the word 'inspection' implies that she is examining how real her self-reflection looks. By slamming 'the mirror face down with such violence' till the glass cracks, Blanche realises that this self is shattered and no longer exists (p.208), and the cracking of the glass visualises this shattering.

Nevertheless, Blanche keeps on holding onto her idealised self. In other words, she still views herself as a 'cultivated woman' of 'intelligence and breeding' (p.211). However, she thinks that she has been 'foolish casting ... pearls before the swine' (p.212). Here the reference is to Stanley and Mitch, who challenge her illusory self. Because of her holding onto this self, Stanley loses his patience with her. Taking advantage of the absence of Stella, he confronts Blanche with the shattering of this idealised self. He asks her to 'look' and 'take a look' at herself (p.212). By asking her to do this, Stanley tries to make her realise that she is putting on an illusory self. Shouting at her face: '**Ha-Ha!** Do you hear me? **Ha-ha-ha**' Stanley parodies Blanche's laughter (p.213: my emphasis). This predicts his triumph over her as the 'Ha' sound here symbolises his ability to hush her up without expecting any further response from her. This maintains her self-entrapment. This entrapment is impeded within her words when she tries to call Western Union, repeating 'desperate circumstances' 'caught in a trap' 'caught in-Oh!' (p.214). Here, the 'Oh' sound parallels Blanche's fear of being caught between the 'lurid reflections' which appear 'on the walls' around her with inhuman voices 'like cries in a jungle', and the image of 'the prostitute [who] has

rolled a drunkard' (p.213).²² Here the image of the prostitute visualises the threat of desire that is waiting for Blanche, culminating in the rape scene through which Stanley tries to rid Blanche of her illusory idealised self completely.

To achieve that, he realises that he has to violate her body as it represents the space where this self lies. So, by wearing his 'brilliant silk pyjamas', he adopts a refined appearance to prove to Blanche that it is he who has become the refined, decent and superior self. This is suggested by the refined fabric of the silk. So, when she sees him in his pyjamas, she gasps and 'backs away from the phone' (p.214). However, his constant staring at her violates her, so she tells him she has 'got to get out somehow' to let her 'get by' him (p.214). Yet she cannot pass by him, not only because she has no space to retreat to, but also because she cannot defeat him after she has lost the self with which she is identified. He tells her that she 'has plenty of room to walk' by him. However, he thinks that it wouldn't be bad to 'interfere' with her (p.21). As he steps towards her his movement visualises his final spatial violation of Blanche's self before he rapes her at the end of the scene. By smashing a 'bottle on the table' in order to face him, Blanche tries to defeat her self. However, she fails as the broken bottle top visualises her shattered idealised self which she can no longer defend. Stanley realises that this self cannot defeat him. He wonders why she does this as he bets she can twist the 'broken end' in his face. She fails to do so, and she ends up sinking to her knees to be carried by him 'to the bed' (p.215).

When Stanley springs at Blanche in the rape scene, Anne Fleche in Mimetic Disillusion (1997) reads it as 'a last barrier has been broken down, and

²² The use of these disembodied voices originates from the one-act version of the play, Interior Panic. Williams portrays 'Blanche as being increasingly detached from reality by hearing disembodied voices and becoming more and more paranoid' (Bray, 2007, p.5).

now there is no space that is outside the jungle' (Fleche, p.99). Stanley's brutishness succeeds in dispossessing Blanche of her idealised self. This leads her to be entrapped within the shattered image of this self. When her story of the rape is refuted by everyone including Stella, Blanche's entrapment escalates, pushing her to the edge of insanity. At this stage, Stanley's voice starts to cause her a 'shocked gesture' whenever she hears him, so she avoids him. For example, in Scene Eleven she tells Stella that she does not 'want to pass in front of those men' (p.220). Here, the reference is to Mitch and Stanley in front of whom she feels vulnerable after her idealised self has been dispossessed.

This vulnerability is developed when Stella and Eunice ask her to 'hush!' her 'sudden hysteria' (p.219). The vulnerability results from the shattering of her idealised self. With no self-image with which to identify, her feeling of self-captivity increases until she feels the need to 'get out' of Stanley's apartment which becomes a 'trap' for her with the 'cathedral bells' are the 'only clean thing in the Quarter' (p.219). Here the bells chiming stand in contrast to the sound of Stanley. It is the voice of faith which Blanche needs in order to free her from her confinement. The sound of the bells overlaps with her monologue and her wish to 'die on the sea' buried at 'sea sewn up in a clean white sack' (p.220). Here the words 'clean', 'white' and 'water' symbolise her wish for purification and elevation as inspired by the sound of the bells. Blanche desires to be rescued from her situation which is characterised by her gazing towards the sky wishing to 'go there on a rocket that never comes down' (p.141). By the end of Scene Three, she 'looks up at the sky' and tells Mitch 'thank you for being so kind I need kindness now' (p.155). In spite of the temporary nature of this kindness, it offers her an outlet for this elevation which she can achieve by finding her personified God on Earth. Blanche needs to

find Him in someone and by the end of Scene Six, she tells Mitch 'sometimes - there's God - so quickly' (p.184). The image of God she finds in Mitch is replaced by the doctor at the end of the play; they share between them the kindness which Blanche seeks. Her dream to die hand- in -hand with 'some nice-looking ship's doctor' makes her surrender to the doctor at the end of Scene Eleven (p.220).

Thomas P. Adler in 'The Search for God in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1977) posits with this view as he writes about Blanche's need 'of someone to love and reassure her, of someone to mean God to her by helping her refind a belief in her own humanity' (Stanton, p.140). However, in Mitch's failure to fulfil this role, Blanche has no option but to surrender to the kindness of the stranger: the doctor. The God-like aspect of the doctor is confirmed by the fatality of his arrival where no one in the scene can stop him taking Blanche away. They all realise it is her fate to leave as she 'couldn't stay' and 'there wasn't no other place for her to go' (Streetcar, p.224). However, it is only Stanley who tries to 'block her way' when she stops inside the door as she realises that the doctor is 'not the gentleman' she was expecting (p.222).

Following her into the flat to ask her whether she has forgotten something, Stanley's voice along with the Matron's greeting, is 'echoed and re-echoed by other mysterious voices behind the wall' which are the 'cries and noises of the jungle' (p.222). They are the very same noises heard by Blanche in the rape scene. The animalistic tone of the cries visualise them as the cries of the brutal desire which defeat Blanche's idealised self by the end. The sound of Stanley is echoed by these cries and noises to imply that he is the catalyst who sheds light on and uncovers Blanche's wretched self by raping her. The image of Stanley in Scene Eleven tearing the lantern off the light bulb to 'extend it towards her' visualises the

physical act which makes her surrender to the grasp of the Matron. By crying out 'as if the lantern was herself', Blanche realises that she is completely dispossessed of her illusory idealised self, and there is nothing left in Stanley's apartment to identify with (p.223).

So, the play ends with the sound of Stanley's 'luxurious sobbing' and the 'sensual murmur' of his brutal desire of 'love' after Blanche's departure (p.226). The 'murmured' nature of this sound suggests its weakness. This is to imply that although he succeeds in driving Blanche to a mental institution, Stanley does not represent the liberated self in the play. He has an anxiety for self-affirmation. He wants to affirm himself in contrast to the genteel Southern background of Blanche. For example, when she calls him 'Polack', he gets defensive: 'I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is one hundred percent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it' (p.197).

Blanche ends up screaming and crying as a way to verbalise her entrapment until she is led by the doctor out of the Kowalskis' apartment. She surrenders to the doctor's 'gentle and reassuring' voice as it calms her crying and subsides the 'lurid reflections' (Streetcar, p.225). Its 'assuring' nature makes her feel it is the God-like voice which can briefly liberate her from self-confinement; but it is only temporary as Williams does not present in the play the liberation of Blanche.

Blanche's self-confinement categorises her as one of Williams' early minority characters. By the end of the play, Blanche fails to break away from her self imposed confinement, because the truth about the rape has to be locked in her

mind and not to be revealed to others. Here truth as a mental fluctuating space is developed into another form of entrapment within which Blanche is confined towards the end of the play. This kind of confinement is developed further in Williams' Suddenly Last Summer (1958) where we are presented with Catharine Holly who is a developed version of Blanche. Like Blanche, Catharine is entrapped by truth and will be committed to the state asylum.

CHAPTER I, PART IV

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER (1958)

Stop it! - Catharine, be still (Sister Felicity to Catharine in Suddenly Last Summer, The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.357).

As the above quotation suggests, Suddenly Last Summer (1958) develops the concept of identifiable minority in relation to the self-entrapment of Catharine Holly's mind and reason. The vision of truth about her cousin Sebastian, within which she is entrapped, takes a form of fluctuating mental space which categorises Catharine as being insane. This is because the self here is a space of conflict between the 'truth' within her own mind and the illusion of 'truth' in the mind of the other, Mrs. Violet Venable. The discourse between these two conflicting visions forms the dramatic heart of the play and the action lies with the development of Catharine's vision into action through the liberation of the truth from her mind into the exterior space. Given that it is one-act play with limited dramatic action, emphasis in this chapter will be given to decoding the language and stage directions with a specific focus on reading verbal and non-verbal language as well as visual and aural images.

The play departs from the two discussed previously, dramatising a well-defined and clearly evolving central action: that of the liberating of the self from entrapment. To consider the play's theme of self-liberation it is important to consider the confined insane self of Catharine Holly. I will use the term 'insane self' to refer to the self-entrapment of Catharine's mind that identifies her as one of

Williams' early minorities. This part of the chapter will decode fluctuating mental space which is the basis of Catharine's self-entrapment. In order to understand how this dynamic operates, this part will be centred on decoding this self in relation to the two conflicting visions of truth presented in the play about the identity of Sebastian Venable. The character of the homosexual Sebastian provides an illustration of how an easily identifiable minority character can be obsessed by his self until it destroys him. I will conclude by examining Catharine's success in liberating her insane self by exposing it to the exterior space by the end of the play. The play represents a transitional stage that links Williams' early work and The Night of the Iguana (1961), which will be the focus of the next chapter.

The themes of the play can be tracked back with Williams' two short stories 'The Poet' and 'Desire and the Black Masseur', which were published in One Arm and Other Stories (1948), and to a pair of plays published under the title Garden District (1958), the first 'a tragicomic' one-act play entitled Something Unspoken and the second 'the more important work Suddenly Last Summer' (Memoirs, p.175). This full-length play in four scenes was published in 1958. It was inspired by Williams' trip to Barcelona in July 1953 where he saw a 'band of black-plucked-sparrow children shrilling about for bread and making percussive serenades with flattened out tin cans' (Devlin and Tischler, 2004, p.492). This is the origin of the play's theme and its images of sexual procurement, horror and predation. When Williams started working on Last Summer, he mentioned to Margaret 'Margo' Jones in a letter in 1945 that he was writing a 'play about a were-wolf - Cabeza de Lobo - inspired by a Mexican painting of one'. He intimated that 'it will be a bit longer than [the one-act play] Purification and I hope it may finally

be good enough to use on a program with it. It is full of horror' (p.13).²³ In spite of its horror and savage images, the play is still viewed by Williams as one of his best-written dramas: 'there are passages' which were as well written as anything Williams considered he had done (*Memoirs*, p.176). The play premiered in New York at the York Theatre in 1958 under the title Garden District, and was adapted for film by Joseph L. Mankiewicz in 1959.

The play is set in a Gothic-Victorian mansion in the Garden District of New Orleans. It revolves around Mrs. Violet Venable's attempt to hide the truth about the homosexuality of her son Sebastian and his death. She tries to convince Dr. Cukrowicz, a neurosurgeon at the state asylum, Lion View, to lobotomise her niece, Catharine who witnessed Sebastian's death in Cabeza de Lobo.²⁴ If he promises to perform the lobotomy on Catharine, Violet promises Dr. Cukrowicz she will fund the setting up of the Sebastian Venable Memorial clinic where he can pursue his research further. So, throughout the play there is pressure on Catharine to change her version of the story; if she does this Violet will release from probate a large amount of money willed by Sebastian to Catharine and her brother, George. So, both her brother and her mother, Mrs. Holly, want her to take back what she 'babbles' about Sebastian's death. Finally, under the influence of a truth serum, Catharine tells the story of Sebastian's death by cannibalism at the hand of local

²³ 'Were-wolf' refers to a legend popular among the Gypsy in Cabeza de Lobo. This legendary creature 'takes the form of a beautiful virgin at each full moon and descends to the village to claim a lover, who is allowed to lift her veil' and in the play Williams uses Cabeza de Lobo as a 'fictional shield for the Barcelona scenes' (Devlin and Tischler, 2004, p.13).

²⁴ Williams mentioned that he dealt with 'cerebral Lobotomy' as 'it was a dramatic necessity' in the play. He knows about it as 'some person [he] had known well that had a cerebral Lobotomy' (Frost, p.39). Williams refers here to his sister Rose; the decision 'to have' her 'undergo a Lobotomy was completely' his mother's who 'demanded that the Doctors cut' a story that 'at the convent school the girls use altar candles for self-abuse' (Rader, p.63).

boys who were the sexual objects for his homosexuality.²⁵ As her story unfolds it becomes clear he used Catharine and his mother as devices to attract the young men. Upon listening to the story, Violet insists on erasing the memory from Catharine's brain, while the Doctor asserts that the story might be true.

The play's setting is 'as unrealistic as the décor of a dramatic ballet' with an interior 'blended with a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle or forest' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.349). With the words 'unrealistic', 'dramatic', and 'fantastic' it is not clear whether the play takes place within the mind of the characters or physically on the stage. The action on the stage is still, linear and symbolic more than it is dynamic and realistic. However, there is a sense of evolution suggested in the setting. In other words the fantastic garden is 'more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin' (p.349). This dramatises the physical spatial setting as a visualisation of the primitive impulses within a human's psyche. Thomas P. Adler in American Drama, 1940-1960: A Critical History (1994) argues similarly saying that the garden is 'internalised, representing a psychological state of mind, everyone in the play preys on or uses others' (Adler, 1994, p.155). According to my reading, these 'primitive impulses', in fact, are related to the cycle of devouring which the characters experience, where each one in the play tries to devour the other. Violet wants to devour Catharine by erasing the truth from her mind through lobotomy, as she realises that after the operation, there may not be 'any possibility, afterwards, of - reconstructing a - totally sound person' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.366). Mrs Holly and George prey on the money of Sebastian and they persuade Catharine to

²⁵ He thinks that his plays come out of 'everybody personal life', when asked by David Frost about whether 'do we all live with cannibalism in this same symbolic way', Williams answers 'yes, we all devour each other, in our fashion' (Frost, p.40).

take back her story about him in order to gain the money 'bequeathed' by Sebastian. The Doctor is pushed by Violet to prey on Catharine in order to get the funding for his research. It is the characters' self-obsession which pushes them to this cycle of abuse towards each other.

Sebastian's life is a fiction, since what is known about him is left in the form of conflicting truths and stories which we hear. These conflicting visions portray him not as a seen reality, but rather as a representation of what is true within the minds of each character. This is manifested in the act of masking. For example, all Sebastian's photographs show him masked in a 'Renaissance pageboy's costume' and at a masked ball in Cannes and in Venice. Although the pictures were apparently taken twenty years apart, Sebastian remains unchanged and static, as Violet puts it: 'the photographs looks older but not the subject' (p.360). The use of the word 'subject' visualises him as a piece of art where his existence is identified by his poetry because 'the work of a poet is the life of a poet and – vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet' (p.352). So through this identification with his art he adopts another kind of masking, the artistic masking through which he hides his own homosexuality. He has a sense of guilt about this identifiable self of which he gradually loses control. The guilt which Sebastian feels echoes the guilt of the homosexual writer 'born in the Episcopal rectory' and growing up 'in the shadow of the Episcopal church' (Devlin, p.58). Guilt was unavoidable for Williams in the repressive political atmosphere of the 1940s and 1950s which 'were extremely turbulent and trying decades for gay men and lesbians in America' (Savran, p.84).²⁶

²⁶ As Savran notes 'the 1920s and 1930s had witnessed the growth of a gay and lesbian subculture in several major cities in the United States, the legal and ideological prohibitions were so stringent that an antihomophobic discursive counterpart was virtually inconceivable' (Savran, p.84). This was the

David Savran in Communists, Cowboys, and Queers (1992) thinks that critics like the novelist Gore Vidal 'attempt to explain the contradictions in [Williams'] writing by sketching a portrait of Williams as a self-hating homosexual' (Savran, p.83). He criticises Vidal and other critics who see Williams as believing strongly that 'the homosexualist is wrong and that the heterosexualist is right' (p.83). He views Vidal's statement as implying that 'a position radically different from Williams' was possible, 'that the product of a deeply homophobic culture can somehow avoid internalizing its values' (p.84). Violet cannot understand the homosexuality of Sebastian; it is an unacceptable truth which she tries to hide and keep enclosed within Catharine's mind. Although Sebastian's homosexuality is implied in the play by Violet's constant reference to his 'looks' and 'charm' which 'keep ahead of pursuers', this word 'pursuers' suggests she is very careful to avoid using the word 'chased' for fear that it may be taken as 'chaste' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.361). Chastity here refers to Sebastian's sexual chastity as he was devoted to 'a celibate life'. However, he 'insisted upon good looks in people around him' and he had a little 'court of young and beautiful people' surrounding him all the time (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.359). D. A. Miller in 'Visual Pleasure in 1959' (1997) suggests that Catharine is used as a 'device for giving utterance to the story of Sebastian, the homosexual who, though barred from anywhere appearing in the would-be mainstream drama, by means of her recollection becomes its true protagonist' (Miller, p.35). Drawing on this, Sebastian finds in her the means to facilitate his own homosexual activity which he cannot control until it devours him.

case until the rise of the modern gay rights movement which opposed the intense persecution against homosexuals, with the founding of the Mattachine Society in 1951 by Henry Hay and the launching of 'ONE' in 1953, a magazine that examined 'homosexuality from the scientific, historical and critical point of view' (see Savran, p. 85).

This is symbolised by the very act of cannibalism which parallels his metaphorical devouring or consuming by his desire.

Here the act of cannibalism can be viewed as the inevitable culmination of (or punishment for) homosexual desire in Williams' works. Parallels can be seen in 'Desire and the Black Masseur' where Anthony Burns like Sebastian, is devoured by the objects of his desire. Annette Saddik in 'The (Un) Represented Fragmentation of the Body in Tennessee Williams' 'Desire and the Black Masseur' and Suddenly Last Summer' (1998) views it as 'a commentary on the nature of homosexual relationships in society' (Saddik, 1998, p.2). Williams' concern according to my reading is not with using Sebastian as a representative of all homosexuals in the 1950s (or even as a parallel to his own homosexuality), but with exemplifying through him the image of the self-consumption of the identifiable self. In other words, Sebastian's body represents this identifiable self (his homosexuality) which is unavoidably destroyed as a result of the self's unbridled desire to satisfy itself. So by being consumed with desire, the consequence is death which is the punishment for expressing his desire.²⁷

With the act of cannibalism (the image of death) is described through the dialogue, a heavenly implication is suggested. For Saddik, there is something actually inhuman in this act being shown in a Broadway play. She argues:

[Williams'] polysexual content is at its most explicit and straightforward in this story ['Desire and the Black Masseur'] since this type of narrative genre is less public than drama, and would better allow for the expression of subject matter such as cannibalism and homoerotic

²⁷ It is the very fate which Williams' earlier characters pre-Last Summer try to escape, and yet it further entraps them (as previously discussed in relation to Streetcar).

sadomasochism, especially in the repressive atmosphere of the 1940s and 1950s. Over ten years later, however, Williams chose to push the boundaries of sordidness and perversion, for which he had by then become known, by presenting Suddenly Last Summer off-Broadway in 1958. In this play we get one of his most violent endings as the audience listens to Catharine tell what both she and Violet Venable call a “hideous story” of her son Sebastian being physically devoured by the young boys whom he had “consumed” sexually at Cabeza de Lobo (Saddik, 1998, p.4: my emphasis).

This ‘hideous story’ of Sebastian’s death maintains his heaven-like aspect which is explicit in the fact that his dead body is absent as it was devoured before the play even began. Andrew Sofer in ‘Self-consuming Artifacts: Power, Performance and the Body in Suddenly Last Summer’ (1995) reads this in relation to Sebastian’s identity in the play which is shrouded with ‘a series of masks and performances, right down to his fastidious costume of white silk suits’ and his mother’s references ‘to his life as a legend which Catharine is [smashing] with her tongue’ (Sofer, p.26).

This view corresponds with my reading of the play which questions the status of Sebastian as symbolic rather than as a concrete and realistic character. In this sense, he symbolises the vision of truth in the mind of Violet. This is explicit in her ‘ritualistic invocation’ of his name: ‘my son, Sebastian’ ‘my truth-not the truth’ (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.352: my emphasis). With the use of these possessive linguistic markers, Violet both constructs this vision of Sebastian and defends it to maintain its continuity. For instance, she makes clear to the Doctor that Catharine’s truth is just ‘a hideous attack’ on her son’s moral

character 'which being dead, he can't defend himself from' and she has to be the defender (p.361). There is something artificial about this truth, in the way she 'constructed' her days with him where 'each day' they would 'carve out' is 'like a piece of sculpture' till they left behind them 'a trail of days like a gallery of sculpture' (p.363). There is a sense of stillness suggested in the word 'sculpture', where things and days are designed and do not flow spontaneously.

However, Catharine's truth destroys this stillness of Violet's God-like idealised image of Sebastian, and Violet tries to silence Catharine in order to prevent her from articulating her version of Sebastian's life. Violet finds in her view of Sebastian a personified image of God on earth who has an ability to create and recreate the world through his poetry: the 'Poem of Summer'. There is an air of divinity surrounding the poem which is implied in the way the act of writing is said to mirror the act of creation. Sebastian is said to write a poem each summer, as 'the other nine months of the year were really only a preparation', as if Williams is drawing a parallel between the creative 'birth' of Sebastian's poetry and the birth of a reborn child (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.354). Violet then takes the heavenly analogy further as she likens the poets to priests, but goes on to say poets have to 'look harder' for God as they 'don't have the help of such famous guidebooks and well-organised expeditions as priests have with their scriptures and churches' (p.357). Sebastian's crisis of faith comes about in his last summer when the pages of his 'Foxhill! The Blue Jay notebook' which he 'used for making notes and revisions on his Poem of Summer', turn 'blank' (p.407). He starts to lose his ability to create after he sees the horrific events which he cannot relate to the beauty of the art of creation. At that point he starts to lose his identity as an artist which identifies him as a person.

The events which so horrify him are when he sees the cruel face of God on the beach in the 'terrible Encantadas'. He visualises God in the image of the 'flesh-eating birds' attacking and diving on the 'hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.356). Sebastian 'spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow's nest of the schooner watching' this scene (p.357). The 'blazing' light of the day enables him to watch God, while darkness makes it too difficult for him to see. He left the 'crow's nest of the schooner' when it was 'too dark to see' and he sailed with Violet 'north by east into cooler waters' (p.357). His act of sailing is related to the remoteness of the space where Sebastian has to go 'looking for God' and for 'a clear image of Him' (p.357). However, this is not to imply that Last Summer still operates using the same personified pattern of God which dominates Menagerie and Streetcar, but rather it marks a development of the God-like image into an abstract vision. However, it is related to the vision of the self which is projected on Him. This image of God is a reflection of Sebastian's own self-image which is full of the horror of self-consumption. This is suggested in Catharine's words when she says that somebody 'said once or wrote, once: "we're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks"' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.375). The word 'children' implies the image of God as a father figure who observes and watches the way his children differ in how they spell His name and perceive His almightiness. Sebastian is one of 'children' who spells God's name wrongly. The horrible image he saw in Encantadas controls his vision of God until he becomes obsessed with the dark side of God which he gradually projects on others. Thomas P. Adler in 'The Search for God in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1977) posits this idea as he perceives

Sebastian as one of three Williams' characters (along with T. Lawrence Shannon in The Night of the Iguana (1961) and Chicken Ravenstock in Kingdom of Earth (1968) (explored in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis) who are so obsessed with 'the evil in themselves and in those around them that they transfer this evil to God, creating a God devoid of any goodness or love' (Stanton, p.141). He elaborates that Sebastian lives a 'predatory life', and mistakenly:

equates his savage vision with a cruel God who created a hideous world where men attack their fellowmen. Instead of entering into communion with other people, Sebastian inverts the normal flow of love, turning it back in upon himself until he finally sacrifices himself to his personal image of God the devourer (Stanton, p.141).

His mother, Violet contributes to this equation by pushing him constantly into the circle of self-consumption until it devours and destroys him. When Sebastian tries to free himself by following Eastern theology and giving up 'the world and himself and all his worldly possession to their mendicant order' Violet stops him (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.358). Under her influence, in less than a month he gives up his Eastern theology and for them to resume their travel 'and from then on' they 'still lived in a - world of light and shadow' (p.358). However, Violet asserts that the word 'shadow' does not imply darkness as it is 'as luminous as light' (p.358). This shadow is related to the image of Sebastian which she tries to keep lit in order to maintain its idealised nature.

Catharine's constant 'babbling', however, threatens this perceived idealised truth about Sebastian. Catharine tries to verbalise her knowledge about Sebastian demise by exposing the truth about his death. On her side Violet wants this vision

'to keep still' in Catharine's mind, with Catharine locked up in St. Mary's, because her spatial stillness will enclose the truth in her mind. Violet sets out to do this by making sure Catharine is under constant supervision in Saint Mary's where her movements are monitored by Sister Felicity, and where her physical movements are restrained by Felicity's holding of her arm (p.371). Catharine's disobedience through resistance will only lead to her being put 'right back on the violent ward' (p.372). This institutionalised 'violent ward' represents a means to restrain Catharine's violence which is viewed as a form of resistance to the physical stillness Violet seeks.

This stillness is dictated to Catharine by the Sister's orders in Scene Two: 'sit down and be still' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.373). The seating position implied within these orders maintains Catharine's entrapment as insanity. When she rises from the wicker chair in the same scene advancing towards the Doctor, Sister Felicity adopts a 'restraining gesture' telling her to 'sit down' (p.374). When Catharine adopts a rising position, she starts talking about Sebastian, and by doing so she starts liberating her confined vision of truth. Rising in Scene Two she tells the Sister that she 'loved him [Sebastian]' and she wonders 'why wouldn't he' let her 'save him', and this is followed immediately by the Sister's orders for Catharine to 'sit down' (p.374). The same seating position is maintained by Violet in Scene Four in the garden where Catharine asks her 'Can I move? Can I get up and move around till it starts?' (p.386). When she moves downstage she is 'followed quickly by Sister Felicity' and she is conducted 'back to the patio' (p.387). She also feels the same spatial entrapment in the garden as whenever she rises or rushes out; her physical movements are restrained by Sister Felicity.

Unlike Violet's garden, Catharine does not view Saint Mary as a sweet place, when she talks of trying to 'get a message out from that "sweet, sweet place"' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.388). Williams is in fact playing on the Doctor's name, Cukrowicz, which means 'sugar' in Polish. This sweetness is related to Catharine's ability to voice her entrapped vision on Sebastian to the Doctor, generated from her fear to be committed to the asylum. An example of this can be seen in Scene Two when she sees him and shouts: 'IS IT LION'S VIEW? DOCTOR?!' (p.374). The block capitals suggest her shouting as a way of resisting the idea of being institutionalised. This is followed by her words about Sebastian which are silenced by the Sister's orders. In the same scene when Catharine advances towards the bay window, the Doctor withdraws 'letting the misty white gauze curtain down to obscure him' (p.374). This obscurity which surrounds him is contrasted with his being 'too blond to hide behind window curtains' as he 'catches the light' and 'shines through them' (p.375). These words suggest the image of the Doctor as a healer who may enlighten Catharine by releasing the truth from her mind and bringing it to light.

In Scene One the doctor is the one who Mrs Venable feels she can 'lean on' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.350). Here the position of leaning suggests the need for dependency on his kindness. However, Violet tries to push him into the circle of self-consumption which she controls as she knows all of them are financially dependent on her. She exerts this control by referring implicitly to her interest in funding the 'Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation', making it is dependent on his performing the lobotomy on Catharine. For example, when he questions the operation, she reminds him that 'we [are] always more interested in a thing that concerns us personally' (p.367). Here the reference is to

the self with which he should be consumed rather than interpreting her offer as 'sort of bribe' (p.368).

Nevertheless, contrary to Violet's expectations, as the play unfolds the Doctor tries to break away from her circle of self-absorption by adopting the role of the catalyst that helps to free Catharine gradually from her entrapment. First, in Scene Four he frees her physically by grasping her 'elbow and [leading] her out upon forestage' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, 398). The very act of 'leading' maintains this image of the catalyst that she will follow in order to be free from entrapment, which offers a stark contrast to the Sister's constant act of 'pushing' Catharine to be still. This is visualised by his request to surrender to him by giving up 'all' her 'resistance' to tell the truth. He achieves this by hypnotising her after giving her the injection, and also by 'holding' his hand out. He wants her through these two tactics to 'put' her hands in his and 'pass' of her resistance out of her hand into his (p.402), a physical contact will enable her to voice the unspoken and to change her unstable babblings into a coherent verbalisation of her vision of the truth.

When Catharine asked the Doctor: 'can I stand up', she succeeds in standing up, although 'unsteadily' after he tells her to 'stand up' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.403). The Doctor's words urge her to make physical movements which can free her from her spatial stillness. The Doctor realises that the moment she is free of her physical stillness, she will be liberated from her self-entrapment. By standing up, she feels 'dizzy' and she calls out 'help me'. He 'rushes to support her' and 'holds her' (p.403). By holding her, she realises her need for someone to rely on, as she still needs the physical support. So, she 'holds him tight against her', crushes her mouth to his 'violently', clutching his

body against her (p.403). Through her physicality towards him, she projects her violence onto him as the words 'tight', 'crushes', 'violently' 'fiercely' and 'clutching' suggest (p.403). By doing so, she transfers to him her resistance to the truth.

Nonetheless, her action here is not read by him as a sexual advance, but rather a 'little' unsteadiness. This unsteadiness results from the conflict between the truth which is entrapped in her mind, and the exterior vision of truth. The first step for Catharine to break away from this conflict is to control her physical movements within the space, and the Doctor helps her achieve that. For example, going to the 'dazzling jungle of the garden', Sister Felicity tries to restrain her, however she is stopped by the Doctor: 'you're not responsible for her' (p.404). Her free spatial movement helps Catharine gradually to respond to the Doctor's orders by telling the 'true story' (p.405).

By telling the story Catharine starts to be liberated from her violence. This is visualised by the 'clear and sweet' 'bird song' which replaces the 'raucous sounds in the garden' and overlaps with her words throughout the play (p.405). So, as her words unfold instead of the dashes and the pauses, the Doctor starts to complete Catharine's sentences. This is symbolised verbally with their conversation. For example, Catharine tells the Doctor that 'I mean from the evenings to the afternoons and from the fa-fash-'. Ending with pauses between the incomplete word 'fa-fash-', the Doctor replies 'fashionable! Is that the word you-?' (pp.409-10). Her 'yes' answer implies that the Doctor has started to recognise Catharine's identity which starts to break away from its entrapment and be externalised and readable to him.

By telling the truth about Sebastian's death, Catharine liberates her insane self. This is visualised on the stage by the use of the light; 'the light changes as' she gets 'deeper into her story' concentrating on her while 'the other figures sink into shadow' (p.411). When telling the truth about Sebastian, Catharine starts to confront the truth about her self. It is her self-image of being 'dropped' by people like a 'hot, rock' after being used (p.392). This 'dropped' self is a rejected self from the social set of New Orleans, dating back to her encounter with a married man she met in front of the Mardi Gras ballroom, who drove her to 'the Duelling Oaks' where they both 'walked through the wet grass to the great misty oaks' and had a sexual encounter (p.398). However, after he told her that they should 'better forget it' as his 'wife's expecting a child', she 'just entered the house and sat there thinking a little' and suddenly she 'called a taxi and went right back' to the Hotel ballroom. She projects her anxiety of being used and rejected by beating the drunk guy in the ballroom. She resists the image of her self as a dropped 'rock' by violence. She 'beats him as hard' in the face with her fists until Sebastian takes her away (p.399).

Asked by Sebastian to 'get up' on that day, Catharine just follows him. Catharine accepts his command after she starts to feel symbolically dead: 'if you're still alive after dying, well then, you're obedient' (p.398). However, travelling with him, she starts to feel entrapped more and more with the same 'dropped' self-image, building the feeling of being 'stuck so often' (p.400). She starts to 'appreciate his kindness more than he wanted' her to, until she is 'procuring for him' (p.412). She responds 'too much to his kindness' by 'taking hold of his hand before he'd take hold of [hers], of holding onto his arm and leaning on his shoulder' (p.406). This comes from her need to liberate her self and

regain her self-esteem by holding on to Sebastian's kindness. However, in fact, this only alienates her from herself; she begins writing her diary in the third person and keeping up her 'third-personal journal' (p.413).²⁸ Sebastian fails to help Catharine defeat this feeling of alienation because he is self-obsessed. This can be seen in the way he projects the cruel image of God which he saw in the 'terrible Encantadas' onto others as well as himself. This event conjures up an image of sacrificial violence in his mind. David Charles Cameron Mathew in 'The Ritual of Self-Assassination in the Drama of Tennessee Williams' (1974) agrees with this view as he thinks that 'it must be a sacrifice which could literally incorporate the divinity in [Sebastian]; that is, by re-enacting the bloody ritual, he could make himself a part of the myth, or participate in the sensation of being the dying god' (Mathew, p.182). This suggests according to my reading the image of Sebastian as a sacrifice as a way to purify his self through consumption of his flesh. Within his flesh lies his guilt from which he wants to be free. Sebastian realises that his self-obsession starts to consume him. This is embodied by him physically aging; his physical sickness in the heart where he 'had rheumatic fever' which 'affected a heart-valve' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.353).

Symbolically, the day when Sebastian dies was one of those 'white blazing days in Cabeza de Lobo, not a blazing hot blue one' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 3, p.414). Like the weather, Sebastian was in white with 'a spotless white silk shantung suit and a white silk tie and a white panama and white shoes, white – white lizard skin – pumps!' (p.414: my emphasis). With the colour 'white' there is an image of purity which contrasts with the band of the

²⁸ Jacqueline O'Connor Dramatizing Dementia: Madness in the Plays of Tennessee Williams (1997) reads this as 'a feeling of separation from the self, a common symptom of schizophrenia' (O'Connor, 1997, p.54).

‘naked **black hungry**’ children who followed him. The words ‘black’ and ‘hungry’ parallel the image of savagery in nature as the sun looks like ‘a great white **bone off a giant beast** that had caught on fire in the sky’ (p.421: my emphasis).²⁹ Gradually the voice of the children develops from ‘crying out’ for bread making ‘gobbling noises with their little black mouths’ into serenading on ‘instruments of percussion’ and ‘tin cans strung together’ (p.417). There is violence and savagery suggested in the voice of their instruments and their metallic sound. They ‘pulled up and down, back and forth, to make a sort of’ ‘Ooompa’ noise (p.418). Witnessing that, Catharine ‘ran down’ screaming ‘Help’. Here the direction is important and stands in contrast to the upper direction which Sebastian follows by climbing the hill. In other words, instead of escaping down to the ‘waterfront’ or the ‘docks down there at the bottom of the hill’, he climbs up the ‘steep white street’ to the white hill towards the children (p.421). His spatial movement suggests that Sebastian views in these children the face of God, and he wants to sacrifice himself to Him. Sebastian ‘screamed just once’ before this ‘flock black plucked little birds’ overtook him halfway up the white hill and devoured him just as the flesh-eating birds did to the hatched eggs (p.421). So, according to this vision the truth about Sebastian’s death is that he was ‘torn’, ‘cut’ ‘stuffed’ into the hungry boys’ ‘gobbling fierce little empty black mouths’ (p.422). By tearing him off, ‘there wasn’t a sound any more’: ‘what was left of him’ a ‘big white-paper-wrapped bunch of red roses had been torn, thrown, crushed! - against that blazing white

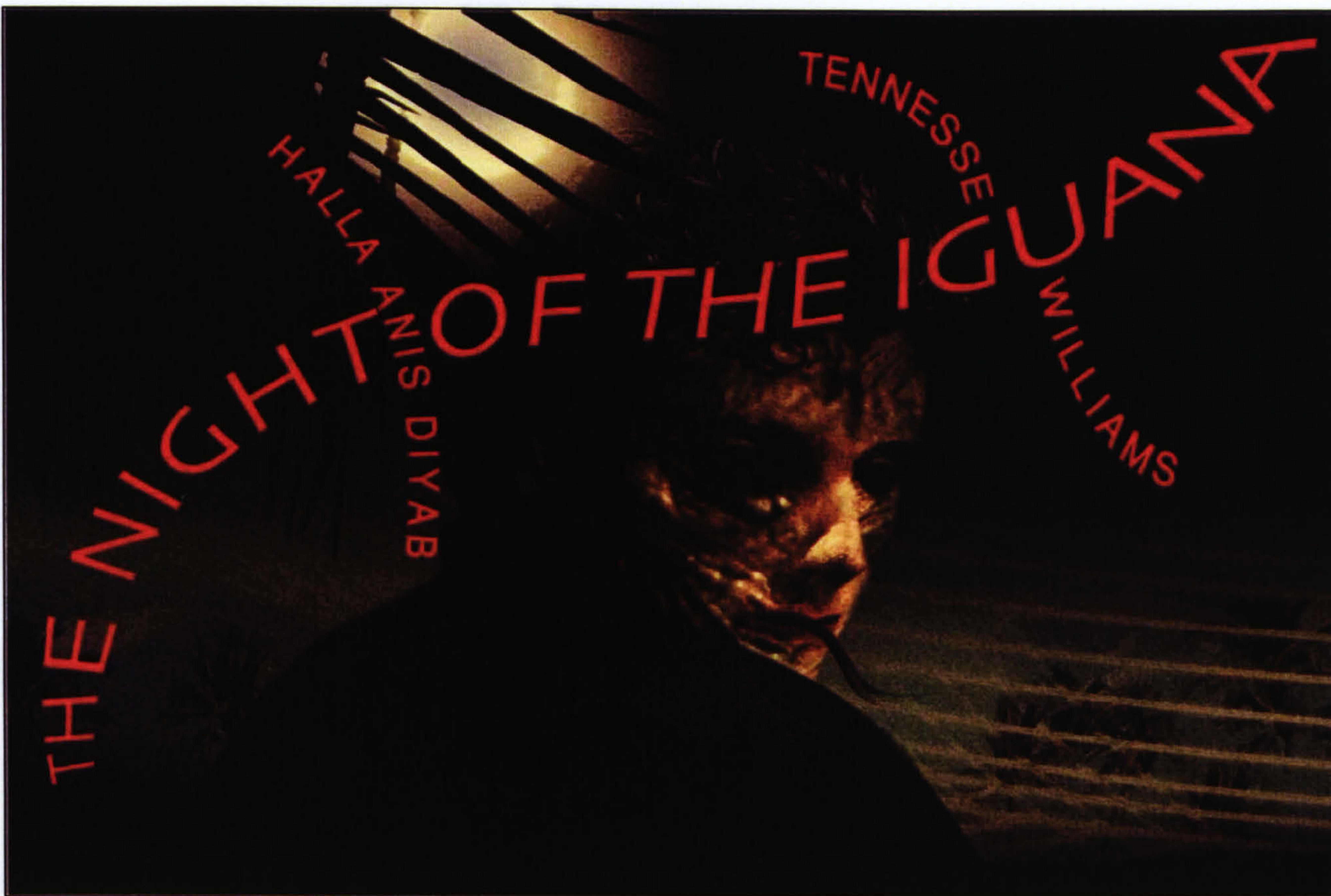
²⁹ There is no racial issue suggested in Williams’ use of the word black to describe the savagery of the nature as well as the colour of the children who devour Sebastian. The blackness here is related to the dark cruel face of God which is a reflection of the darkness of Sebastian’s own self-image, full of the horror of self-consumption. Moreover, the savagery and the blackness of the children are recalled to parallel the image of the flesh-eating birds which devour the hatched eggs in Encantadas, and which ‘made the sky almost as black as the beach’. This parallel is clear in Catharine’s words when she describes the black children as ‘flock black plucked little birds’ (p.421). Williams does not explicitly handle race issues until the 1960s with *Kingdom of Earth* (1968) when he starts dealing with race as a sign of self-confinement through the character of Chicken, as Chapter Three of this thesis will discuss.

wall' (p.422). The parallel between him and the blazing weather and the white wall suggests an image of purification and elevation through this act of cannibalism.

Upon hearing Catharine's story Violet 'springs with amazing power from her wheelchair' to hush and still Catharine. She strikes her with her cane to object to 'this hideous story out of her brain' (p.423). The Doctor, however, stops her by snatching the cane and leading her towards the exit. For the first time in the play, Violet is staged as unstable within the space and 'about to fall' (p.423). By stilling her spatially, the Doctor stops Violet from repressing the truth in Catharine's mind. He helps Catharine by the end of the play to expose the truth about Sebastian's death. Out of this comes Catharine's self-liberation which, at the end of the play, helps her move freely in the exterior physical space. So, she 'wanders out into the garden' followed by the Sister, but not restrained by her (p.423: my emphasis). The Doctor's open-ended statement after he looks 'reflectively into space', that 'the girl's story could be true' symbolises Catharine's success in liberating her self by voicing the truth which can now be judged by others and accepted or not (p.423). This is to imply that when the self is liberated it is subjected to conflict with the exterior space. By breaking away from the self, Last Summer leads us into the conflict between the self and the exterior space which will be the main focus of the following chapter, on Williams' The Night of the Iguana as a pivotal point in the development of Williams' minority issues.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II, PART I



language, space and characters to convey minority issues as an experience of marginality.

Awarded the Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1962, many critics claim

Poster designed by the author to illustrate the concept of spatial reversal in The Night of the Iguana (1961), and awarded the prize for Best Poster-Presentation: Business, Social Science and Arts at the University of Leicester Festival of Postgraduate Research in 2006.

plays of the 1940s, The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire. However, this section of the thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the play can be read as a pivotal point in the development of minority issues in Williams' work, operating less in terms of an identifiable minority group and more explicitly in terms of the

CHAPTER II, PART I

THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA: BETWEEN FICTION AND DRAMA

As the main concern of my thesis is the development of the minority concept from the identity of a particular group towards an experience of marginality over the course of Tennessee Williams' career – from the mid-1940s until the end of the 1970s – this middle section of the thesis will focus exclusively on The Night of the Iguana (1961) with its three developmental drafts as a pivotal text in his portrayal of minority issues. It is significant that the play went through a number of versions; the short story version of 'The Night of the Iguana' (1948) was revised into a one-act play written for the Spoleto festival of 1959, followed by the three-act play of 1961. These drafts signal Williams' transitional phase regarding the use of language, space and characters to convey minority issues as an experience of marginality.

Awarded the Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1962, many critics claim that Williams laid one of his 'dozen golden eggs' when he wrote his 1961 play The Night of the Iguana. This view suggests that Iguana is the last major success in Williams' career, after which his volume of work gradually declined after the mid-1960s. Certainly, the play did not repeat the critical and commercial success of his plays of the 1940s, The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire. However, this section of the thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the play can be read as a pivotal point in the development of minority issues in Williams' work, operating less in terms of an identifiable minority group and more explicitly in terms of the

experience of marginality itself. In this sense it provides a means of identifying a transitional phase in the methods he uses to highlight minority questions, from the emphasis on characterization in his early plays to his interest in language, setting, stagecraft and structure in his later plays.

The peculiarity of Iguana lies in Williams' use of certain visual techniques within the play that tries to externalise and project the confinement of the characters onto the stage itself. I will argue that, unlike Williams' early plays, the representation of minorities in Iguana operates through the interrelation between characterization and how the play is set up spatially. My view is that in Iguana Williams' theatricality shifts the concept of the minority from an abstract viewpoint to a real human experience of marginality which is fully developed in Williams' later plays as Chapter Three of the thesis will demonstrate. In Suddenly Last Summer the characters start to move away from the self by projecting their self-entrapment onto the exterior space, symbolised by the liberation of Catharine Holly's vision of the truth of Sebastian's death by the end of the play. This shifts the question of minority onto an experience of marginality. Iguana develops this shift gradually in its three developmental drafts to function as a transitional stage that links Williams' early and later plays.

To illustrate further, with Williams' early plays there is a focus on the 'self' within which the characters are entrapped. This 'self' is defined in the following reading of Iguana – especially in the 1961 version - as 'the interior space', later witnessed as a conflict existing between the 'interior space' and 'the exterior space'.³⁰ The main concern in this chapter will be tracing the development

³⁰ The two concepts, the 'interior space' and the 'exterior space' will be fully defined and introduced in the third part of this chapter. Using these two terms have been inspired by my reading of Thomas

of this conflict where the characters find it incredibly difficult to accomplish reconciliation.

This chapter will focus on the minority issue in Iguana's three developmental drafts, due to the peculiar position of the play as marking the mid-point in Williams' career. It is difficult to judge Iguana merely by reading the final 1961 three-act version, as Williams incorporates material from the one-act play into the final version, as well as including some aspects from the early short story. Discussing the final 1961 Iguana version is not sufficient in itself, as this discussion requires understanding of the development from fiction to drama.

The differences between the story version and the two play versions reside in the relation between the representation of minorities and generic issues of literary form. By discussing the concept of minority in the 1948 short story I will seek to demonstrate that the story pivots around the characters' sexual anxieties in relation to body and space. I will argue that the major characters are unable to achieve reconciliation, thus placing them in tremendous conflict with each other. This will establish the minority issue as a character-based concept and a continuation of Williams' earlier dramatic concerns. In this sense, the Iguana short story does not constitute a real departure from the early plays regarding the structure by which the minority question is framed.

I will follow this discussion by focusing on the early one-act play version to identify the development of the minority concept onto an experience of marginality in its initial stages. A more chaotic setting is presented in the one-act play which complicates the version presented in the story. While in the short story

Postlewait 'Spatial Order and Meaning in the Theatre' (1994), however he reads the concepts of 'interior' and 'exterior' in relation to the scenic design in Williams' plays.

minority status operates on the characters' sexual anxiety, in the one-act play it is projected onto a wider array of characters as a consequence of the cosmopolitan setting. This is accompanied by a shift in historical context: the one-act version provides a clearer dramatisation of the social and political precipice of the United States of America at the beginning of the 1940s just before its involvement in World War II. In the one-act version the absence of God, or any other obvious authority figure, adds to the anxiety of the characters. Yet in both versions space functions as a significant factor in structuring minority issues. In the one-act play, place fundamentally serves as a function, in so far as to define the experience of minority in its theatrical staging than in the narrative form of the short story.

CHAPTER II, PART II

THE SHORT STORY VERSION OF 'THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA'

(1948)

The short story 'The Night of the Iguana' was included in the One Arm and Other Stories collection, originally published in 1948 and reprinted in 1954. Signi Falk in Tennessee Williams (1978) views this collection as a reflection of Williams' 'wandering years through sordid rooming houses, on city streets, and on the obscure corners where derelicts hide' (Falk, p.25). In this collection, Williams indicates his sympathy for the unfortunate, his 'fascination for the macabre', and presents 'his own system of values as he rejects workers in favour of ne'er-do-wells and seems to prefer the vagrant of both sexes' (Falk, p.26). Written in the mid-1940s when Williams was still a younger and less experienced writer, the short story version seems explicitly autobiographical. It is literally based on Williams' experiences in 1940 at the Hotel Costa Verde outside Acapulco. He had fled to Mexico, as recorded in his Memoirs (2006), to forget the loss of his lover, Kip Kernan.³¹ The short story revives this biographical material and is closer to Williams' actual experience than the two later versions of Iguana. It is a text reliant on his autobiography that draws on Williams' vivid memory of his experience in

³¹ Williams writes of this incident in his Memoirs: 'Back from that little excursion to the situation on the honeymoon trip to Mexico, August 1940. We had checked into a motel in Monterrey. I had settled down in a small, hot bedroom with a book on a bed enclosed by mosquito netting when there came rap at the door; it was the bride ... later I was at the Hotel Costa Verde over the rain forest and the still-water beach which were the off-stage background for The Night of the Iguana. The summer much of Mexico was overrun by Nazi Germans. A party of them arrived at the Costa Verde, jubilant over the fine-bombing of London which was then in progress ... it was there in Acapulco that summer that I first met Jane and Paul Bowles ... we lay in adjoining hammocks along the sleeping-verandah, drinking rum-coco and talking until the numbered cubicles were cool enough to enter for sleep ... and some Mexican boys did catch an iguana and tie it up under the verandah, to be fattened for eating- but nobody cut it loose' (Memoirs, pp.57-59).

Mexico, in addition to the homosexual relationship that exists between the two writers in the story which echoes Williams' physical and emotional relationship with his secretary, Frank Merlo.³²

On a basic level the characters are seen to be direct representations of Williams' family members. For instance, the older writer is much like Williams in his 'strongly social kind of writing', while the physical desire shown towards the younger writer echoes Williams' lust for Merlo as 'his anchor' (Vidal, p.xxv). Moreover, Miss Edith Jelkes seems to be a version of Williams' sister, Rose, whose delicate emotional state led to her being institutionalised for much of her adult life.

The story opens with a description of the setting; 'the long South verandah of the Costa Verde hotel' that is owned by the Patrona, whose character remains vague throughout the story (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.229). The hotel is positioned on a cliff near Acapulco, with a hammock slung outside the screen door of each of the ten bedrooms. Three of these rooms are occupied, one by an 'unearthly' looking art teacher from Mississippi named Edith Jelkes, who is travelling to recover from a breakdown and has 'given up her teaching position for a life of refined vagrancy', and two by homosexual American writers (p.229). During the story Miss Jelkes makes friendly advances to the two writers, but also intrudes on their close relationship. She seeks their aid in freeing a captive iguana tied beneath her bedroom that emits scuffling noises making it impossible for her to sleep. However, her suspicion of the writers' relationship and her intrusive behaviour merely provokes the older writer to assault her sexually, when he ejaculates on her during a tropical storm. In this particular episode, the older writer

³² Williams did not publicly declare his homosexuality until 1970 as evidenced on the 'David Frost Show'.

helps Miss Jelkes to overcome her loneliness; which appears to have been cured as symbolised by the freeing of the iguana.

In my reading of the short story, the minority question is linked closely to the sexual anxieties that alienate these three characters. These anxieties are two-fold. On the one hand, Miss Edith Jelkes' sexual anxiety appears to stem from her contradictory inheritance. As the descendant of oversexed degenerates and 'squeamish old ladies', she is caught between two extremes (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.229). Her sexual anxiety is the symptom of her status as a minority character, leading to despair, frustration and loneliness. Secondly, there is the sexual anxiety of the two homosexual writers. Interestingly, this anxiety is correlated to the narrative space in relation to the text's representation of the body, and reinforced by the metaphorical significance of physical space in relation to the depiction of minorities in the short story. In this way, an interrelation operates between the characterization of minorities and the way the story is set up spatially. In the short story version, various spatial dimensions are applied in descriptions of the hotel's verandah: 'the South verandah', 'the writers' end of the long verandah', the 'hammock', 'the front' and 'the back' of the verandah.

In order to explore the connections between sexual anxiety, bodies and space, the following discussion will be devoted to decoding the narrative text, specifically the spatial setting in relation to the characters. Within this reading of Williams' use of space, I will frame the short story in relation to other themes such as masculinity, the body and violence, as a starting point for developing my discussion of minority issues in the three versions of Iguana.

Williams' 1948 short story 'The Night of the Iguana' portrays the characters' sexual anxieties, particularly the neurotic Miss Jelkes' experience of her latent sensuality and the sexual anxiety of the two homosexual writers. The crux of the minority question resides in the conflict between Miss Jelkes and the two writers. Herein lies the origin of one of Williams' most common themes: the clash of innocence and nostalgic gentility with crassness and ruthless power.³³

The two writers at the Hotel can be read to represent what the critic Signi Falk calls Williams' 'desperate heroes'.³⁴ These feature in most of his plays from the 1940s and 1950s, and live 'uncommitted to the mores of conventional' America (Falk, p.92). Retreating to a verandah in Acapulco, the two writers are depicted as 'sex-starved', because of their homosexuality. Misfits within a society that prohibits homosexuality, the two writers are marginalized. The older writer has written a novel dealing with a topic of interest deemed to be sensational, which 'had caused a good deal of controversy' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.233). This controversy stems from the writer's radical view of America: stressing its dynamism and the possibility of sexual freedom. On the other hand, the younger writer witnesses the political history of America is a record of suffering, loss, war and conflict which have exacted a physical, spiritual, and psychological toll on him. In this sense, the two writers are examples of a rising new radical consciousness in America following World War II, still confused about whether their radical thoughts and actions can be reconciled with conventional American values. As such, they represent the frustrated generation of the late 1940s. Distinct from the

³³ Miss Jelkes recalls with her 'Southern family' background the character of Blanche in Streetcar, however here the conflict of Miss Jelkes transcends self-confinement, as this part of the chapter will discuss.

³⁴ For Signi Falk, Williams' 'desperate heroes' stand alone 'above the average, money-mad, sex-starved, and unhappy jobholder' who are 'lonely misfit in an artificial society' and usually victims of 'stereotyped figures who represent Business, the Law, the Church, or Goodness' (Falk, p.92). However, the reading of the two writers in this part of the chapter goes further than Falk's description.

traditional morality of the 'Old South', the two writers have no attachment with the past; they have no family names - the older writer's name is left unspecified, while the younger writer is simply called Mike - and a hostile attitude towards their past memories.

The characterization of the two writers is used by Williams as a tool to shape the concept of masculinity in the story. The masculine body becomes a spectacle in the eyes of Miss Jelkes, who forms a 'habit of darting toward the two men as they did toward what she was painting' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.231). Here Williams shows the male body not only as sexually attractive in the flesh, but also as an object of lust. This can be seen as an echo of Williams' own sexual preferences, but, perhaps because of the taboo nature of homosexuality at the time, he chooses to filter the depiction through the eyes of Miss Jelkes rather than a narrator that more closely resembles himself. Miss Jelkes appreciates the male body of the younger writer, describing him as 'massively constructed': 'his torso was burned resembling the colour of an old penny and its emphatic gender still further exclaimed by luxuriant patterns of hair, sunbleached till it shone like masses of crisped and frizzed golden wire' (p.234).

The two writers identify their male bodies with parts of the verandah. For example, there is a freedom in the movements of the men in the narrative, the younger writer moving with disregard for propriety: 'he would get in and out of his colourful napkin as if he were standing in a private cabana' (p.234). However, the male body appears to be more comfortable in its relation to space than the female body. This freedom is depicted in the image of the two nude writers on the beach, and their habit of remaining naked in their rooms.

However, space is used to embody the writers' alienation that results from their homosexuality. The writers' alienation is visualised spatially by their being positioned at one 'end of the verandah' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.235), which represents their spatial territory. The writers' rooms are located in this territory where they usually hold their 'whispered consultation' and drink rum-coco in their hammocks (p.235). With its adjoining bedrooms, this space can be read as representing the writers' territory: open and with no spatial barriers. It is the territory of nudity and sexuality. Violence and physical power are used as tactics to guard this territory.

The narrative tension revolves around a territorial dispute over the writers' space. This dispute originates from the tension between the writers and Miss Jelkes, and is closely related to Miss Jelkes' sexual anxiety. The descendant of oversexed degenerates and 'squeamish old ladies', she conforms to the image of a 'Southern gentlewoman' who represents 'the culture and the gentility, sometimes rather seedy, that disappeared during the decade of World War I' (Falk, p.47). Miss Jelkes' Southern identity is apparent in her 'wistful blond prettiness' that reflects her whiteness (p.229). Because of her 'extremely fair skin, it had been Miss Jelkes' practice to bathe only in the early morning or late afternoon', so as to detract from the full glare of the sun (p.232).

Miss Jelkes feels sexually anxious about the older writer. She is fascinated by him while disgusted at the younger writer's nudity. Her 'squeamish distaste' towards the 'sculptural grandeur' of his naked body leads her to complain to the Patrona 'to enquire if the younger gentleman could not be persuaded to change clothes in his room or, if this was too much to ask of him, that he might at least keep the dorsal side of his nudity toward the beach' (Tennessee Williams

Collected Stories, p.234). Yet, Miss Jelkes is also anxious to know the sexuality of the two writers. Their homosexuality is not made explicit at first, being the subject of sexual connotations. For example, they lock 'their hands together' and lie 'in silence until the incoming tide was lapping over their bodies' (p.233). Appreciating the pleasure of the sexual act, they are left 'apparently in good humour' and make 'racing dives in the water' (p.233). Perhaps she can find in their actions no direct reference to sexuality, Miss Jelkes becomes obsessed with the two men; they represent a mystery which tantalises.

Moreover, the expression of her sexual anxiety extends to the use of phallic symbols such as the iguana and the radio. On a very basic level, in the short story the iguana and its entrapment beneath her room symbolise Miss Jelkes' sexual anxiety and her imprisonment within her own unfulfilled sexuality is given a spatial orientation. Miss Jelkes does not complain about the iguana being tied; only that it is tied under her room. She suggests that if it is not set free, it should at least be taken to some other place. Furthermore, the noises emanating from the iguana suggest that it is in agony, reinforcing her sense of anxiety. In fact, her sensitivity towards sounds is also significant. She complains to the Patrona that the writers' portable radio is played 'too loudly and too long'; that it keeps her awake at night, echoing her complaint about the iguana's scuffling beneath her window (p.231).

The sounds emitting from the radio and iguana both seem to be linked to her sexuality. She is annoyed by the noise of the iguana as if her virginity is threatened by this sound. She tells the two writers that it is an 'outrageous thing to hitch a lizard beneath a woman's door and expect her to sleep with that noise going on all night' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.237: my emphasis). The use of the word 'woman' here engenders the lizard as male, uttering seductive sounds

that threaten Miss Jelkes' sexual purity. Thus, it becomes impossible for her to sleep 'with that lizard's commotion all night' and she moves to the writer's 'end of the verandah' to be put 'within close range of their nightly conversations, the mystery of which had tantalized her for weeks' (p.239). Rushing to the end of the verandah, and using the iguana as an excuse, Miss Jelkes violates their spatial territory. This allows her to discover their homosexuality, confirming 'suspicions which had before been only a formless wonder' once she realises that the younger writer's room 'had two people in it' (p.241).

Her sudden movement is seen by the two writers as an invasion of the spatial freedom suggested by the story's setting in Acapulco; as she doesn't mind moving between 'all these vacant rooms' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.238). The rooms seem identical to Miss Jelkes; the room in which she 'plopped herself down' has 'an identical white iron bed' to the one she left (p.239). However, in this spatial movement to the other side of the younger writer's room, Miss Jelkes is placed 'within close range'. The 'adjoining bedroom' enables Miss Jelkes to hear 'the quality of sounds' coming from the younger writer's room (p.241). Because of this occupation of the 'adjoining' space, she can be seen to violate the two writers' territory. Contrary to the civilised traditions of Miss Jelkes' version of the South, in this 'adjoining' territory Miss Jelkes hears unkind words that are shocking and even 'cruel' to her.

Miss Jelkes' violates their space which corresponds to their sexuality, and so the older writer retaliates; culminating in the violation of her body when the older writer ejaculates on her. His violent riposte embodies a defensive attitude towards his territory and sexual identity. The violent scene of assault also reveals the older writer's masculinity through a bodily spectacle. Thus, he posits a counter-

challenge to the spatial violation of Miss Jelkes. Thrusting at her 'like the bird of blind white fury', he draws up the skirt of Miss Jelkes' robe 'while his other tore at the flimsy goods at her bosom'; his 'predatory fingers dug into her flesh' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.244). This violence is exacted as a result of the older writer seeing Miss Jelkes as an interloper in his territory rather than a sexual object. Meanwhile, the struggle with the older writer is symbolic of Miss Jelkes' attempt to remain identified with the well-bred cultured Southern white woman: an emblem of pure femininity and modesty. However, just as these characteristics are manifested through her struggle, Miss Jelkes adopts a surrendering attitude, described as a 'fierce little comedy of defense', which reflects her interior contradictions. She has an ambivalent attitude towards the attack: she enjoys it even though she is defeated by it.

Miss Jelkes' ambivalence to the writers (she feels both loathing and desire) is related to her emotional movement between the two facets of her contradictory inheritance. This is manifested in the way she views her femininity within the spatial framework of the verandah, as visualised through her movement within the space from the 'long Southern verandah' to the beach to the back of the verandah. The closer she is to the long 'Southern verandah' the more sexually reserved she becomes. Throughout the story, the 'long South verandah' protects Miss Jelkes' feminine Southern values of modesty. There she represses her femininity, unable to reconcile her sexual anxiety. By moving to the two writers' 'end of the verandah', there is a subtle shift in her self-realisation. On a spatial level, she confronts her sexuality by seeing a reflection of her loneliness in the older writer, 'whose singularity was so like her own in many essential aspects' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.243). This minimises her sense of

loneliness and helps her to confront her sexuality. For instance, she is comfortable entering the room of the younger writer when he is 'not properly dressed' (p.242). She witnesses the older writer wearing a towel around his naked body under 'the naked light bulb' in the room, metaphorically reflecting her sexual interest in the older writer (p.234). Standing under the bulb, she confronts her sexuality but this moment also contributes to the writer's sexual assault on her. Uttering 'I do not belong here' after she escapes the attack, she cannot establish any sense of belonging in this masculine territory (p.245). Running into her room in the 'long South verandah', she symbolically runs back to the refinement of the 'Old South'. Despite this retreat, she retains an ambivalent attitude towards her own sexual identity which she discovers in the encounter with the writers. She is pleased with the experience she has with the older writer. Before falling asleep she:

remembered and felt again the spot of dampness, now turning cool but still adhering to the flesh of her belly as a light but persistent kiss. Her fingers approached it timidly. They expected to draw back with revulsion but were not so affected. They touched it curiously and even pityingly and did not draw back for a while (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.245).

She considers the 'spot of dampness' as 'a light'. The image of the light is repeated here to reinforce the theme of illumination in the story, which stands as a metaphorical resolution for Miss Jelkes' sexual anxiety. In other words, the light stands for the sexual confrontation she has on the 'end of the verandah'. It casts a light on her 'interior poise' that is repressed due to the conflict between the two parts of her contradictory inheritance. Her eventual enjoyment reinforces her

potential rebellion against her inherited Southern moral restrictions, glorifying and accepting her sensuality in spite of her spinsterish nature.

Ultimately she rebuilds her relationship with her own physical body which consequently solves her anxiety. As such, the older writer's sexual assault ironically provokes her sexuality. This reconciles her anxiety at the end of the story in spite of her ambivalence towards the writers – a reconciliation which is visualised by the unleashing of the iguana. In this sense the iguana can be seen as an embodiment of Miss Jelkes' sexual anxiety; she identifies with the iguana's loneliness, and so by confronting her sexuality she is freed from the 'strangling rope of loneliness', as is the iguana when it is released (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.245). The iguana is set free by unknown forces, reinforcing its symbolic identification with Miss Jelkes. The unleashing of the iguana is left mysterious, and parallels her ability to confront sexual anxiety. Throughout the story the iguana stands for a phallic symbol but by the end no longer constitutes a sexual threat to Miss Jelkes' anxiety.

In this sense Miss Jelkes represents a departure from Williams' previous depictions of Southern females. She parallels in her Southern characteristics some of Williams' earlier characters, such as Amanda in Menagerie and Blanche in Streetcar. Unlike these Southern women, however, Miss Jelkes succeeds in freeing herself from the faded morality of the 'Old South' which has entrapped her sexuality, and through her Williams dramatises a departure from his earlier self-confined females.³⁵ She departs from her self to experience a conflict

³⁵ Williams is not interested in presenting the antebellum South but rather the South that is derived from the imagery of his childhood. So the concept of 'Old South' is related to Williams' Southern idyll of his early childhood in Mississippi Delta which ended for him when he moved to St. Louis which he called St. Pollution. Williams is identified with the virtuous myth of the South which is 'the source of its particular pathos, it had jumped the rails of history. Its psychological investment was in

with the exterior space by projecting on it her own sexual anxiety. Despite her misgivings, she manages to face her conflict and to reconcile it by the end of the story. This development is visualised by her movement within the space; whereas Williams' Southern characters are usually represented as sensitive individuals 'crippled both emotionally and physically' (Rafailovich, p.192), Miss Jelkes is free to move physically within space, as I have argued above.

Nevertheless, the story is deeply rooted in Williams' view of the South, concentrating the minority issue into a conflict between Old and New South. In other words, setting the story in an exotic resort, Williams incorporates a criticism of the industrialised modern society that he detected in the 'New South'.³⁶ Linked to this, in terms of setting and architecture, the story belongs to genre of the Southern Gothic. The architecture of the hotel on the cliff links to other gothic imagery in the story, such as that of the 'giant bird lunging up and down on its terrestrial quarry' (p.244). There is also the grotesque image of the iguana, described as a 'very low grade of animal life' (p.236), and whose ugliness is juxtaposed with the 'wistful blond prettiness' of Miss Jelkes (p.229). She is annoyed by its 'scuffling around out there in that awful dry dust, trying to reach the bushes with that rope twisted about its neck, making it almost impossible for it to breathe' (p.236).

the past. South became an aesthetic rather than a social fact. This had certain advantages. Taste and style could be retrained as primary virtues; the vertiginous dangers that accompany maturity denied as time is frozen and reality transposed into myth' (Bigsby, p.2000, p.47).

³⁶ Williams' concept of the 'New South' is related to New Orleans as a liberating force of his sexuality and an inspiration for his art in its free and Bohemian spirit and its heterogeneous make up. However, Williams' portrayal of the Southern region was not accurate and not realistic, he replied once that he was not a sociologist but a dramatist, 'what I am writing about is human nature ... I write about the South because I think the war between romanticism and hostility to it is very sharp there' (Holditch and Leavitt, p.33).

This juxtaposition does not merely contrast grotesque images but also reflects Miss Jelkes' twisted interior conflict; there is a correlation between the ugly grotesque image of the iguana and her own interior sexual anxiety. Williams juxtaposes these dualities where 'the grotesque is everywhere ... the ugly exists there beside the beautiful, the deformed next to the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light' (Victor Hugo, 'Preface to Cromwell' (1827), p. 3, in Dorff, 1999, p.82). Williams' use of grotesque dualities is embodied by the primary characters. For example, the younger writer, Mike is described as 'beautiful' and 'cruel', and the duality is also evident in the contrast of 'the naked light bulb' at the 'end of the verandah' with the darkness of the night.

The critic Linda Dorff in 'I Prefer the "Mad" Ones: Tennessee Williams' Grotesque-Lyric Exegetical Poems' (1999) argues that the juxtaposition of 'the grotesque with the beautiful establishes an ironic sensibility that Williams refers to in stage directions as "serio-comic, grotesque-lyric" ... whereas the roots of Williams' grotesque-lyric form are complex and diffuse in his drama' (Dorff, 1999, p.81). This 'grotesque lyric' is displayed in the short story collection belonging to the same era as some of the poems of Williams which Dorff discusses. However, unlike other stories in the collection, gothic imagery is not a priority in 1948 'Iguana'.³⁷ By contrast, in another short story in the same collection, 'Desire and the Black Masseuse', the image of Anthony Burns being devoured by the black

³⁷ When asked in conversation whether he considers himself a Southern writer, Williams states that his 'roots are in the South, at least my creative roots are' (Devlin, 1986). According to his statement, Williams alienates himself from other Southern writers. He even does not admit that he acquires Southern techniques like the Southern Gothic, which he views as a 'sudden efflorescence of writing that began with Faulkner' (p.95).

masseur conveys a grotesque image.³⁸ However, in 'Iguana' Williams is more concerned with presenting his view of the Old/ New South by framing it within Southern locale (the 'long South vernadah'), character and style (grotesque imagery).

For example, he manipulates the use of a Mexican resort near Acapulco to present an exotic, dark and remote gothic environment. However, he does not elaborate on this Mexican locality, but uses it to frame the drama within the contrast between the Old and New South. To provide the setting with further illustration, there is a distinctive sense of Southern life in the resort. The season of cosmopolitan foreigners is over and the residents of the Costa Verde hotel accommodate three guests from the United States. This excludes other ethnic groups; even the Mexicans are omitted, as indicated by the fact that no Spanish words included within the narrative. For example, when Miss Jelkes complains to the Patrona about the younger writer's nudity, no actual Spanish phrases appear in her answer; 'she laughed immoderately, translating phrases of Miss Jelkes' complaint into idiomatic Spanish, shouted to the waiters and the cook' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.234).

In this way, the story demonstrates the absence or marginalisation of other groups. When non-American characters are referred to they are usually given an inferior or supporting role. This is evident in the two writers' racist remarks concerning the Mexicans. The natives in Mexico are rather seen as savages that tie iguanas to poles near the doorway of their huts: behaviour which is described as 'a typically Mexican way of glossing over an unappetizing fact' (Tennessee Williams

³⁸ Williams' story 'Desire and the Black Masseur' (1948) narrates the story of Anthony Burns who has an instinct for being included in things that swallowed him up until his body is devoured by the black masseur.

Collected Stories, p.234). The only time the Mexicans are mentioned within the narrative they are referred to as 'these Mexicans' who cannot tolerate the interruption of sleep (p.237: my emphasis). The use of the article 'these' undermines the humanity of the Mexicans, portraying them as caring only about sleep and the eating of lizards. As such, the non-American characters are left undefined and unnamed with low grade professions such as cook and waiter, as well as the unnamed Patrona and her son.

With non-American characters kept mute in the story, there is little development in the representation of other races. This maintains the focus of the story on sexual anxiety. It also seems to stem from Williams' decision not to deal with racial themes in the story, or in part, at least to downgrade them to an impertinent issue. This is perhaps unusual given the Southern context, but, as I have argued, he presents Southern themes within the space of the 'long South verandah', a visual representation of Williams' 'Old South'.

Williams' perspective of the 'Old South' was not a radical one; it had long been considered 'the pastoral Golden Age'. Lewis P. Simpson in 'The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern literature' (1975) expands on this pastoral perspective to see the South as two fundamental versions of the American pastoral: 'a New England Garden of the covenant' and a 'Southern Garden of the chattel', in which the plantation represents 'a pastoral social order which is beneficial to both master and slave' (Simpson p.2 as quoted in Rafailovich, p.193). The view of the South as the lost garden makes it difficult for twentieth-century Southern writers to 'contend with the issue of slavery' (Rafailovich, p.193). On the other hand, Bigsby in Modern American Drama, 1945-2000 argues that 'the Southern racist insists that the world conform to his will,

accommodate itself to a model whose authority lies in its history' (Bigsby, 2000, p.47). In this way, if Williams had chosen to deal explicitly with racial themes it might have served to undermine the pastoral myth of the South.

Williams adopts this view of the 'Old South' as a lost garden threatened by the rising order of the 'New South'. Like other Southern writers (such as William Faulkner, Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor) Williams uses the actual past for 'satiric purposes and the mythical, pastoral world as a reality to be compared and opposed to the present' (Rafailovich, p.193). The 'garden as a haven and pastoral landscape' is associated with Williams' 'Old South' (N. S. Pradham, 'Modern American Drama: A Study in Myth and Tradition' (1980), p.19, in Rafailovich: pp.193-94). In the story, the garden becomes a 'hilltop on which Costa Verde is planted' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.232: my emphasis). Using the word 'planted' connotes the image of the hill as a pastoral plantation. On this Southern plantation, there is a conflict between the 'Old South' associated with Miss Jelkes' white gentility and conservative attitude, and the brashness of the two writers of the 'New South'. Meanwhile, Miss Jelkes retains a certain innocence that is contrasted to the writers' sexual experiences and their apparent cruelty. The Mexican setting of the story is used by Williams to highlight the contrast between Old and New as a Southern theme that might be jeopardised if he tackled racial themes more explicitly.

Williams was fairly consistent in maintaining this myth of the 'Old South'. However, it remains representative not of the historical South but rather Williams' own view of the Southern States. This version of the South is recognised by Rafailovich as Williams' 'adaptation of the myth of the "Old South" and his choice of the conflicting views regarding the New South' (Rafailovich, p.191). For

Rafailovich, Williams is not concerned with exploring the antebellum society, the Civil War or Reconstruction.³⁹ Rather he examines the myth of the 'Old South' through images that are drawn from his own Southern childhood. Holditch and Leavitt in Tennessee Williams and the South (2002) view Williams' perception of the 'Old South' as related to his concept of home where he hanged his childhood in Clarksdale (the town in which he lived from 1915-1918). The inspiration of the Southern locale offers him a solace for the rest of his life despite his being physically withdrawn from it. Therefore, Williams never stayed put in one place for very long and described himself as being always in flight in the hopes of escaping the past and finding something better. Cokie Robert, the TV commentator and author observed in 1997 'we Southerners have a sense of place and a sense of place gives you a sense of self' (Holditch and Leavitt, p.77). It was Mississippi that Williams held close to his heart as after fifty years he was tightly bound by those ties to the South of his origin.

W. Kenneth Holditch in 'South toward Freedom: Tennessee Williams' (1992) argues that 'one of the most pervasive qualities distinguishing the work of Southern novelists, dramatists, and poets is the sense of place, an identification with one specific spot in the world, which happens to be located in the South', from which they draw strength and even 'their identity' (Kennedy, p.62). However, this 'specific spot in the world' is identified with two places: Williams' place of birth and New Orleans. Holditch views the location with which Williams 'came to be

³⁹ The antebellum period is often looked back on with sentimental nostalgia, as an idealised agrarian and chivalric society, with the moral issues of slavery generally glossed over. This is due in part to widespread destruction caused in the war by both armies and a lingering resentment of the occupation of the region by Union forces after the Confederacy was defeated. As a result, the architecture and fashion of the period were better documented in this region of the United States than in other parts of the country and are often heavily romanticised.

most completely identified' among these two is New Orleans: 'where his creative alter ego in a sense came to life' (p.63).

In the 1948 story of 'Iguana' Williams plays down the representation of the 'New South'. This demonstrates his conflicting attitude towards the 'New South', but, like Miss Jelkes who experiences her sexuality at 'the end of the verandah', Williams acknowledges the way in which he experienced his sexuality in New Orleans.⁴⁰ There, in his life away from St. Louis and from the tensions of his family, he found:

a new and liberating environment where he could be himself and begin for the first time seriously to explore his sexual nature, served to convert the proper young man, wearing a coat and tie and polished shoes, into the Bohemian author who would ultimately blossom into a great dramatist (Holditch and Leavitt, p.67).⁴¹

This exploration he experienced in New Orleans makes it difficult to read the story as independent from the autobiographical mode.

In fact, the story sets up a spatial and physical visualisation of these two fluctuating places: the 'Old South' and the 'New South'. The first is visualised as the 'Southern verandah' that dominates the story's setting, while 'the two

⁴⁰ However, David Kaplan in 'Tennessee Williams in Provincetown' (2007) thinks that 'for Williams to write about his own sexuality, in any form, inevitably meant writing about Provincetown. He did so at four times in his life' where he spent the four summers of 1940,'41,'44, and '47. Williams wrote the plays which made him famous there. It was not until 1975 that Williams' homosexuality became confrontational when his 'Memoirs were put together' (Kaplan, p. 87).

⁴¹ In *Tennessee Williams and the South* (2002), Kenneth Holditch and Richard Freeman Leavitt argue that Williams' departure from St. Louis to New Orleans in 26 December 1938 dramatised a change in his life. Living in the French Quarter provided him not only 'with consolation but also with the freedom to be himself. His Bohemian existence there in those early years was a functional blend of persistent, almost obsessive labour and pleasure in a new lifestyle to which he had adapted completely' (Holditch and Leavitt, p.73).

writers' end of the verandah' represents the 'New South'. However, Williams' view of the conflict between the two versions of the South suggests that the story is not entirely divorced from his perspective of America in 1940. He privileges the myth of the 'Old South' which views 'the antebellum society as a place of order, refinement, and genteel living although he is critical of its Puritanism and decadence' (Rafailovich, pp.192-93). This perspective is represented in the story by Miss Jelkes' character, whose contradictory inheritance stands in contrast to the modern South of the two writers. Williams' perspective of the two writers' territory; at 'the end of the verandah', as a spatial metaphor of his view of the modern South, is masculine associated with the sexuality, violence and punishment where Miss Jelkes' 'Old South' genteel inheritance is ultimately punished.

This relates Williams' perspective of the South presented in the story to his view of modern American society within 'the more general theme of the outsider in modern society' (Rafailovich, p.192). The minority status of Miss Jelkes is given credence by her situation on 'the end of the verandah' which deems her an outsider in the story. In other words, she is in retreat from the New Southern values of the two writers. This is visualised spatially through the characters' movements, as previously discussed, but it is also conveyed through the narrative and especially the theological dimension of the play. For instance, although the older writer is not interested in God or religion, Miss Jelkes emphasises to him the 'principle of atonement'. She views it as awful and 'preposterous that practically all our religions should be based on the principle of atonement when there is really and truly no such thing as guilt' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.237). She relates the same principle to the suffering of the iguana being 'hitched to a post'.

However, at no point does she define or present an alternative to the 'principle of atonement' (p.237).

In fact, the 'principle of atonement' is presented as an implicit theme which dominates the short story collection. For instance in 'Desire and the Black Masseuse', the same principle is defined as a 'surrender of self to violent treatment by others with the idea of therapy cleansing one's self of his guilt' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.206). Moreover, 1948 'Iguana' suggests this principle as the only way for the characters to achieve purification. During the older writer's sexual assault on Miss Jelkes, the punishment of her body acts out the 'principle of atonement'. The phallic power of the older writer unleashes violence upon her body; by violating Miss Jelkes' body, the older writer exerts power over his territory. Miss Jelkes is a passive recipient of this sexual violence: 'not she herself resisted but some demon of virginity that occupied her flesh fought off the assailant more furiously than he attacked her' (p.244). This reinforces a notion of the acceptance of punishment as a means of purification for her intrusion into the two writers' territory, echoed by the 'great violence' of the storm that suddenly appears outside the screen door. The storm is described as if it is 'plunging toward them, not continually but in sudden thrusts and withdrawals, like a giant bird lunging up and down' (p.244). There is a parallel between the effects of the violent storm on the hotel and the metaphorical storm of the sexual assault which Miss Jelkes experiences on the boundary of the two writers' territory.

In this sense, there are two storms taking place in the story: the actual storm and the sexual assault on 'the end of the verandah'. Through this parallel, the terrorising power of the older writer comes to resemble the supreme irrepressible power of the giant bird, giving him the authority to inflict punishment. However,

the scene suggests a reversal of power generated by Miss Jelkes' survival of the assault. Instead of revealing the power of punishment, Miss Jelkes' survival undermines the older writer's power by her ability to endure the violation. In other words, the scene portrays how strong Miss Jelkes is to endure this brutal sexual assault. The survival of Miss Jelkes averts the power of the older writer who is defeated by the '**demon** of virginity that occupied her flesh [and] fought off the assailant more furiously than he attacked her. And her **demon** won, for all at once the man let go of her gown and his fingers released her bruised bosom' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.244: my emphasis). The term 'demon' relates her survival to an outside force that derives from the moral strength of her Southern virtue.

Subsequent to the older writer ejaculating on Miss Jelkes, she runs back 'down the verandah to the room she had occupied before' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.245). The act of ejaculating connotes a contradictory significance. The purification suggested by the act is established through the image of the light; she feels the 'spot of dampness' left after the assault turn into 'a light' on her flesh (p.245). The story closes with an image of this light that again highlights her sexual anxiety. This purification is visualised spatially by her movement back down to her room. She does not fear the sound of the iguana; rather she listens for 'its painful sound' and she moves to look 'over the edge of the verandah' after its escape (p.245). By looking over the edge, Miss Jelkes confronts her sexual anxiety and, for the first time in the story, she identifies with the iguana. Like the rope loosening on the iguana, she feels that 'in some equally mysterious way the strangling rope of her loneliness had also been severed by what had happened' (p.245). Ironically, her experience at the writers' end of the verandah

helps her achieve this confrontation that reconciles her sexual anxiety as the light overcomes the darkness, lapping 'over the outward gaze of her mind'. The story in this sense suggests a spatial reversal that is related to the question of minority.

In other words, the more spatially closer the characters are to this 'end of the verandah' the more aware they are with regards to their very own sexuality. Miss Jelkes' experience at the opposite 'end of the verandah' reconciles her anxiety. She is portrayed throughout the story as being stuck between her conflicting inheritances. By moving spatially closer to the margin – the end of the verandah – she increasingly and I hasten to add explicitly confronts her sexuality. The question of minority operates within this spatial reversal, Miss Jelkes, for instance, confronts the view of the ugly iguana by 'looking over the edge of the verandah'. Her spatial proximity to 'the edge margin of the verandah' rebalances her conflict. The same balance is achieved by the two writers who reside at the 'end of the verandah'. Their spatial marginality centralises them as characters that confront their homosexuality. They are the centre of the storyline and the main action takes place in their spatial territory. By moving to this spatial margin, the characters are more able to confront their sexual anxiety than on the long central 'South verandah'.

CHAPTER II, PART III

THE ONE-ACT VERSION OF THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA (1959)

It is clear that the minority issue in the 1948 'The Night of the Iguana' short story is linked to Williams' autobiography, especially as it remains focused on sexual identity and the conflict between Old and New South. However, as I will go on to discuss, the dramatic versions of Iguana allowed him more distance. Therefore, reading the 1959 one-act play is crucial to conceptualise the development of minority issues over the course of the final three-act version of Iguana from 1961. The one-act play belongs to the period where Williams tries 'to enlarge his material and encompass more universal character types and themes' (Rafailovich, p.195).

The absence of Williams' cultural identification with the South in the one-act play widens the context within which the concept of minority is conveyed, perhaps because, as the following quotation suggests, Williams matured in the years between the writing of the short story and the one-act version:

Unfortunately in 1940 I was younger and stronger and – curiously! – **more confident** writer than I am in the fall of 1953. Now I am a mature and more knowledgeable craftsman of theatre, my experience inside and outside the profession is vastly wider (Tennessee Williams in a letter to Audrey Wood (February 1946), in Roudané, p.158: my emphasis).

Even though he considered himself more confident in the 1940s, Williams thought that he lacked the dramatic maturity that he was to gain in the following decade. As the last section argued, the short story version of Iguana from 1948 does engage

with minority issues, but does not represent a substantial contribution to the development of the concept of minority into an experience of marginality – a contribution more evident in the two dramatic versions of Iguana.

As with several of Williams' other one-act plays, the dating of the early dramatic version of Iguana is uncertain.⁴² According to some sources, the play was written for the 1959 Spoleto Festival. Contextualised within Williams' mature phase, the one-act play of Iguana, unlike the short story version, constitutes a departure from the simple portrayal of minority issues found in his earlier work.

Set in 1940, the one-act version provides a perspective on Williams' view of a 1940s American society that has begun to be affected by external cultural forces. In this sense, the one-act Iguana moves from the autobiographical mode of the short story to engage with a wider cultural context. Williams develops the minority question from the experience of the characters' sexual anxiety into a larger arena of marginality experience. In the one-act play he develops a richer texture with a more sophisticated context than in the story version. There is a more mature development of minority issues in terms of the interrelation between the representation of minorities and the spatial set-up of the play, due in part to the dramatic genre. In this sense, the early one-act play version conveys the transitional development of the minority concept that was later to be developed fully in the three-act version of Iguana in 1961.

Partly because the one-act play has a more chaotic setting, the concept of minority becomes more complicated than in the story version. The play's setting is more cosmopolitan and is linked closely with the play's sociological,

⁴² The one-act play of Iguana which is a previously unpublished work is available in the archives of The Tennessee Williams Annual Review, 4 (2001). Little scholarly criticism has been completed on this version of the play.

psychological, religious and philosophical themes. There is also a departure from the simple representation of the characters' sexual anxiety, onto a wider scale of life anxiety. This anxiety emanates from a larger group of characters that paralyses them within a chaotic society dominated by an unseen and absent power. As such, the play sees a greater number of characters experiencing more intense psychological conflicts than in the short story version.

Stagewise, the play is not as vivid as work such as The Glass Menagerie in which Williams developed his notion of 'plastic theatre' through the use of light, music and screen in relation to the identifiable minority, as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. However, in spite of its comparatively poor use of these expressionistic techniques to parallel the interior psychological status of the characters, the play presents new patterns of theatrical space. Here the theatrical space functions as a significant factor in structuring minority issues. In the use of the spatial areas of the hotel including the bedrooms, the verandah and the hammock, and also the visual image of the iguana, space is closely linked to the experience of minority in its development into an experience of marginality, as Chapter Three will show. Williams introduces the setting by using detailed spatial indicators – such as 'bedrooms (narrow cubicles)' – which demonstrate the importance of setting for the play. In this way he develops the story from a simple autobiographical version of his own experience in Mexico into a dramatic experience where space plays a significant role.

In a similar manner to the short story, the one-act play opens onto a 'wooden verandah' on the beach of Coletta outside Acapulco, Mexico. With the absence of the 'cliff', the Costa Verde hotel is still located 'above the still water (Morning) beach called Coletta' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.

vii). Described as 'narrow cubicles', the spatial freedom suggested by the hotel bedrooms is questionable. Using the phrase 'bedroom, cubicle' suggests the characters' isolation, yet paradoxically they 'open off the verandah' to suggest spatial freedom instead of entrapment (p.vii). Although the cubicles are not numbered as they are in the short story, having the word 'hammocks' in plural suggests that more than one hammock is suspended 'at intervals between the verandah railing and the wall', and a 'short flight of steps off stage left end of verandah which is flanked by jungle foliage', with an explicit exit for the 'off stage' area suggested (p.vii).

Most importantly, the introductory paragraph sets out four main spatial dimensions of the wooden verandah: (1) 'the verandah railing'; (2) 'the left end of verandah which is flanked by jungle foliage'; (3) the 'annex' which is 'right up the hill' behind the verandah; and (4) the area 'below the verandah, off left' (p. vii). In spite of the spatial dimensions of the verandah, the play remains focused on the central part of the verandah where most of the characters' movements take place.

The play opens with the defrocked priest Shannon staggering up to the hotel to find rooms for the eleven ladies that are touring with him. He is 35 years old and in the process of a nervous breakdown. Upon his arrival he immediately falls into the hammock, Shannon feels that he has 'just been living for this verandah'. He has been attractive to the 'stout, swarthy' proprietor of the hotel, Mrs. Faulk, 'since he first started bringing parties of tourists to her hotel' (p.viii). But Shannon is harassed on the verandah by Judith Fellowes, a member of his tour party who accuses him of abandoning the official tour schedule and neglecting his duties as a tour guide. She threatens Shannon that she will inform the tour

company, Drake Tours, about his behaviour. As the play continues, it is clear that Miss Fellowes' rage at Shannon stems from her resentment of his relationship with her young female charge, Josephine Totter. Miss Fellowes goes as far as accusing Shannon of 'statuary rape' – a charge which he will face if he gets back to Texas.

At the hotel Shannon meets a 'water-colour and gouache' artist, Miss Jelkes, and her grandfather, 'a nonogenerian poet' and a world-traveller (p.xi). Mr. Jelkes is trying to finish his long-awaited poem. Between naps in his rocking-chair and semi-coherent mumbling, Mr. Jelkes recites some of his early poetic verse. It is not until the end of the play that his long-awaited poem is given full expression. Also on stage are a German tour party described as drowning with 'merciless laughter' (p.xiii).

As the play unfolds, we can trace a subtle attraction between Miss Jelkes and Shannon, something which irritates Mrs. Faulk. Over the course of the night, the plot becomes deeper and more complex than one expects. Questions of life, death, humanity, poverty, art, sex, love, hunger and God arise through the talks between Shannon and Miss Jelkes. An iguana is caught and tied under the verandah by Mexican boys. Tied by a rope around its neck, the iguana reminds Miss Jelkes of her grandfather: 'at the end of life's rope: a poet: blind: deaf: living to write a last poem, he'll never write' (p.xxxi). Shannon's freeing of the iguana at the end of the play is an act of grace and a symbolic visualisation of the liberation which comes when Mr. Jelkes finishes his last poem. The play ends with Miss Jelkes alone on the hill after the death of her grandfather, while Shannon remains with Mrs. Faulk.

The one-act play version develops and modifies many characters and dramatic lines of the short story. In terms of the characters, for example, Miss Jelkes is a painter, which develops the description in the story where she is described as an artist 'combining her painting with travel' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.230). Meanwhile, her 'neurasthenia' in the short story is now projected onto Shannon's feeling that he is 'cracking up' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.viii).

In the short story Miss Jelkes is described as occupying 'a kind of triumphant plateau as an artist or as a person or even perhaps as both' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.230). This description suggests that she has various 'unsettled components' that are given new expression in the play version. When introducing her in the story, Williams predicts that there might be a period of five or ten years in her 'life where she would serenely climb over the lightning-shot clouds of her immaturity and the waiting murk of decline' (p.230: my emphasis). While Miss Jelkes in the one-act play retains some characteristics from the short story, some of her 'unsettled components' are projected onto Mr. Jelkes and Shannon in the one-act version (p.230). The 'immaturity' of Miss Jelkes in the short story, for example, manifests itself in Mr. Jelkes' weakened 'power of concentration' in his efforts to finish his new poem (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.xii). The 'triumphant plateau' that Miss Jelkes might arrive at one day is linked to her grandfather's artistic personality: he is described as having 'started a new poem' and still having 'inspiration'. On the other hand, the 'murk of decline' in the story finds expression in Shannon's cracking up in the one-act play and his slow realisation that the 'spook' which haunts him can be vanquished only

through 'sympathetic companionship' (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.230).

The one-act play shares its setting with the story version, but develops the situation further. The short story is set 'in between the seasons' at Acapulco, in:

the winter season when the resort was more popular with the cosmopolitan type of foreign tourists had been over for a couple of months and the summer season when ordinary Mexicans and American vacationists thronged there had not yet started (Tennessee Williams Collected Stories, p.229).

However, the one-act play is set in the summer season with Mexican and American holiday makers and German tourists. This adds a cosmopolitan flavour that is absent in the story.

Although the one-act play develops certain hints made in the short story, its limited length does not allow for a thorough exploration of the links between cosmopolitanism and the minority question. Just as the story focuses on Miss Jelkes' anxiety, so the play explores the anxiety which positions Shannon as a minority character. The play develops the range of the story though, in exploring Shannon's anxiety through a series of dualities. The play operates around a series of opposites – despair-hope, romanticism-realism, and heterosexuality-homosexuality – which reflect Shannon's anxiety about living a chaotic human existence. The result of this narrow focus on Shannon is that other figures in the play do not function as dramatic characters; rather they embrace and represent these dualities. As a playwright (rather than a short-story writer), Williams gathers these characters primarily to weave the dualities that formulate Shannon's anxiety. For

example, Mr. Jelkes as a poet represents romantic qualities that are opposed by the coarseness of the earthy Germans, and Miss Jelkes' hope is contrasted with Shannon's constant despair. The suggested homosexuality of Miss Fellowes (implied by the bitterness of her accusations against Shannon) is contrasted with Mrs. Faulk's heterosexuality. By this argument, Shannon is the only character in the play whose characterization is dramatically complete. Applying this perspective, my main concern will be to discuss Shannon's anxiety as the primary focus for minority issues in the play.

Shannon's anxiety stems from his experience as a wanderer for whom the world is meaningless and purposeless. This is due to his inability to reconcile his desire with a comprehension of the meaning of life, reinforced by his loss of faith in God, which leads to his expulsion from the church. His dilemma comes about through the tension between his mind that asks questions and his experience of life which refuses to give answers. He lives in a state of loss that marginalises him and intensifies his anxiety. For example, Shannon's violation of Drake Tours' 'itinerary' exemplifies this anxiety. In his search for new meaning in life he is led to 'places not listed in the brochure' and 'what lies under the public surface of cities, among the resorts not listed, off the ground boulevards and away from the smart night-clubs' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, pp.xxi-xxii). He is not satisfied with knowing what is permitted; rather, he searches for alternative experiences that will expose him 'to the rare, the very exceptional chance of being touched and moved by the depths and the dregs' (p.xxiii). Because these alternative experiences are condemned by others, his anxiety becomes an interior conflict. Retreating to the verandah, Shannon seeks a refuge from this conflict. Yet,

ironically, he finds himself increasingly entrapped until he is offered help from Miss Jelkes.

The interrelation between body and space in the one-act play is not as integrated as in the story version, but place is still crucial for understanding the dramatisation of Shannon's anxiety within the theatrical space. Shannon's anxiety is visualised by his static position on the verandah. He enjoys escaping to the verandah as it represents a refuge for his unresolved anxiety. On the verandah, he is identified with certain physical objects that hypnotise him, including the hammock which Shannon identifies as his haven. Everyone on the verandah understands his attraction to the hammock, and they even go as far as to push him towards it by asking him to stay there drinking rum-coco. In doing so, they metaphorically reinforce and increase his anxiety. For example, indicating the hammock, Mrs. Faulk asks Shannon to 'lie down' whenever the action on the verandah is unstable, and Miss Fellowes doubts that Shannon can get up from the hammock (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.viii). His identification with the hammock is exemplified by Shannon's struggle up to 'a sitting position' in the hammock, which parallels his inability to allay his anxiety (p.ix). This position is made explicit by the comments of Latta who takes charge of the tour instead of Shannon. Latta shares with the other characters the belief that Shannon will 'never get off this verandah again except to pick up a coconut for a rum-coco' (p.xxiii). As a result, Shannon feels further isolation, reinforced through his spatial identification with the hammock.

It is not only his relationships with other characters that reinforce Shannon's anxiety, but internal limitations such as his inability to define abstract concepts such as God. Shannon's anxiety is connected with his loss of faith in God,

and he feels that life is chaotic and without purpose. In the world of one-act Iguana, the only visible power is the political power of the Germans who confront the suffering of the characters with their merciless laughter. The Germans are referred to only in national terms as ‘the German couple’, ‘the Germans’, ‘German man’, ‘German voice’, and ‘the German party’, and their power is implicit rather than explicit. The ‘German voice’ that is heard only seems remotely connected to the action, merely issuing orders or seeking compliance from its subordinates, but the ‘voice’ is nevertheless a powerful presence on stage (p.xxxiii). This highlights the play version as a dramatisation of the social and political precipice that was the United States at the beginning of the 1940s, just before its involvement in World War II, when the nation was finding it hard to comprehend powerful forces in the world, here symbolised by the Nazi’s totalitarian regime. Even though this historical precipice is not explicitly addressed in the play (mainly due to its short length), it still functions as a factor that reinforces Shannon’s anxiety.

With only reason at his disposal, Shannon finds he is unable to define the concept of God. Shannon’s loss of faith in God implies a crumbling of the foundation of truth and morality. As a result, what is true and moral is questionable in the play. For example, the heterosexual relationship between Shannon and Josephine Totter is condemned by the homosexual Mrs Fellowes. Shannon cannot cross the Texas border without Mrs Fellowes accusing him of ‘statutory rape’, and she swears that she will have him arrested for raping her friend (p.ix). The status of the relationship between the older and the younger woman mirrors the relationship between the two writers in the short story, suggesting that Miss Fellowes may well be a lesbian. Herein lies one of the play’s dualities which reinforce Shannon’s

anxiety. The homosexuality of Miss Fellowes makes Shannon question the morality of his heterosexual desire.

This questionable morality is related to Williams' projection of homosexuality onto Miss Fellowes. It may well be that Williams chose to project homosexuality onto a female character to avoid any autobiographical resonances in the play, but the play nevertheless seems to favour or privilege homosexuality rather than the heterosexuality of Shannon. Miss Fellowes is an authoritative character who returns throughout the play to remind Shannon of his punishment for his heterosexual relations with Josephine. His punishment takes the form of spatial entrapment in the hammock on the verandah and, by extension, his inability to cross back over the Texas border. Nevertheless, Williams does avoid presenting homosexuality as explicitly as it is portrayed in the short story. Miss Fellowes' homosexuality is narrated; we do not see evidence of it on the stage. For example, her girlfriend, Josephine, does not appear on stage, which does not dramatise the female body as a spectacle for homosexuality.

As the play progresses, Shannon discovers his inability to resolve his anxiety. In Costa Verde he is stuck within time, unable to understand the meaning of God. Eventually, though, through Miss Jelkes, Shannon shifts into self-questioning mode about the relationship between himself and his environment; which helps Shannon to renew his self-esteem. Meeting Miss Jelkes, Shannon is given a chance to recapture the meaning of existence, resolved by Miss Jelkes' helping Shannon to comprehend God again. During her conversation with Shannon, she realises that the only solution for Shannon's anxiety is to aid his return to God. That is why she is portrayed as a helper for Shannon who can lead him to the light of faith. This is visualised on the stage through the image of Miss Jelkes' alcohol

burner. The image of the tea pot and the burner depicts Miss Jelkes as a person who wants to comfort Shannon by bringing light into his life: the teapot with the burner represents this warmth and comfort.

Due to his lack of faith, Shannon lives in darkness. He needs the help of Miss Jelkes to achieve the light of faith that can resolve his anxiety. To maintain this image of darkness, Shannon is identified with a ghost: described as a 'spook' in the play. The image of the spook 'creeping and crawling around the rain forest' represents this darkness inside Shannon that prevents him from seeing outside himself: his own 'coconut shell'. Gradually, Miss Jelkes manages to communicate with Shannon to free him from his 'coconut shell' in order to confront his darkness. Before speaking with Miss Jelkes, Shannon has succumbed to his anxiety by surrendering to darkness; he is happy enough to drink the rum-coco to hypnotise himself as a way to escape his anxiety.

Miss Jelkes helps Shannon to gain a renewed hope in God by stimulating him to free one of God's creatures: the iguana. Setting the iguana free represents a moment of grace and the transcending of Shannon's anxiety. She identifies the iguana with Mr. Jelkes 'at the end of life's rope: a poet: blind: deaf: living to write a last poem' (p.xxxi). By setting the iguana free, Shannon looks outside himself into the suffering of God's other creatures, which brings him closer to the light of faith that helps to reconcile his anxiety. Miss Jelkes helps Shannon perform an act of mercy and thereby see beyond his anxiety. By shining his flashlight 'upon the source of the scuffling sound beneath the verandah', Shannon is linked closely to the iguana 'trying to go on past the end of its goddam rope' (p.xxix). This identification makes him realise his oppressive anxiety from which he also needs to be set free.

Descending from the hilltop to swim, the play ends with Shannon's final connection between himself and the iguana: 'another one of God's creatures is going down to the beach to swim in the **liquid moonlight**' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.xxxv: my emphasis). Shannon realises that light emanates from a different source than the rum-coco that symbolises his hypnotic loneliness. It also helps him to achieve his own synthesis with Mrs. Faulk as a realistic sensual woman who can support him and make 'the place more attractive' by giving him the freedom to see beyond what is allowed to be seen (p.xxv). In the end, he realises that his exile in Mexico seems to be a better option than going back to Texas. In exile he is able to reconcile his anxiety and to comprehend the world again, but only with the support of Mrs. Faulk who takes him down to 'swim away from the German party' (p.xxv). Hence, he escapes into the light of faith away from the incomprehensible power of the Germans that had compounded his anxiety earlier in the play.

On the other hand, Miss Jelkes' support of Shannon is related to the question of the father figure in the play, and links back to the theme of atonement in the short story. The play locates the source of authority as an absent religious force; the absence of the storm-scene is linked to the metaphor of the father figure in the play. This reinforces the absence of the God-like figure that represents the centre of authority and a figure of punishment at the same time, as a version of an Old Testament God. Thus, the theme of sexual anxiety from the short story is expanded into a more intense and broader life anxiety in the one-act play. The idea of the father figure is developed here into a religious interpretation of the absence of authority. Although this interpretation is hinted at in the one-act play, the limited length makes it difficult to trace this interpretation to the extent that it is

represented in the three-act version of 1961 Iguana, as I will explore in the next part of this chapter.

Nevertheless, Miss Jelkes represents a sign of the existence of the father-figure. She has a dual role of messenger and helper. She is sent by the absent God, a patriarchal supreme power, to confirm His unseen presence. It is clear that Miss Jelkes is the healer that Shannon awaits. This is pointed out in Shannon's statement: 'Now I know why I came here!' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.xix). Her supportive personality and bodily language reinforce the image of the healer. In this way, Miss Jelkes is a pragmatic person who is capable of bringing about synthesis for Shannon. She adopts certain tactics to fulfil her mission as a healer. For example, her poppy-seed tea helps Shannon to 'get through nights that are hard' for him (p.xxv). Through practical methods she communicates with Shannon and helps him to resolve his anxiety.

However, the one-act play does not present a mature characterization of the healer. Miss Jelkes adopts a preaching tone and is very direct in the way she seeks to help Shannon. She comments very straightforwardly: 'how to help you, Mr Shannon. - Do you think you could teach me? Taking a tight hold of her hand, and raising his other hand to cover the tears in his eyes' (p.xix). Realising that Miss Jelkes is interested in helping him; Shannon wonders why he came there. This foreshadows Miss Jelkes' function in resolving Shannon's concerns and presents a solution for his anxiety. On more than one occasion she is seen to cry to emotionally manipulate Shannon: for example, when she asks Shannon to free the iguana and when Mr. Jelkes recites his poem. Such actions tend to weaken Miss Jelkes' authority as a healer. Hence, Miss Jelkes is not represented as a dramatic character; her role is made clear as a person who does not take an active part in

scenes, but one who observes. Her gestures further develop her passivity. Emphasis is always on Miss Jelkes being 'behind' other characters, suggesting that she acts as a messenger, always watching the scene unfold and only taking action at the last possible moment.

In my argument, the use of light in the play signifies a symbolic reference to the question of the God-like father figure. Nancy Tischler in 'Romantic Textures in Tennessee Williams' Plays and Short Stories' (1997) offers an insightful examination of the theological connotation of light in Williams' work. She observes 'a sweep of sky and sea, a rainforest; sounds of thunderstorms, lightning, and wind', all of which she views as 'signals of God's sovereign power, dwarfing the human activities' (Roudané, p.159). Based on this argument, the absence of the storm-scene in the play visualises the absence of these God-like deific signs of thunder and lightening. Shannon is longing for the light as a sign of God's unseen power. He needs this sign to prove that God is there to reconcile his anxiety, and only through the help of the healer is it possible for Shannon to locate this light. Miss Jelkes has herself reached the light that signifies the existence of God, and has done so by looking at things outside herself: her artistic sensibility forces her 'to look at things: skies-oceans-light ... human faces' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.xxvii). This helped her see the grey light at the end of the tunnel that 'became clearer and clearer' as she went on toward it until it turns white (p.xxvii). It is the light of faith that signifies God's sovereign power. Yet, unlike Williams' earlier plays, such as The Glass Menagerie, the weak use of plastic theatre techniques in the one-act play minimises the functional significance of the light. Its significance is left to be decoded by the characterization and the dialogue rather than being apparent in the theatrical stage techniques.

Furthermore, reading the image of the poet in the play is a means of developing the significance of the light in relation to the issue of God. It is significant that with his extreme age and confinement to his wheelchair Mr. Jelkes represents another minority character in the play. However, Mr. Jelkes is also a reminder of Tom Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie and Sebastian in Suddenly Last Summer as a representative of the archetype of the artist in Williams' dramatic work. Ascending the hilltop, Mr. Jelkes longs to be close to divinity to allow him to comprehend the chaotic world. By going up the hilltop to the hotel, he enjoys the 'declamation of his last poem' (p.xxxiv). He knows that he will finish the poem; he tells Hannah he is 'pretty sure' he is going to 'finish it here' (p.xv). Tischler's views 'the primacy of the artist, not God' is the 'artistic creed' of Williams (Roudané, p.147). The poet can be seen representing this 'artistic creed' that replaces the absent God-figure in the play. Unable to bear silence and solitude, Mr. Jelkes is driven to communicate 'the presence of something beyond the province of matter' (Roudané, p.159).

Tischler argues that Williams perceives that 'writers are the messengers of transcendence, informing humanity that humdrum life behind the plough is not the full story. Poets help people to look towards heaven' (Roudané, p.159). According to my reading, in the play Mr. Jelkes has the gift of art, and he communicates it to the other characters. This is articulated through his constant recitation of the poetic verse: 'Oh, Courage, could you not as well select a second place to dwell' (p.xxiii). His poem is based on hope and the courage to fight despair.

Mr. Jelkes tries to communicate this vision to the characters on the stage through his hesitant poetic verses. The world of 1959 Iguana seems too

chaotic to apprehend this 'element in human-life that put up the strongest resistance to that which is false and impure' (Roudané, p.149). In other words, the artistic vision of Mr. Jelkes cannot be communicated directly. It is a world controlled by the dominant surveillance of the Germans who 'drown out' Mr. Jelkes' poetic verse 'with their laughter' (A one-act version of The Night of the Iguana, p.xiii). Mr. Jelkes' poem is an attempt to rebalance the chaotic setting of the play, a chaos which is caused by the absence of God. This poetic attempt at rebalance is always silenced and laughed at by the German group on stage, paralleling the rising dominance of the Nazis in 1940. Even when he finishes his poem towards the end of the play, the German group still asks for 'quiet' (p.xxxiii).

There is a parallel between Mr. Jelkes' throat and the tied iguana: Mr. Jelkes releases his poem only after the iguana is unleashed. This also follows the communication that has grown between Miss Jelkes and Shannon. When from his narrow cubicle Mr. Jelkes utters his final poetic verse that rebalances the play, the release of the poem initiates a marked change in Shannon, demonstrating to him that the light of faith does exist. Mr. Jelkes has reached this light, which helps him utter his artistic creed and stimulates a renewed faith in Shannon.

By ending with the recitation of the poem, the play suggests that Mr. Jelkes has reached the light. He even asks Miss Jelkes to switch off the light as 'the moonlight is almost brighter'; he prefers to 'pray in the dark', but has an interior light that leads him to the faith represented by his final verse (p.xxxiii). Immediately following the recitation of Mr. Jelkes' poem, Mrs. Faulk appears looking 'over rail' to see Shannon down there (p.xxxiv). She takes him to swim in the liquid moonlight. The play ends with Shannon submitting to the supportive hand of Mrs. Faulk, to bring him closer to the moonlight.

Before the story was expanded into a three-act play in 1961, it seems that the one-act play had not fully realised Williams' ambition to present a radical shift of focus from minority characters towards the broader experience of marginality. However, as I have examined in this part of the chapter, it contains some promising ideas for this progressive development. Since a fuller development is given in the three-act version of 1961 Iguana, the following part of this chapter will examine this version to demonstrate this development.

CHAPTER II, PART IV

SPATIAL REVERSAL IN THE THREE-ACT VERSION OF THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA (1961)

The drama in my plays, I think, is nearly always people trying to reach each other. In The Night of the Iguana each one has his separate cubicle but they meet on the verandah outside their cubicles, at least Hannah and Larry Shannon meet on the verandah outside their cubicles, which is of course an allegorical touch of what people must try to do. It's true they're confined inside their own skins, or their own cubicles, but they must try to find a common ground on which they can meet because the only truly satisfying moments in life are those in which you are in contact, and I do not mean just physical contact, I mean in deep, a deeper contact than physical, with some other human being (Tennessee Williams in 'Studs Terkel talks with Tennessee Williams' (1961), in Devlin, pp.80-81).

As the above quotation suggests, Tennessee Williams' fascination with the significance of place is given expression in the spatial metaphors of his 1961 play The Night of the Iguana. To explore Williams' use of theatrical space in Iguana it is not sufficient to look at what the actual text offers. It is important to go beyond the text to read the stagecraft, especially as Williams emphasised stage performance, body language and theatrical techniques in his drama. To understand the play in

performance requires more than an examination of the stage design, architecture, acoustics and lighting: it must also deal with Williams' creative use of theatrical space.

The overall argument in the following part of the chapter will decode the stage directions by reading bodily and spoken language as well as visual and aural images. As a development of my reading of the earlier versions of Iguana, earlier in this chapter, the discussion here is devoted to the physical movement of the characters on the stage and how objects are presented and used within theatrical space. I am concerned here with reading the sense of place in the play, achieved by decoding the interrelation of two contrasting spatial poles: interior and exterior space and their reversal as expressed in the action of the play. Challenging the confines of theatrical space, 1961 Iguana presents a conflict between the interior and the exterior spaces. This conflict cannot be approached merely from reading the play as a text: not until the play is approached as a performance is it possible to decode Williams' interest in the spatial reversal of interior and exterior space in Iguana.

The following study will show that to approach the minority question in Williams' Iguana it is important to reflect on the sense of place and the spatial reversals utilised in the play. The 'self' who entraps Williams' early characters (as discussed in Chapter One of the thesis) will be referred in Iguana (1961) as 'the interior space'. Here the concept of minority is developed from an identity of a certain group into an experience of marginality which will be fully dramatised in Williams' later plays.

Here the minority concept does not refer to the identifiable characters as is the case in Williams' early plays, but to characters embodying conflicting dualities that cause their alienation from society due to their inability to reconcile their dualities. They experience a constant inner conflict as result of inability to find a balance. Accordingly, I will demonstrate that Iguana's characters are unable to accomplish easy reconciliations. In this sense, regarding the new structure by which it frames the minority question; Iguana is a real departure from Williams' early plays. In his earlier plays, Williams presents minorities as self-entrapped, in contrast, in Iguana there is a departure from the 'self' towards an experience of conflict with the exterior space. Surprisingly, 'space' works as a possible therapy for this conflict of the minority characters in the play. As I will show, this reflects Williams' view of the minority question as conceptualised through the sense of place in the play. This is a crucial issue in approaching the play, but little has been written on this subject, the question of place rarely discussed as focal in 1961 Iguana.

In this part of the chapter I will introduce what is meant by the interior and exterior space of the play. I begin by elucidating the definition of these polarised spatial concepts – the interior and exterior – and go on to project the suggestion of interior space as a fluctuating mental place onto stagecraft and specific physical movements. This study attempts to establish the idea of 'space' as related to intertextual spatial metaphors of duality, particularly relating to interior and exterior. The spatial duality is oriented towards questions of 'flesh' and 'spirit' in Iguana, in its representation of 'fleshy' characters such as Maxine and 'spiritual' characters such as Hannah, and of those who hover between the two as Shannon does. I will examine the spatial reversal in terms of the violation of the exterior

space by interiority and how that is related to the minority question in the play. This violation will be read by examining visual images and symbols in conjunction with the dramatic text's monologues and stage directions. Certain techniques in the play externalise the characters' interiority while other techniques present a blurring of the distinctions between inner and outer space. For example, unlike the 1948 short story of 'Iguana', we see only the events that take place on the verandah, while events within the interior of the cubicles are only narrated. The scenes do not reveal directly the interior space of these cubicles, as the exterior is privileged on the stage.

I will adopt what we may call a 'territorial view' by categorising Hannah's arrival as an invasion of Maxine's territory, these being the two female characters between which Williams' protagonist Shannon is placed. A close reading of the staging of this territory and the territorial fight between Hannah and Maxine will be discussed as representative of a metaphorical invasion of the interior body by exterior space. The study will close by considering the impact of such spatial invasion on the framing of minority confinement in Iguana.

It is noticeable that the setting dominates the 1961 three-act play, more so than the earlier one-act version. Most of the action is set on the verandah of the Costa Verde hotel and great significance is given to the verandah on which the play's events are centralized. Williams writes the beginning of the play as a prologue which provides a detailed account of the setting:

a wide verandah of the hotel ... enclosed by a railing, runs around all four sides of the somewhat dilapidated, tropical-style frame structure,

but on the stage we see only the front and one side (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.6).

At the Costa Verde hotel, the three main characters share the experience of the night. Set in a Mexican seaside resort during World War II, Iguana is the story of Rev. Lawrence Shannon, a defrocked Episcopal minister. Arriving on his tour bus filled with Baptist women (whom Shannon is taking on tour), Shannon stops the bus and climbs alone up to the hilltop setting of the Costa Verde hotel. Shannon arrives at the hotel on the edge of a nervous breakdown as before but Williams is more explicit than in the one-act play: in this version Shannon has been thrown out of the church for committing fornication and heresy. Instead of his friend Fred (whose death by infection is left ambiguous), Shannon finds at the hotel Fred's earthy and sensual widow, Maxine, who hires diving-boys as her casual lovers. Shannon also finds a kindred spirit, Hannah Jelkes. The rum-coco tree and the cries of the parrot represent the spiritual life of the Costa Verde and are contrasted to the appearance of middle-aged spinster artist, Hannah, and her aged grandfather, Nonno, the 'oldest living and practicing poet' who is trying to finish his long-awaited poem (p.34). Between impromptu naps and mumbling attempts to complete his last poem, Nonno recites fragments of his unfinished poetic verse throughout the play.

The ethereal aspect of Hannah and the lusty nature of Maxine establish a crucial duality, with Maxine seeing in Hannah a rival to her intimacy with Shannon. Consequently, the whole play takes the form of a series of confrontations between the two women over Shannon. An iguana caught and tied under the verandah by a Mexican boy, symbolises the play's theme and the characters' suffering. The unleashing of the iguana by Shannon at the end of the

play is considered an act of grace and a symbolic visualisation of his own liberation. Also on stage are a Nazi family, who although given only a few lines serve as a constant reminder of the outside world, and through whom we are informed of the bombing of London during World War II.

As the play unfolds, we can trace an attraction between the spinster Hannah and the fallen clergyman Shannon, that as the night unfolds becomes something far deeper and more complex. Williams masterfully visualises through the play the tale of these lost souls, who like the iguana are each at the end of their ropes. Providing an exploration of the possibility of redemption and healing by living beyond despair, Iguana stands as a real departure from Williams' early plays regarding the optimism it provokes. This is enacted at the end of the play when the old man Nonno dies after finishing the poem, suggesting a potential restoration of balance. This echoes a statement made by Williams in 'Williams on Williams', a conversation with Lewis Funke and John E. Booth in 1962, that the play is about 'how to live beyond despair and still live' (Williams as quoted in Delvin, p.104). Ending with Hannah's realisation of the impracticality of life with Shannon, the play ends with Hannah departing alone on her travels, while Shannon remains with Maxine at the Hotel.

In this reading of Iguana the discussion of interior space will be developed from meaning the self which confines Williams' early characters to relate also to the body, particularly suppressed bodily desires and unfulfilled sexual urges. Moreover, interior space is a fluctuating mental area that the characters both embody and live within. This is one of the prominent concepts that the play introduces in relation to the development of the minority issues. Quoting Williams,

the interior space is a 'subterranean world'.⁴³ It can be thought of as the unlit side of the self that is suppressed due to the restrictions of the exterior world. It is positioned in contrast to the exterior space: the outside world of the theatrical stage. This subterranean world is neither tolerated nor given credence by the exterior world, and as a consequence it finds itself in confinement and isolation. As I have suggested, the play reveals an intersection between interior and exterior spaces, experienced as a spirit/flesh conflict which is mapped onto the three main characters: Maxine (of the flesh), Hannah (of the spirit) and Shannon, hovering between the two states.

Very little has been written about the spatial interior concept in Iguana. Some critical essays do illuminate this interior space, but do not broach the issue of space as a central theme related to the minority question in the play. Although Glenn Embrey's article suggests the importance of looking beyond the surface text of Iguana into its subterranean world, his concept of this world is related to sex as an underlying theme of danger and destruction. Embrey argues that the play intimates that 'sex is degrading', and he supports this assertion with the illustration of Hannah's asexuality. He thinks that:

Hannah creates, in the audience; the impression that withdrawing from sex is positive or healthy, since we tend to see all the behaviour of an admirable character as admirable, unless something indicates that we should feel otherwise. And nothing in this play indicates that her sexual reluctance is a problem (p.338).

⁴³ The 'subterranean world' is a term used in the text of 1961 Iguana, but is emphasised as the main theme of Glenn Embrey's article 'The Subterranean World of The Night of the Iguana' (1977) to which I refer here (see Tharpe, 1977).

Embrey confines the arena of this interior space to unfulfilled sexuality, and configures sex as the prominent factor in formulating the subterranean world of the play. He compares Iguana to Williams' early story, 'Desire and the Black Masseuse' which suggests that desire is a 'gigantic dark force that batters human beings and finally devours them' (p.340). Iguana shows that thirteen years later after the publication of this story, 'the fear of sex' is still central to Williams' work and it undermines for Embrey 'whatever positive values the playwright [Williams] consciously wishes to attribute to human relations' (p.340).

Lindy Levin's 'Shadow into Light: A Jungian Analysis of The Night of the Iguana' (1999) offers a sharp contrast. Contextualising the duality of human nature within contradictory images of light and dark, 'man and beast', and the split in personality between the 'known and unknown part', Levin considers the dark side as the shadow in Iguana (Levin, p.87). Quoting Carl Jung's theory of psychic archetypes, Levin defines shadow as 'the negative side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide' (Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams 'Meeting the Shadow' (1991), p.3, in Levin, p.87). She develops her argument by defining shadow as 'part of the unconscious which is sometimes referred to as the inferior "other"- the imperfect alter ego that is flawed, shameful, and relegated to the basement of the psyche' (p.87). Framing this argument within Iguana, Levin thinks that Williams creates 'blue devils and spooks' to show that 'inner demons are the source of self torture and cruelty to others' (p.87). However, the 'light side' is not tackled in Levin's article. Both Levin and Embrey dismiss the fact that, unlike Williams' earlier plays, in Iguana the dramatic themes are achieved through performance on the theatrical stage, rather than dealing with the themes of

the text.⁴⁴ My reading considers the visualisation of this interior space to examine its demystification.

Stagewise, interior space is visualised through images as well as through monologue and dialogue. In *Iguana* certain visual items are used to project the interior space of the characters onto the exterior space of the stage. Visual items include the cubicles, the verandah and the hammock – all the key spatial areas of the Costa Verde hotel.

The verandah is located as an extension of the main building of the hotel. It is initially depicted as a ‘roofed verandah, enclosed by the railing’ that runs ‘around all’ its four sides (*The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending*, p.6). This highlights its marginality as a space, yet its marginality is reversed by Williams into a centrality. As part of the hotel, the verandah is given special attention, with nothing mentioned of the rest of the building. In fact, the whole dramatic action takes place on the verandah as the main setting for the play. It is the stage for the characters’ communication outside their separate cubicles, and it is also the centre of the dramatic action where communication between the characters takes place outside of their isolated cubicles. The isolated individuals are ironically shifted by various issues onto this verandah, into the centre of events and into the foreground for the audience.

The hammock signifies a third exterior visual object that visualises the interior space of the characters, and it represents a physical object with which Shannon exclusively identifies. Through the hammock, Shannon builds his own exterior physical escape out of the hostility and the spatial entrapment he feels in

⁴⁴ This is because the main concern in Williams’ early plays is the characters that manifest the theme of self-confinement.

the Costa Verde hotel: as such, the hammock represents his only outlet. That is why whenever Shannon feels that he is pressurised by the heat of the events, he returns to the hammock as a sanctuary from the crisis of the action. His struggle to realise his shattered self-identity can be prolonged only outside the place he occupies, motivating him to build another physical outlet for escape through the hammock. Shannon creates a physical identification with the hammock but, in the same identification, he also re-asserts the interior space of his alienated identity as a place of retreat and escape. In the course of the play, whenever he steps away from it to involve himself in the action onstage, he struggles to return to the hammock.

Throughout the play Shannon adopts a back and forth movement, which demonstrates that his mental instability is paralleled by his constant swinging in the hammock: he 'staggers back to the path', 'he drops back on the step', 'stumbles widely', 'moves brokenly', 'starts towards', and 'draws quickly back'. After Hannah's grandfather Nonno finishes his poem, however, the stillness of Nonno's chair replaces the swinging hammock and symbolises the stability which Shannon achieves at the end of the play. At this point he is described in the stage directions as adopting firm movements, instead of the restraining ones that mark him throughout: he 'comes into view', 'crouches', 'cuts the rope with a quick, hard stroke', 'starting to climb on to the verandah' (p.116). His movements on stage are no longer restrained, yet his firm and assured gestures do not prevent the violation of his interior space by the exterior.

Shannon cannot resist the violation of his interiority by the exterior stage. In other words, his inner struggle forces him to confess his feelings and painful memories to Hannah and the audience: a theatrical image that visualises this violation. At many points in the play, the interiority of Shannon becomes exterior

through the spoken words of monologue, confession and lamentation. In Act Three, thinking he is alone, Shannon begins a soliloquy about his disapproval of the outside world, which he thinks is rotten, neurotic and repressed. He wants the others to see this underworld, which is very different from the shining and glamorous world in which they live. In this world there are 'a lot of hungry people' that die of 'starvation' (p.111). That is why throughout his tour Shannon invites the Baptist ladies to see this subterranean world. He thinks that by exposing them to the subterranean world, he is fulfilling a better mission than he could as a minister. The twist is that this horrible subterranean world reflects Shannon's interiority from which he is trying to escape. In this regard, Foster Hirsch in A Portrait of the Artist: the Plays of Tennessee Williams (1979) compares Shannon with Williams, the playwright:

a misbehaving child who delights in shocking the philistines. From preaching about a God of thunder and Lightning to a congregation weaned on a concept of God as a "bad tempered, childish, old, sick, peevish man", he descends to conducting irregular tours to the underworlds of all places (Hirsch, p.67).

However, my argument in this part of the chapter departs from drawing a parallel between Shannon and Williams to view Shannon as a violator of the exterior space. He does this by looking for the horror of the underworld instead of searching inside himself.

Celebrating oddity and perversion, Shannon enjoys taking his tour ladies to face the underworld instead of looking inside his own interior horror. He cannot acknowledge the horror of his interiority, particularly his complex sexuality. The

result is a problematic relationship between his interior and exterior spaces: moving in the exterior space, Shannon represses his interiority. Embrey argues that Shannon's interiority comprises the horror of sexuality that drives him to expose himself and others to the horrors in tropical countries. Quoting Shannon's monologue at the end of Act Three, Embrey supports this line of the argument as he senses that 'either guilt or rebellion accounts for Shannon's sexual behaviour ... sex for him is on a par with the other ravaging horrors he subjects himself and his tours to' (Tharpe, 1977, p.336).

Stagewise, meanwhile, the iguana is used as a visual image of the interiority of the characters. By the end of Act Three, Shannon's monologue is preceded by Hannah's query about the iguana that is tied 'beneath the verandah'; Shannon lurches into 'his cubicle and back out with a flashlight' to point out to Hannah the iguana (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.111). Shannon's flash lighting of the iguana that tries 'to go on past the end of its goddam rope' parallels his constant attempt to reveal his tour the subterranean world that is hidden from most eyes (p.111). The iguana is used as a visual symbol that externalises the interior subterranean world and suffering of the characters. As such, an analogue is set up between the 'iguana' and the 'subterranean world'. In contrast to this view, Embrey looks at the iguana figuratively; it does not stand for any of the major characters, but can be interpreted as a symbol of all human beings and 'creatures made grotesque by suffering and terror, frequently forced to live in the most degrading of conditions' (Tharpe, 1977, p.328). This also links the iguana to the function of the play's setting: the subterranean world is embodied in the tropical climate of Mexico.

As a visual symbol of the subterranean world, the iguana represents according to my reading the three main characters' interiorities. As with the iguana, this subterranean world of the characters is bound in their interiority, and cannot be admitted into the exterior space. Shannon is tied to his ghosts in the hammock and the coco-rum drink, and other characters are also entrapped: Nonno is confined to his wheelchair and Hannah to her art and watercolours. As such, the iguana visualises the entrapment of Hannah, Shannon and Nonno: as Shannon puts it; 'at the end of its rope? Trying to go on past the end of its goddam rope? Like you! Like me! Like Grampa with his last poem' (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.111). This entrapment is predestined as the word 'goddam' ironically implies; it can be thought of as the fate from which there is no escape. Thus, like the iguana, the three characters' subterranean worlds are entrapped not only within the space but within themselves.

In fact, monologues, the play's setting, the night and the metaphor of shadow frame the subterranean world of the three characters as the techniques by which the playwright establishes the characters' interior spaces. It is important to define these techniques which other critics highlight Thomas P. Adler in 'Before the Fall and After' (1997) argues that, like the iguana 'caught and tied under the verandah for much of the play', Shannon 'has "cracked up", feels desperate and is "at the end of [his] rope", but "still has to try to go on, to continue"' (Roudané, p.121). For Adler Shannon suffers a tension between 'wanting to exist on some "fantastic level" that admits the unexplainable, but always being forced instead to operate on the more mundane realistic plane' (p.123). Drawing on Adler's view, resorting to the Costa Verde hotel, Shannon achieves numbing peace in the hammock drinking the rum-coco. Previously, caught and punished by his mother

for finding pleasure through the act of masturbation, Shannon has suppressed his sexuality until it has become part of his subterranean world which he denies. Ironically, Shannon tries to help others realise the horrors and fears of the world, but he still cannot face his own underworld.⁴⁵

To illustrate further, in his verbal monologue at the end of Act Three, Shannon goes down deep into his subterranean world openly onto the stage. Searching for horrors in the outside world, Shannon is blind to look inside himself at his own interior horrors. This shows a vague and confused understanding of his subterranean world, represented by his incomplete sentences in his long monologue. Moreover, the many ellipses ('...') in the play show his fragmentary thoughts and mental distraction. He acknowledges that he first 'faced it in that nameless country' but he has a belief that he must expose this underworld to 'others', especially his tour ladies, as a part of his role as missionary (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.112). He recognises that 'fast decay' is always 'a thing of hot climates, steamy, hot, wet climates' (p.112). As he states in his monologue, Shannon tries vainly to escape this subterranean world by resorting to seducing 'a lady or two'.

Shannon's subterranean world requires decoding further by looking at the ghostly image that is associated with his interiority in the play. In fact, this image is embedded within the metaphor of shadow. Adopting a Jungian perspective, Levin argues that the closer Shannon's shadow 'comes to the surface of consciousness, the more he battles to repress it below the level of awareness'

⁴⁵ Williams mentions in conversation with Studs Terkel in 1961 that such concern is part of Shannon's deep social conscience that reflects the character's deep awareness of social inequalities, as he conducts the tour to places where a great deal lies 'under the public surface of cities' (Devlin, pp.80-81).

(Levin, p.88). She adds that ‘when Shannon gets a glimpse of his shadow, he tries to eradicate its presence by casting it out of his mind – and literally by throwing objects at the spook to drive it away’ (p.88). Levin associates the shadow with negativity, otherness, imperfection and the subconscious alter-ego. Ironically, Shannon thinks that the spirit lies outside him: as he puts it, ‘the spook is in the rain forest’ (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.98).

Until now Shannon has been unable to create a fruitful synthesis to escape the entrapment of this subterranean world, and the only avenue available for him is to stay in the tropical Costa Verde with Maxine. In his acceptance of Maxine’s conditions at the end of the play, however, are the seeds of Shannon’s acceptance of his subterranean world. He is able to make a compromise between his interiority and the demands of the exterior space of Maxine’s territory. He accepts his sexuality by approving Maxine’s conditions to make her ‘place attractive to the male clientele, the middle-aged ones at least. And you can take care of the women that are with them’ (p.117). At the end of the play, Williams insists on ‘the need for accepting and embracing, rather than denying or outrightly condemning, the “unlighted side” of human nature: not everyone is capable of transcending to and existing upon the otherworldly plane of a Hannah’ (Roudané, p.125: my emphasis). This ‘need’ is read in this part of the chapter in relation to Shannon’s eventual realisation of the possibility of a synthesis and compromise between his interiority and the exterior space. As I will show, in accepting Maxine’s conditions, he affirms his subterranean world.

Hannah functions as a catalyst that helps Shannon look deep inside himself to find his own interior space. Thinking of his dramatic works as a struggle to achieve ‘cathartic purity’, Williams claims in his conversation with Jeanne

Fayard in 1971 in 'Meeting with Tennessee Williams' that in Iguana, Hannah is right about her view of life as a struggle for purity while Shannon is unable to 'achieve his quest and will never finish it' (Devlin, P.211). As Ralph F. Voss argues in Magical Muse: Millennial Essays on Tennessee Williams (2002), Hannah has followed Shannon's perilous path, what Hannah calls 'the subterranean travels, the journeys that the spooked and bedevilled people are forced to take through the unlighted sides of their nature'. She has 'outlasted her spook, her "blue devil", by paying close attention to the world around her rather than focusing on herself' (Voss, p.127). However, the two critics dismiss the fact that Hannah confronts Shannon with her spirit-oriented integrity. Although she is subconsciously against any physical contact with men, this does not disgust her: in fact, nothing disgusts her 'unless it is unkind, violent' (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.107).⁴⁶ Voss's analysis supports this line of argument, he finds that 'spirit, in the play, is accepting of body and therefore accepting of, and at peace with, herself' (Voss, p.128). In contrast to Voss' view, this does not help Hannah to come to terms with her own problems: ultimately she has to move on after helping Shannon free himself.

Adler argues that Hannah has:

undergone her personal dark night – whether it involved coming to terms with her solitary sexual condition or an awareness of her limited artistic talent Williams leaves ambiguous – but she successfully “started down” and beat back her own “blue devils” (Roudané, p.122).

⁴⁶ Hannah's ability to accept others with no sense of disgust draws a contrast to Williams' early plays where his characters are projected onto the cycle of rejection which maintains their self-confinement, as is the case of Blanche in Streetcar.

For Hannah, as my reading demonstrates, her art is the therapy for realising a balance between her interiority and the exterior space. Through her art she can give outward form to the subterranean world. She shares with Shannon the ability to accept the horror and the fears of the world; yet, unlike Shannon, she acknowledges her own interior horror and faults. As a result, her art gives shape to the moral code that nothing human disgusts her ‘unless it’s unkind, violent’ (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.107). As a portraitist, Hannah observes and probes deeply into her subjects to portray their subterranean interiority; through her art Hannah has access to the subterranean world of the other characters.

Asked about the resemblances between his characters, Williams classifies Hannah as a character who ‘had to pass through the tunnel of despair. She is a Blanche purified of confusion and sensuality. Hannah is nearly detached from life; she feels for others; she accepts everything from others’ (Devlin, 1986, p.209). However, unlike Blanche who fails to control the desire which confines her, Hannah succeeds in doing that. Hannah’s own story of her ‘love experience’ is a real example of this. Adler views this story as shocking, ‘in its own way in its **unvarnished expression of what she regards as an almost unbearable depth of loneliness, seldom encountered**’ (Roudané, p.124: my emphasis). Responding to Shannon’s question of whether she ever had a ‘love experience’, Hannah pensively tells of:

[two] events in her life: of fleeing as a young girl from an unwanted hand upon her leg in a movie theatre; and much later in her life, at the expense of moving beyond her normal reticence, of accommodating the desire of the underwear fetishist out in a boat for a piece of her clothing he could hold while achieving orgasm (Roudané, p.124).

Hannah feels free to talk about her subterranean world by retelling this 'love experience' to Shannon. Her attitude is revealed on the stage through her confrontation with the image of the tied iguana (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.107). In Act Three, while Shannon verbalises his subterranean world openly onto the stage, at the same moment Hannah takes a closer look at the iguana beneath the verandah. Exposed to the exterior horror manifested by this tied animal, unlike other ladies in Shannon's tour who continue to avoid facing their ugly subterranean world, Hannah rushes 'the length of the verandah to the wooden steps' to be face to face with the iguana: her symbolic subterranean world (p.112).

In fact, Hannah's acceptance of her subterranean interiority helps her devise tactics to expose the exterior space. This is visualised implicitly by her symbolic invasion of the exterior. From Hannah's initial appearance we are introduced to the territorial aspect of place in the play. If the Costa Verde hill is Maxine's territory, the stage direction visualises Hannah's coming to the hilltop as an invasion. Like an invader she creeps to the place, without welcome or even acknowledgment from the owner. The licence to enter Costa Verde is offered by Shannon who assures her that there's 'plenty of room here out-of-season-like now' (p.18). Hannah's presence appears at first like disaster, as an earthquake that shakes the place. This is signalled through the theatrical techniques on the stage: her coming to the hilltop is accompanied by the falling of a coconut and the lamentation-like screaming of the parrot, where 'a coconut plops to the ground; a parrot screams at a distance' (p.18). The visual image of the falling coconut represents the threat of the hypnotic atmosphere that pervades the hilltop, while the parrot's scream in the stage directions predicts Hannah's figurative invasion of Maxine's territory. Both visual and aural images anticipate the threat of Hannah's

invasion, and the harsh 'bird cries sound in the rain forest' to signal Hannah's war on Maxine's hilltop (p.27).

In terms of Hannah's territorial invasion of place, Act Two witnesses the first explicit verbal clash between Maxine and Hannah, where Maxine tries to force Hannah and her grandfather to move by calling the Casa de Huéspedes. When the appearance of Shannon at the top of the path draws Maxine and Hannah's attention it breaks their verbal exchange. On the stage, Shannon appears as prey that the two women fight to capture. Maxine perceives him when he appears at the top of the hill as booty that she might lose to Hannah. Hannah's threat to Maxine is maximised by the theatrical technique of light, which is described in the stage direction as a 'hot light' portraying Maxine as a warrior who is involved in a war over Shannon (p.41).

The stage direction in this act emphasises a territorial battle between Maxine and Hannah, with Hannah as a visual (although weaker) 'counterpart'. Drawing on this metaphor, in the stage directions Hannah is described as having a 'stoical despair of the refuge she has unsuccessfully fought for' (p.41). Her inability to conquer the exterior space is emphasised as she is forced to take a backward step, clenching her eyes shut for a moment to acknowledge her defeat. The terminology used in the stage direction generates the mood of war, with words such as 'refuge' 'fought for' 'counterpart', and 'power line'. Such a vocabulary suggests the war-like atmosphere which parallels the German tourists' report of the Battle of Britain. Significantly, news of the Battle of Britain follows immediately after the visual sketch of Maxine and Hannah as two warriors involved in a war for Shannon. Act Two begins with a coppery light but ends with more peaceful silver

light; following Hannah's retreat, the war imagery also decreases towards the end of the act.

At the beginning of Act Three, Hannah does not involve herself in the action, remaining in her cubicle and leaving Maxine to control the scene. Hannah views Maxine as a dominant figure; even though the screen to her cubicle is open, she feels compelled to stay there. Towards the end of this act Hannah's tactics in her territorial fight with Maxine have changed: she admits indirectly to Maxine's domination of the place. Furthermore, Hannah even asks Maxine for help to put an end to the Germans' negative attitude towards Shannon: she goes to Maxine with childish complaints about the Germans. This proves her helplessness in the exterior place where everything is surveyed and dominated by Maxine. She begins to adopt a different attitude towards Maxine, admitting her failure to challenge Maxine's territorial domination. In this way, Act Three witnesses a remarkable shift in Hannah's attitude as she retreats in the face of Maxine's territorial dominance. What Hannah concludes is that her interest in Shannon is a kind of 'sympathetic interest' which does not demand bodily contact between them.

In spite of the overt identification between Hannah and her grandfather, Nonno experiences a different type of subterranean world, expressed in the effort to give voice to his poem. There is also a close link between Nonno and the iguana. Like the iguana, Nonno is tied by his throat unable to finish his last poem: thus, symbolically, when the iguana is released Nonno's voice is set free and his 'excited mumble ... grows louder' ending in a sudden shout as he completes his long awaited verse (p.116). Unleashing the iguana using the machete (previously used for cutting the rum-coconuts) Shannon symbolically frees Nonno's voice, as the old man finishes his poem almost immediately. Shannon's act of grace frees

Nonno's voice to release his one last poem. This is also associated with a change in the old man's physicality as a visual image of this release on the stage; the crawling movement that characterised Nonno throughout the play has been replaced by an image of him wheeling 'himself out of his cubicle on to the verandah' (p.114).

The unleashing of the iguana also initiates a marked change in Shannon. Following immediately the completion of Nonno's poem, Maxine appears on the stage holding the rum-coco shell which foreshadows her conquest of Shannon. The play ends as it began when Shannon made his way up the hill to be received by Maxine: she now is able to control him. The rum-coco she carries, with its hypnotic effect on Shannon, symbolises the hold she now has over him. Maxine accepts Shannon only on her own territorial terms, allowing him to help her manage 'the place' by caring for 'the women' that accompany the middle-aged clients and visitors (p.117). Ironically, the suggestion is that these middle-aged clients hang around with young women whom Shannon is drawn towards. This implies that Shannon's future with Maxine is as a 'helper' (not a 'companion') and is linked to him enjoying the young women. Meanwhile, Maxine will also make the place attractive to 'the male clientele' (p.117). In other words, Shannon's acceptance of Maxine's territory is conditional on his acceptance of his subterranean world. As a helper and not a manager of the place, his sexual freedom and interest in the young women will be permitted, while Maxine indulges in her subterranean world by continuing her sexual interest in middle-aged men.

Like Hannah, Maxine is capable of creating a balance between her subterranean world and the exterior space. The physical visualisation of this balance is embodied on the stage through the 'pushing-up' movement adopted by Maxine and Hannah. Pushing Nonno in his wheelchair, Hannah's first appearance

on the stage signals this ability to get people 'up' figuratively and spatially. This is symbolised by her understanding of the exterior space, which is why the play ends with Hannah on the hilltop. On the other hand, Maxine mirrors this ability to adapt the place to her own interiority. As the owner of the exterior territory, the Costa Verde hotel, Maxine literally and figuratively gets Shannon back up the hill and is ready to help Shannon achieve the balance between his interiority and the exterior space.

Adler espouses this idea of relating the two characters. He thinks that 'just as Hannah had to push the wheelchair-bound Nonno up the hill, so, too, Maxine whose face now "wears a faint smile ... suggestive of ... the carved heads of Egyptian or Oriental deities" will "get [Shannon] back up the hill"' (Roudané, p.125). However in my reading, to a greater extent than Hannah, Maxine is able to hover freely between her interior and exterior spaces. It seems as if her territorial dominance of space, which Hannah fails to achieve as the early discussion of the territorial invasion shows, maintains this balance between the two worlds. After a lengthy struggle with Hannah's territorial invasion, Maxine settles down at the end of the play, with Nonno's poem helping the place regain its peace and balance. At this moment, Maxine appears unusually 'around the front of the verandah', instead of the back of the verandah as she has on all other occasions in the play (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.116). This epitomises the surveillance of her spatial territory after Hannah's initial assault on it. In fact, she seems relaxed for the first time in the play as she prepares for a night swim wearing a faint smile. While the night 'has mellowed her spirit', Maxine is compared to 'Egyptian or Oriental deities' and for once there is no comparison with Hannah (p.116). In contrast, Hannah adopts a neutral attitude towards the scene where she stands 'motionless

behind the wicker chair' and gradually withdraws quietly from the scene 'out of the moon's glare', leaving the space to Maxine (p.116). The scene once more becomes Maxine's territory when she ignores Hannah's presence.

The division of duties dictated by Maxine maintains her territorial triumph, and imposes her rules over the inhabitants of the Costa Verde hotel. Choosing to stay in the hotel, Shannon must accept the conditions of Maxine's territorial space; he realises 'that's what' he can do, although there is really no other avenue available for him (p.117). Chuckling happily, Shannon approves of his fate in the hope that he can now express his sexuality freely and have Maxine as a 'drinking companion'. As a 'defrocked tour guide' unable to go back to Texas, Shannon takes the other path with Maxine 'half leading, half supporting him' (p.117). Shannon cannot leave with Hannah, whose quiet presence at the end of the play confirms Maxine's triumph and Hannah's own failure to provide a refuge for Shannon.

Reading the fluctuating mental space presented through abstract readings of the play is an interesting way of developing the notion of spatial reversal. For Embrey the play creates 'a definite contrast between East and West, in which the Eastern attitudes of stoicism and fatalism are offered as a positive alternative to the Western preoccupations with guilt and suffering' (Tharpe, 1977, p.332). However, Embrey's argument denies the fact that the ideological dualities of East and West are presented in the play in spite of the spatial absence of either. Presenting East and West as fluctuating mental places explored through these two conflicting ideologies, Iguana establishes a radical concept of space that is present and absent at the same time. Yet the two absent geographical spaces – East and West – are implicated in the play through the various characters. On the one hand,

Hannah is initiated into oriental philosophies that represent Eastern ideology. Though the Orient represents an absent space, not staged in the play as an exterior space, through Hannah its philosophy dominates the thought of the play. In fact, the oriental philosophy presented in the play is based on Williams' own travel in Asia. In one conversation with Jeanne Fayard, he states that although he has never studied this philosophy, through his visit to the Orient, he spoke 'with Buddhist monks. I was in Singapore one day and I visited the House of the Dead' (Devlin, p.210).

On the other side of the divide, the failure of the Western model to find a balance between fatalism and the individual demands of Shannon's dilemma serves to emphasise the failings of Western ideology. Adler highlights the significance of fatalism in the play, in which characters are consumed in their cycle of despair and constant guilt: no matter to what degree an individual is good, s/he is still predestined to be punished. In the terms of Western fatalism, God is a 'senile delinquent blaming the world and brutally punishes all he created for his own faults in construction' (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.52). In the light of this argument, the Nazi family can be thought of as a representative of the doomed Western ideology, particularly its sadistic and destructive nature. Not only are they caricatures, but their 'Rubensesque proportions and Wagnerian exuberance' represents the supposed triumph of Western civilization. Embrey summarises this succinctly in the way he describes this family's 'boisterousness and frenetic activity' as a counterpart to Hannah's poised 'demeanor' (Tharpe, 1977, p.333). Their song that is heard at the end of the play illuminates the cruelty and the violence of the Western world.

Ultimately, the play conveys a superiority of East over West in the way that Eastern ideology proves its validity over its Western counterpart. Unlike Hannah's words which are given priority in concluding the play, the Nazis do not actually speak at all. But ending with the Nazi song, Williams demonstrates the futility of Western ideology by not including it within the body of the drama. The song seems an addition just to convey that this ideology exists, but cannot be approved of. Moreover, written in German, the song represents a racist attitude that deprives it of the universality of Hannah final words: 'Oh, God, can't we stop now? Finally? Please let us. It's so quiet here, now' (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.117).

Within the terms of my thesis, the interior entrapment of the characters' subterranean world within exterior space contributes to the marginality of the chief characters in the play. This conflict is visualised on the exterior space of the stage. For instance, in Shannon's case, he constantly jerks savagely back and forth on the stage, striking himself with the chain that suspends his 'gold cross' as if his body is responding to the spiritual confinement that entraps his subterranean world. It is Hannah who functions as a catalyst, or an agent, to free Shannon from his confinement. Throughout the course of the play, Hannah helps to free Shannon from what Embrey calls: **'his obsessive, self-destructive notions** so that he can move completely out of the previous pattern of his life, find a measure of peace, and establish a healthy sexual relationship' (Tharpe, 1977, p.331: my emphasis).

However, the only effective therapy to free Shannon from this confinement is not only his freedom from his 'self-destructive notions' but rather the acknowledgment of his subterranean interior world. By the end of the play, Hannah's suggestion of endurance as a key factor that can help in this

acknowledgment is therapeutic for him. In other words, when she tells him ‘he must learn simply to endure the tension and terror that are part of his life’, Hannah’s suggestion of endurance will lead to self-acceptance: Shannon finally accepts what an individual cannot change (p.332). Accepting the ugliness of the subterranean world through endurance and living beyond despair are ways of defeating the confinement and the imprisonment of the interior space. Embrey elucidates this argument by pointing out that:

Hannah also makes two other important suggestions. She tells him he must learn simply to endure the tension and the terror that are part of his life. Later she advises him to go beyond the endurance to acceptance; after recounting the two bizarre incidents that compromise her “love life”, she tells him “the moral is oriental. Accept whatever situation you cannot improve (p.363).

This idea of ‘endurance’ is a persuasive interpretation, especially as Williams admitted that he thought the main theme of the play is ‘how to live beyond despair and still live’ (Devlin, p.104).

In this chapter I have looked at the spatial reversal in Iguana by contextualising it within the two spatial opposites of interior and exterior space. This represents a marked departure from the ways in which identities and conflict between individuals were constructed in the earlier short story and one-act version of the play, as discussed in previous parts of this chapter. Exploring how the characters’ interiority is intruded by the exterior space in the three-act play is crucial for developing a territorial reading of the text. In fact, emphasising the

function of the visual images and objects to highlight this spatial reversal helps to challenge conventional approaches to 1961 Iguana. It is the dramatic qualities of Iguana that makes such visual images so interesting to decode.

The relation of the minorities' confinement to the spatial reversal in Iguana encourages various avenues of research. However, such relation cannot be defined simply, especially when dealing with Williams' use of stagecraft that legitimises the reversed interior/exterior conflict by presenting a spatial synthesis where the duality is rebalanced as a solution to the characters' confinement. Achieving this balance in 1961 Iguana, the play represents a turning point in Williams' career in relation to the development of minority issues: a departure from the strategies of presenting identifiable minorities in his early plays and a shaping influence on dramatising the experience of marginality in his later work. In the following chapter, an understanding of the development of minority as a concept will be pursued by discussing further the shift towards the experience of marginality that frames the minority question in Williams' later plays.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III, PART I



Poster painted by the author in 2007 to visualise the idea of ‘one-ness’ as a suggested vision of liberation in Kingdom of Earth (1968). It was one of the finalist poster-presentations at the University of Leicester Festival of Postgraduate Research in 2007.

CHAPTER III, PART I

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' LATER PLAYS AFTER THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

I suddenly saw the light - that there were enough long speeches, which is my speciality, unfortunately, and that at least five or six pages earlier in the act could be reduced to a sort of a dynamic, you know - rather than talk - it would be more effective that way. I realised there was too much talk. I mean there were speeches of five lines where half a line could have done it. Right now I'm engaged in trying to say - trying to express a play more in terms of action. Not in terms of physical action; I mean, in sort of gunfire dialogue instead of the long speeches that I've always relied on before. Let me say that I depended too much on language - on words (1962 interview with Tennessee Williams by Lewis Frunk, in Saddik, 1999, p.4).

The above quotation suggests that not only does the defrocked reverend of The Night of the Iguana, T. Lawrence Shannon, begin to see the light when the curtain falls at the end of the play in 1961, but around that time Tennessee Williams too began to see the light. However, Williams' light is not that of Shannon: the reflective light that illuminates his interior subterranean world, liberating him from his long confinement within a conflicted exterior space. Rather it is the

retrospective light which enables Williams to see his dramatic works from a different perspective. Here, the very word 'perspective' suggests a change in the mode of expressing the themes that had long concerned Williams throughout his dramatic career, rather than a completely new set of themes. His drama at the end of the 1960s still explores the theme of minority, but unlike his early plays which by and large deal with this in relation to an identifiable minority group, in his later works Williams moves towards dramatising the experience of marginality itself. To achieve this, he starts to explore this experience in all its complexity in relation to a small group of characters alienated from their social world and suffering from varying degrees of anxiety.

This is not to imply that in these plays Williams aligns himself with certain schools or movements. He does reflect a general trend in American thought in the 1960s, shifting his focus from the individual to a broader view of social relationships, but he goes beyond identity politics by choosing to shift his dramatic focus from a specifically marginalized group to deal with the marginality experience on a general level, where a group of characters work collectively to reach their liberation. Here the isolated individuals come together to counter their solitary alienation. In this way the concept of marginality becomes more abstract, to do with the characters' interacting to create their own space of liberation. It takes in these plays the form of a mental fluctuating space that is created between two marginalized or confined characters who come together to be liberated from their interior confinement. This place will be referred to as 'the circle of 'one-ness'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The 'one-ness' is a term used by Williams in the text of *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969) on the mouth of its main character, Mark Conley: 'there was always a sense of division till! Gone! Now absolute 'one-ness' with!' (*The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, Volume 7, p.17). The same term is used by Albert E. Kalson in 'Tennessee Williams Enters Dragon Country' (1973), however he develops this term only in relation to Mark's words in the play on his 'one-ness' with his art which also reads in relation to the "'one-ness'" which 'the artist must find in himself' (Kalson, p.63).

The use of the word 'circle' signifies the circularity of the marginality experience in these plays, where the characters resort to projecting anxiety onto each other and have no choice but to go on within an endless circle of anxiety and entrapment. This idea is visualised by certain exterior items on the stage, such as round tables, through which this circle is created. The use of the word 'one-ness' does not suggest that characters do not come into conflict with each other, but rather signifies the integration of two characters and their realisation that, despite their differences, they need each other to cope with the exterior hostile space that confines them.

To represent this experience, Williams becomes more abstract in representation by adopting dramatic forms beyond language. He recognises language's futility as an attempt to represent experience and language now becomes a mechanism of entrapment. This is because the characters' experience is so abstract that it cannot be expressed on linguistic and verbal levels. In their attempt to be free of language, the characters in Williams' later plays resemble those in the Theatre of the Absurd which flourished in Europe and, to a certain extent, in America in the 1950s and 1960s. This shift in direction marks Williams' departure from realism towards freer forms of expression, replacing his long poetic speeches and monologues with 'a more minimalistic approach to drama language' (Saddik, 1999, p.81). With the shift in dramatic expression, the marginality experience in Williams' later plays is modified to embrace with 'anti realistic' or 'free' dramatic forms. In other words, Williams' departure from the realism of his earlier plays includes a change in his attitude to characters, action, themes, plot and language. To illustrate further, in these later plays Williams dramatises his characters as representative of certain themes or ideas, rather than as self-confined

characters. Consequently, marginality starts to operate on characterization in relation to the way the play is set up spatially. To realise this, Williams uses certain visual and aural devices which suggest that silence is an important tool to challenge the entrapment of language, and that the body is vital in the representation of marginality.

Nonetheless, Williams' new perception of language as adopted in his later plays does not receive much attention or appreciation from critics. In general the plays written after Iguana have been overlooked or considered as evidence that the 1960s and 1970s were decades of deterioration for Williams. With the exception of a couple of positive attempts to view them as 'triumphs of the American theatre', little positive scholarship has been so far published. Philip C. Kolin does offer a positive account of Williams' later plays in his edited collection The Undiscovered Country: The Later Plays of Tennessee Williams (2002). This brings together fifteen essays that discuss Williams' late plays as 'highly experimental and carefully crafted for theatre of mind and body', and which offer an original insight into Williams' later canon post-Iguana (Kolin, 2002, p.3). Kolin calls his book the 'undiscovered country, elusively difficult to edit, classify, and interpret', citing the 'uneasiness' and 'embarrassment' it evokes from the 'critical establishment' (p.1), while Annette Saddik, in The Politics of Reputation (1999), recognises the negative reception of Williams' later plays: 'by the 1970s, the reviewers had essentially given up on Williams, altogether expecting him to fail' (Saddik, 1999, p.29).

However, these studies are inevitably incomplete. For example, Allean Hale in 'Confronting the Late Plays of Tennessee Williams' (2002) believes Kolin's book is a 'seminal work offering the most recent scholarship. Seminal,

perhaps, but not final' (Hale, 2003, p.21). She states that Williams 'wrote thirty-nine plays whose titles we know', but she believes that 'there are at least twenty more out there to be "discovered" in various archives, repositories, and private collections across the nation' (p.21). In spite of the vast quantity of later plays from 1961 until Williams' death at the Elysee Hotel in 1983, they rarely achieve much critical recognition. Kolin argues that a 'truckload of them may still be unearthed' referring to the fact that many of them are unavailable in print. His examples include Kirche, Kutchen Und Kinder (1979, unpublished), THIS IS (unpublished) and A House Not Meant to Stand (1982), as examples of those available only in manuscript, access to which is guarded by the Williams estate. However, these plays are still approached from within the same biographical perspective that shrouds earlier plays, a fact that blinds critical discussion of Williams' developing approaches to language. Kolin thinks that most if not all of Williams' later plays – those in print and in manuscript – are still seen as 'nothing more (or less) than a performance of his Memoirs', where 'booze, drugs, the failed dreams of an artist' influence the scripts (Kolin, 2002, p.2).

Quoting various critics, Kolin sheds the light on their perceptions of these works as 'borne directly out of his life' as a 'blighted gay poet or debilitated artist for whom writing was a way of denying his mortality' (C. W. E. Bigsby in Modern American Drama 1945-2000 (2000), p.65, in Kolin, 2002, p.2). Bigsby is one of those critics who judges Williams instead of his plays. He views his later characters as 'his psychic look-alikes, however dissimilar their physical appearances', such as the 'one-eyed Fräulein' in The Gnädiges Fräulein (1967) and 'every predatory gay character' like Quentin in Small Craft Warnings (1972) and Mark in Chalky White Substance (1980) (p.1).

In Dialogue in American Drama (1971), Ruby Cohn shares with other critics this biographical approach to Williams' later plays: 'Williams often uses the same materials-phrase, theme, scene, or character' reworking them by 'expansion and comparison of the short works' (Cohn, p.97). She still places Williams within 'the Southern grotesque tradition' where he strives through his drama to 'establish the mythic importance of his grotesque' (pp.108-09). Cohn sees the earlier plays within 'the realist convention of psychologically coherent characters, grotesque though they may be'. However, she views some of them - The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Rose Tattoo and The Night of the Iguana - as examples of the few of where a combination of verbal and theatrical imagery conveys a 'symbolic resonance beyond the realistic surface' (p.121). She classifies later plays such as Slapstick Tragedy (1966) and The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More (1963) as non-realistic where they still use 'crisp, colloquial dialogue' (p.121).⁴⁸ Despite, her insightful examination of grotesque patterns, she does not relate this non-realistic aspect to Williams' use of free dramatic form.

In Cohn's chapter 'Tennessee Williams: The Last Two Decades' (1997), she praises the theatrical style of some of the later plays. However, she views his 'socio-political' views as 'naive', but not 'his stylistic range: the mocking rhymes and repetitions of Demolition' (Roudané, p.233). Thomas P. Adler argues similarly in 'The Dialogue of Incompletion: Language in Tennessee Williams' Later Plays' (1975), in reference to three later plays: Small Craft Warnings (1972), In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969) and Out Cry (1973). Adler focuses on the soliloquy and 'most especially, on those experiments with syntactical patterns

⁴⁸ Cohn thinks that with a lesser dependency on 'comparable colloquialism', Williams moves in his later plays towards a 'combination of realism and fantasy'. Hence, he seeks 'a popular idiom, with a minimum of the pretentious images that spring so readily to the lips of his garrulous grotesques' (Cohn, p.125).

which suggest a new direction in Williams' theatrical technique', to offer an insightful vision of his innovations in dramatic language (Adler, 1975, p.48).

Referring to absurdist playwrights, Adler recognises Williams' use of language to 'express metaphysics' is different from that of others.⁴⁹ He argues that Williams:

writes about people who, rather than [going] to extremes to evade communication, crave it obsessively as a means of breaking out of the self and making contact with the other, of overcoming the aloneness that is the human condition and entering into a saving communion of shared humanity (Adler, p.49).

This positions Williams against other absurdist playwrights, rather than aligning him with their attempts to evade the entrapment of language.

In fact, Williams first uses this style in some of his earlier plays from the 1940s and 1950s such as Menagerie and Camino Real. Nevertheless, the plots of his later plays have been 'assailed, branded as fragmentary, a rambling discourse with little or no movement toward climax' (Arthur Gunz in Realms of the Self (1980), p.22, in Kolin, 2002, p.2). However, Williams' dramatic movement away from realism does not situate him as a dramatist 'in line with Artaud, Beckett, or Pinter, rather he was diminished as uncreatively derivative' (p.2). Although he admired the writing style of these absurdist, he views their theatre as unappealing, preferring the 'romantic fantasy' and the 'very far-out plays' (Saddik, 1999, p.77). In fact, there is only a fine line between Williams' later plays and the 'anti realistic

⁴⁹ Absurdist playwrights include Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco and Harld Pinter. Beckett is the most sceptical of the three towards the 'continued potency of the word to deal with ... the universal, metaphysical silence' (Karen F.Stein in 'Metaphysical silence in Absurd Drama' (1971), p.422, in Adler, p.48). While Ionesco thinks that 'there is something to communicate, but it is very nearly incommunicable', Pinter differs from other playwrights in his belief that the people's anguish 'more often than not derives from within' and is not imposed from the 'indifferent world without' (Adler, p.49).

plays' of the absurdists. Like them he minimises the action, rejecting 'an emphasis on the disclosures of plot' in order to focus on the experience that can be conveyed through silence 'or evoked through fragmented, inarticulate moments of speech', to access the 'meaning that lies in the gaps between linguistic expressions' (p.78). Although kabuki theatre and the forms of dramatic realism that mark his 1963 play The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore suggest Williams' first break away from realistic dramatic forms since Camino Real, he develops his new perception of reality much further through the alternative structures of later plays: the one-act plays including Dragon Country: A Book of Plays (1970), I Can't Imagine Tomorrow (1970) and In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel. These exhibit a 'linguistic reality which is rapidly deteriorating toward silence', while other plays such as Mutilated and The Gnädiges Fräulein have been described as 'attempts at an absurdist dramatic style' (Saddik, 1999, p.78). These unrealistic forms are developed by other late plays such as Steps Must Be Gentle (1981), Lifeboat Drill (1979) and Now the Cats with Jewelled Claws (1981). However, for Williams the break away from realism is a new pattern of writing: he told Donald Spoto 'I'm writing differently now' (Elliot Martin to Donald Spoto in The Kindness of Strangers (1997), p.331, in Saddik, 1999, p.41).

Some critics do recognise this 'difference' but view it as a kind of 'outrage', like Linda Dorff in 'Theatrical Cartoons: Tennessee Williams' late, "Outrageous" Plays' (1999) who examines it as a 'gradual evolution of dramaturgic elements which had been present in his work from the beginning' (Dorff, 1999, p.13). She gives The Case of the Crushed Petunias (1941) as an example of his early farce-satire (Dorff, p.13) in which the outrage is articulated through 'forms of

parody, parable and farce' which 'function on a level of meta-mimesis' (p.14).⁵⁰

However, unlike other critics she believes that the biographical approach to Williams' later plays devalues:

parody as a serious form and ignore[s] the metadramatic implications of the works - namely, their critique of the theatre-as-world – and proceed[s] as though the plays belonged to the realist tradition, attempting to divine individualist, psychological, and thematic meanings from anti-mimetic works that subvert psychological processes (p.14).

Dorff shares with Cohn her view of the 'grotesque' pattern of these plays. However, for Dorff this is seen as a reaction against the 'cold naturalism of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century naturalism and realism' (p.16). Dorff moves further from Cohn's reading of Slapstick to explore the 'grotesquely animated cartoon' in The Gnädiges Fräulein; 'the outrageous two-dimensional action of the animated cartoon' in Kirche, Küche Und Kinder; the 'most understandable outrageous play', A Lovely Sunday For Creve Coeur (1979) and 'the potential of the outrageous play-within-a-play' in THIS IS which foregrounds 'a metadramatic critique of the theatre' (p.26).

Unlike Kolin, Saddik recognises that this dramatic movement toward freer and different dramatic forms is originally based on Williams' early interest in 'anti realistic drama', visible from the beginning of his career in plays such as Glass Menagerie and Camino Real. Saddik relates his 'experimental later work' to the 'development of his prior interests rather than a random departure brought

⁵⁰ Dorff argues that the later plays all 'take as their subject a pre-existing dramatic form, convention or maxim that claims to mimetically represent a condition in the "real" world and, through the superimposition of a metatheatrical level that emphasises doubleness' which establishes 'the subject of meta-mimesis as drama about mimetic representation' (Dorff, 1999, p.14).

about by excessive drug use, as is often argued' (Saddik, 1999, p.39). Quoting Williams, she argues that his movement from 'a dependence on language - on words to more minimalistic dialogue does not necessarily indicate a shift away from realism'. Instead she describes him depending less on 'the ability of discursive language to communicate accurately and completely an idea of emotion – a "truth"', and moving 'toward non realistic drama, which resists the assumption that language is able to represent directly an objective reality' (p.40). These 'non-realistic forms' express meanings that can only be 'articulated through incomplete, fragmented dialogue and the silences which surround it' (p.40). She elaborates on this by quoting a 1979 interview where Williams claimed he was striving for a new form in spite of reviewers' intolerance of free dramatic method.

As a whole, the critics still considered his later plays of the 1970s and 1980s as 'failures', and this is interpreted by recent scholarship as related to a 'nostalgia for the poetic realism which had established his early reputation' (Kolin, 2002, p.6). This brought with it a tendency for critics to be blind to the new dramatic style of the late plays, which has been described as 'the cerebral ... the conscious, rational processes of the analyst, the symbolist, the abstract thinker' (Walter Kerr in 'A Touch of the Poet Isn't Enough to Sustain Williams' Latest Play' (1977), p.35, in Saddik, 1999, p.37). A hostile critical attitude towards Williams continued throughout his last two decades. For example, speaking to Elliot Martin, the producer of Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980), Williams insisted that:

he was not writing the same kind of dramas as he had done earlier in his career [...] I want to warn you, Elliot ... the critics are out to get me.

You'll see how vicious they are. They make comparisons with my

earlier work, but I am writing differently now (quoted in Saddik, 1999, p.41).

This attitude of 'writing differently' starts in the 1960s, with an increasing suspicion of 'realism's desire to naturalize the relationship between stage presentation and outside world'. However, not until his last decade did this suspicion lead Williams to 'discover dramatic forms which examined the signifier's power to create rather than represent reality' (p.74).

With later plays, The Gnädiges Fräulein, Kingdom of Earth (1968), Now the Cats with Jewelled Claws and This is the Peaceable Kingdom (Good Luck God) (1980), Williams shifts completely from a dramatisation of fragile characters within a hostile exterior space, to dramatising the interiorities of marginalized homeless and rootless characters. Saddik supports this line of argument, stating that:

Williams was ready to move completely beyond psychological characterization and conventional moral ideology, beyond theatre as mimetic representation, and therefore his style became more concurrent with a focus of eclectic and immediate "happenings" of the 1960s to 1980s which emphasized the physical presence of the sexualized body and the illusive energy of the spirit (p.7).

However, the following discussion aims to go further than Saddik's focus on 'the sexualized body', in order to explore Williams' movement towards centralising the body and marginalising language through the concept of 'one-ness', which helps to explain his later characters' experience of marginality. Through this concept he

develops the image of the body in his early plays as a subject of confinement and marginality, to become paradoxically a force of freedom and centrality.

Although Williams' later plays share with Iguana the interrelation of body and space in structuring the experience of marginality, they develop the space and body conflict into an interior bodily conflict resulting from the characters' bodily confinement. Like the earlier plays, they 'still focus on a desire to escape – here not only from a disturbing existence in which the characters are trapped, but also from a dialogue which frustrates and alienates them' (Saddik, 1999, p.80). For Saddik these characters are trapped within 'a private psychological world' rather than within 'a particular situation' (p.80).⁵¹ Drawing on Saddik's argument, language functions here as a means of entrapment and confinement rather than an avenue of liberation from this bodily confinement. According to this argument, the only escape is:

silence and death, and they don't even seem to hope for anything to save or protect them. The panic, fear, and loneliness they experience postpone "the end" however, and the characters have no choice but to "go on" in an endless cycle of representation which is linguistically and philosophically fragmented (p.80).

This 'endless cycle of representation' will be read in this chapter as an experience of 'one-ness' created between two or more characters through bodily communication, in order to escape their own interior bodily confinement. However, unlike Saddik's view, this circle will be viewed as a means of escape. This escape

⁵¹ Saddik's examples are Tom Wingfield of Menagerie and Blanche DuBois in Streetcar.

is anti realistic as it is established within the psyche of another character rather than within the social context.

Saddik's argument supports this view, as she thinks that Williams searches in these plays:

to locate and directly represent an absolute, intangible reality apart from an external reality which he once described as "the everyday humdrum world" indicates a different subject of representation than we saw in his early work. While the ultimate goal of getting closer to a truth which exists outside of language is no different from the goal he claimed for his early realistic plays (Saddik, 1999, p.80).

She adds that in I Cannot Imagine Tomorrow, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel, and The Two-Character Play (1973), he seeks to reach that goal 'through representation and exploration of the psychological process rather than through the representation of human interaction' (p.80). It is this 'psychological process' that I will focus on in this section of the thesis, to demonstrate Williams' changed attitude to processes and experiences of marginality.

I will examine this concept of 'one-ness' in relation to the last phase of the transition the minorities go through in the later phase of Williams' work, in its development into an experience of marginality. The aim is to move beyond these critical perspectives of Williams' later plays to view them within his new perception of language in relation to characterization. This will be examined in relation to questions of marginality, arguing that this perception of language frames a different representation of marginality from that of his earlier plays. Here the experience of marginality moves from the interrelation between characters and the

way the play is set up spatially (as suggested in Iguana) to the marginality of language and the centrality of the body. It is worth mentioning that this representation is developed through three phases of Williams' late dramatic career: the late 1960s, the early 1970s and the late 1970s. As the emphasis is to explore chronologically the development of the concept of 'one-ness' in relation to the marginality experience, I will examine the plays in which this development is salient. These plays will include Kingdom of Earth, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and Small Craft Warnings, and I will conclude the thesis with Vieux Carré (1977). My discussion traces the development of 'one-ness' in Williams' dramatic worlds from an individual experience to a communal one. In Kingdom of Earth we are introduced to the stages of creating the 'one-ness' between two characters, until In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel the circle of 'one-ness' is developed into an experience of marginality. Then Small Craft Warnings suggests that the communal unity is an in-between form of liberation and Williams as he explores moving beyond the margin by dramatising 'one-ness' with God and the return to the self as the source of salvation and liberation.

CHAPTER III, PART II

KINGDOM OF EARTH (1968): THE TRANSITION FROM THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA TO TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' LATER PLAYS

The Night of the Iguana ends with Hannah's concept of 'home', a fluctuating mental space that is built between two people as a therapeutic alternative to the characters' sense of entrapment within exterior space.⁵² By building 'a nest in the heart' of Shannon, Hannah helps him endure and accept his subterranean world. With his 1968 play Kingdom of Earth (The Seven Descents of Myrtle), Williams develops this concept of home into the idea of 'one-ness' as a vision of liberation from the pressures of self-imprisonment that characterise his earlier plays.

Kingdom of Earth introduces in stages to the creation of this 'one-ness' between Myrtle and Chicken. The experience of 'one-ness' stands for the fluctuating mental space established between them through their physical contact as an outlet for their bodily confinement. This liminal space is where the experience of marginality lies in this play. It is visualised by the 'kitchen table', around which the characters' movement is described.

In this sense, the play signifies a dramatic transition regarding the minority experience from Iguana into Williams' later plays. In Earth the experience of marginality takes a circular form where the characters resort to projecting their anxiety and confinement onto each other; the play suggests that they have no choice but to hold to each other within the circle of 'one-ness'. However, Williams

⁵² The reference here is to Hannah's words to Shannon in Iguana about her concept of 'home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can ... well, nest – rest – live in, emotionally speaking' (The Night of the Iguana, Orpheus Descending, p.101).

has not fully visualised the idea of a circle in Earth and he does not do so until In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel. This circularity is developed in Williams' later plays to focus on language itself, which becomes frustrating because it appears to take the characters nowhere.

The action of the play takes place in a farmhouse in the Mississippi Delta, during the flooding season in early spring. The play opens with the arrival of Lot, a young man suffering from tuberculosis, returning to his childhood home with his new bride Myrtle, an ex-stripper and sometime whore. They quickly encounter Lot's half brother, Chicken, an African-American who 'rules' over the place. The play depicts the entrapment of these three characters within the house after a flood warning is issued. Throughout the play we are presented with contrasts between the two brothers: Lot is impotent and effeminate, while Chicken is heterosexual, and a strong and lusty 'wood-colt'. Unlike Chicken, who earns his name by drinking the blood of a chicken on the roof, Lot coughs up blood out of his infected left lung because of TB. Lot has a special arrangement with Chicken: Chicken runs the place for Lot, and the farm goes to him after Lot's death. The play ends with Myrtle involved in sexual intercourse with Chicken on the kitchen table. They both witness Lot's death in the parlour, after he has resurrected his dead mother's image by wearing her clothes.

The focus on Chicken as a black character has led critics to contextualise the play within discourses of race and the liberal movements of the 1960s. For example, Philip C. Kolin in 'Sleeping with Caliban: The Politics of Race in Tennessee Williams' Kingdom of Earth' (1996), argues that whereas in Williams' earlier plays, people of colour are seen as 'the supernumeraries of Southern patriarchy', in this play the major role is given to 'a man of colour'

(Crandell, 1996a, p.226).⁵³ Kolin argues that the 'racial/ethnic presence lies outside the performative experience of a dominant culture', where Chicken has been 'marginalized'. This is seen as the major reason why the play is rarely performed.⁵⁴ The play, as Kolin puts it, 'valorises anthropological claims that it is nearly impossible to identify racial traits by origin', and it 'challenges race ideology by destabilizing the "either/or" economy of colonialism and demoralizes such mythologies [power bases built upon racial differences] upon which racial stereotypes are grounded' (Crandell, p.230).⁵⁵ David Savran in Communists, Cowboys, and Queers (1992) supports this line of argument, suggesting that Chicken's 'dark-complected' and 'foreign' looking features signify his power instead of his marginality (Savran, p.123).

Although this study does not adopt a socio-political reading of the play, it is nevertheless significant to relate it to the broader transitions in American society and culture, as they impact upon the representation of marginality in Williams' drama. The summer of 1968 witnessed the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the rising spirit of 'protest movements' which were in place before 1968 against the Vietnam War's goals of colonisation (Crandell, 1996a, p.229).⁵⁶ Although the civil rights movement had grown steadily since the mid-1950s, the more turbulent mid-to late 1960s (against the backdrop of Vietnam) provide a context for the tensions between the characters in Earth, particularly

⁵³ The link here is to Suddenly Last Summer where the black boys who are unstaged characters are used by Williams as a symbolic reference to visualise the image of the blackness of Sebastian's self-consumption.

⁵⁴ Kolin relates this to the fact that the Broadway premiere of the play starred Harry Gurdino as Chicken, instead of a man of colour. Actually, it was not until 1975 with Princeton McCarty's production that two black actors, Garland Wright and David Pendleton, starred as Chicken. Kolin thinks that 'casting a person of color to play Chicken would unquestionably allow the script to foreground the social anxieties of a dominant white culture' (See Crandell, 1996a, pp.230-31).

⁵⁵ In the spring of 1968 'these mythologies were tested in the fires of the streets, and at the Ethel Barrymore theatre where Williams' play premiered' (Crandell, 1996a, p.230).

⁵⁶ Williams' himself 'made several public appearances denouncing the war' (Crandell, 1996a, p.229).

embodied by Chicken who is named 'Negro' and objects to the discrimination he faces. The context of 1968 helps to explain Williams' focus, but the play implies that the new social movements can never get to grips with the complexity of human identity and communication. In other words, within the 1960s movements where the 'invisible America' starts to emerge, moving from margin to be centralized as a visible group, Williams focuses on his characters in isolation by placing them in the remote setting of the farmhouse on the Mississippi Delta. Although Mississippi was the centre of racial politics at the time of the play, Williams' main concern is the spatial entrapment of his characters within the farmhouse with a flood's threat outside. His main focus is the experience of these characters within the house in relation to the concept of 'one-ness' rather than on their interaction with the exterior social space which is still racist to the coloured Chicken. For instance, apart from the opening scene where Chicken is subjected to the racist comments of a white family before they flee the flood, Chicken and the other two characters do not have any interaction with the exterior place.

Although reading the play within this socio-political framework of racial politics is an interesting point of research, the focus here is on reading this experience within the frame of the characters' interiority and their movements within the dramatic space of the play. This is not to imply that Williams does not engage with the ideas informing the social movements that prevailed the time era of the play, but rather he transcends and questions them. With the failure of the liberal movements in achieving its objectives, Williams in Earth is pervasive in his attempt to reverse the dominant identity politics by centralising the coloured Chicken as the force of light and liberation within his 'one-ness' with Myrtle as will be further discussed in this part of the chapter.

The play establishes two main spatial areas in which the action takes place. Myrtle is placed between the bedroom and the kitchen, seeking survival from the coming destruction of the flood. Her only escape is to the stairs where her vertical spatial movements represent her gradually liberated self. Within these spatial areas, the two male characters struggle for the attentions of Myrtle who represents an outlet onto which they project their anxiety and confinement.⁵⁷ On the one hand, Lot is confined in his past (which he tries to revive by cross-dressing and imitating his dead mother). On the other hand, Chicken is entrapped within his African-American heritage. However, during the course of the play, Chicken succeeds in escaping his confinement by achieving 'one-ness' with Myrtle. Here 'one-ness' is established as a suggested formula for liberation.⁵⁸

These issues of confinement and liberation will be explored by decoding the stage directions and reading bodily and spoken language, as well as visual and aural images. A close reading of the stage visualisation of the two characters' conflict over Myrtle will be discussed in relation to the concept of 'one-

⁵⁷ The triangle in the characterization is reminiscent of *Streetcar*, 'in which the widow of the dead homosexual [Lot] is possessed carnally by her ape-like brother in law [Chicken]. Lot is not yet dead before Chicken breaks through Myrtle's feeble protestations just as Stanley cruelty degrades Blanche ... however, the faded belle is less the malleable wife (an ex-show girl) than she is the "exotically pretty" husband, who, with his pale eyes and dyed blond hair, dresses up like a ghost of his [Southern] mother in her youth and dies in her beloved parlour' (Boxill, pp.153- 54).

⁵⁸ One stereotype of African-American men is that sexuality and violence are closely related. However, Williams does not perpetuate this stereotype, but rather reverses it by dramatising Chicken's sexuality and violence as a way for Myrtle's salvation through her 'one-ness' with him where he plays the role of her saviour figure. The reading of Williams' letters and memoirs proves that Williams does not have a racist attitude. For example in his letter to Audrey Wood from New Orleans, November 22, 1946, he refers to the 'Washington race-discrimination deal' and he 'added his name to the protest' (Devlin and Tischler, 2004, p.79). Although he refers to blacks as 'Negro', it seems that his reference to them never implies racial bias or discrimination. He mentions in his letter to his mother from Iowa City in 1937 that he is 'taking part in a "living newspaper", a series of skits dramatising current events' where he plays 'a Negro chairman of a church convention condemning Hugo Black and the Ku Klux Klan' (Devlin and Tischler, 2000, p.104: my emphasis). In his memoirs, Williams refers to the fact that his sister 'Rose is fond of blacks, as I am, perhaps because of our devotion to our beautiful black nurse Ozzie when we were children in Mississippi' who used to conclude her letters to Williams with 'love to my children, white or black' (*Memoirs*, p.252). Some critics like Nick Moschovakis in 'Tennessee Williams' American Blues: From the Early Manuscripts Through *Menagerie*' (2005) thinks that racial issues do not 'often arise explicitly in the Williams canon' in comparison to 'other major Southern writers' (Moschovakis, 2005, p.1).

ness'. This will be read in relation to the stage as an exterior projection of the characters' interior conflict in order to create, through this 'one-ness', a space of liberation.

The opening of the play suggests two spatial dimensions of the Mississippi Delta farmhouse: the ground level and an upper space. The ground floor consists of four spatial areas: the back wall, a kitchen and 'a mysterious little parlour' with 'a narrow, dark hall between them' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.625). The two latter areas constitute the interior which 'will be exposed', as Williams puts it, in his description of the setting. It suggests that Williams is recounting a metaphorical journey of Myrtle's self-discovery towards her interiority. Her confinement is visualised from the very beginning by the spatial barriers that she has to overcome. The door represents the first symbolic barrier: there is the back door which she 'pulls', tumbling off the back steps when it is opened. However, she refuses at first to enter her 'new home for the first time by the back door' and only finally 'stops waiting out front and comes charging back around the side of the house' to try 'the back door' (p.627). She first finds it stuck but then it opens to lead her 'straight up' to 'the dark, narrow hall' through which she heads straight to the parlour (p.629). The second spatial barrier is the door to the parlour. It is stuck but after putting her weight against it, she accesses it. The last spatial barrier is the kitchen door, which she cannot access because it has been locked by Chicken. This suggests his territorial dominance over the kitchen, by which he can manipulate others. The play establishes the kitchen as his territory, where entry and exit are licensed by him.

The 'back wall of the house' symbolises Myrtle's hidden interiority, which is 'represented by a scrim' that will 'lift when the house is entered'

(Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.625). Williams uses many vivid details to describe her entrance into the house, paralleling the journey into her interiority. In this sense, it is not clear whether the other two characters are there merely to serve the navigation of this journey, as elements in Myrtle's interiority rather than real dramatic characters. In other words, Chicken and Lot represent two conflicting opposites that visualise Myrtle's interior binaries (her suppressed sexuality and her apparent decency). In the spatial construction of the play, the steps act as a transitional place between these two opposites.

Chicken and Lot provide this vision as a prolepsis of her descent into her interiority. On the one hand, Chicken resides in the kitchen area which is identified with invisibility and marginality. It has been inhabited by the invisible outcasts: Chicken and the 'unmarried colored couples' who were there when Lot's mother was still alive. Positioned spatially in the ground-floor area, its status as a subterranean interiority is maintained. With a 'nude girl's body in a calendar picture' a sexual aspect is added to the place (p.626). However, it remains the source of light and warmth in the house, as there is no 'fire anywhere in this house except in the kitchen' (p.632). This is read as a stage through which Myrtle must move in order to achieve reconciliation with her interiority.

To achieve this, she has to violate Chicken's territorial dominance over the area. However, Myrtle fails to recognise that Chicken is the only one who can defeat the spatial entrapment of the flood by going up to the roof. As such, he is described in the stage directions with his 'rubber hip boots covered with river slick' as a 'suitable antagonist to a flooding river' (p.625: my emphasis). The word 'antagonist' suggests the image of his 'boots' as a weapon of resistance against the flood. The only outlet for Myrtle is to reconcile herself with this body through the

circle of 'one-ness'. Given this fact, she is incapable of building an equal relationship with him, and he starts to violate her instead of her controlling him. He begins to project onto her his own anxiety resulting from his bodily confinement.

Chicken is confined within his 'black-complexion' and 'coloured blood', which appears to cause his bodily anxiety. He is subjected to the racial gaze of disgust and discrimination. For example, the play starts with a bleak attitude of white society towards Chicken: the white people who flee the flood inform him 'sorry we don't have room for you in the car' (p.625). He also tells Myrtle in one of his monologues that they won't sell him 'bottle liquor in this country', but that he gets it from an 'ole colored man that brews a pretty good brew' (p.665). Furthermore, when he approaches one of the white girls on the 'Dixie Star', she gives him a 'quick, mean look' and says, "Nigger, stay in your place" (p.679: my emphasis). He is labelled 'colored' and 'Nigger' as terms which entrap him within others' perceptions of his skin colour. This entrapment is visualised spatially by his being positioned on the ground floor. He never ascends to the upper area of the stage, only moving horizontally on the lower spatial areas of the house: the kitchen, the lower hall, the back door, and the basement.

By contrast, the upstairs area symbolises the white and supposedly genteel Southern world, guarded by Lot. Ironically, it is a dark area where 'the electric current that makes the lights light ... is temporarily interrupted' (p.629). The crystal chandelier cannot light the place as its pendants are dusty. The only light that enters is an exterior 'fading grey light' through the velvet drapes. Everything on this level is fragile, including the crystal chandelier, the bohemian wineglasses and the gold chairs. This evokes a situation of decay and death in life, which is also expressed through Lot's body. Lot is diseased with TB and he is only

barely able to stagger around the space. Sitting in the bedroom, Lot is positioned in the 'pool of the moonlight' where his only spatial movement is that of the 'wicker rocker' (p.651). The rocking motion stands for his interior instability due to his mental confinement brought about through his memories of his past.

It is important to the direction of Williams' drama after Iguana that this is presented symbolically through Lot's mind, more so than as a visual symbol of a lost, Southern physical setting. Lot identifies with certain visual symbols, including his mother's cigar holder, her clothes, and the house. Through these he builds memories as a point of departure into the past. For example, upon his early meeting with Chicken he removes the holder 'from a coat pocket, puts a cigarette in it and lights it' (p.632). By remaining in the house, he maintains the illusion of a continuous past. So, by marrying Myrtle, he tries to use her to revive the image of his dead mother, as part of his 'revenge plot' against Chicken to regain the house.

This situates Lot and Chicken in a rivalry for Myrtle. This is visualised spatially by Chicken's advances towards Lot which push him to the upper area, and by Lot's retreat to the bedroom. At the beginning of the play, when he realises that Lot has arrived at the house, Chicken rushes to the kitchen to hide: his 'frozen attitude by the door was released by the sound of Lot's paroxysm of coughing' (p.634). He 'crosses to a cupboard, takes out a jug and takes a long, long drink' (p.634). Neither Lot nor Myrtle calls him out of the kitchen; he only comes out when he 'is ready'. In comparison we see Lot's physical decline through TB; by the end of Scene One he groans and staggers to his feet after being pushed to the floor by Chicken. So, he 'drags himself up the steep, dark, narrow steps' in retreat to the bedroom (p.650). Following Lot, at the end of this scene Myrtle also 'scrambles up the narrow steps to the bedroom door'. In this upper area she realises

that she is entrapped spatially, unable to 'drive right back to Memphis', stuck with a sick husband.

Lot's lack of reaction puts Myrtle in tension with herself. This is visualised by her vertical movement on the stairs throughout the play, which is symbolic of her hovering between her suppressed sexuality and her illusory decency. On the one hand, when going upstairs to the bedroom, she denies her sexuality in order to display a refined personality in front of Lot. She tells him a different version of what is happening down in the kitchen between her and Chicken, to keep up her image as a 'decent woman'. For example, she lies about her comment on the carving on the table: 'I notice a pocket knife and some fresh wood shavings in the middle of the table. Well. That was peculiar but I said nothing about it' (p.662). Gradually Chicken attempts to help her confront her sexual interiority. From the very beginning he tries to reveal her past: 'yes I bet. You kick with the right leg, you kick with the left leg, and between your legs you make your living' (p.645). Savran supports this line of argument, as he views Chicken as 'the embodiment of power and virility' who 'disrupts a woman's life and her affiliations, inaugurates a sexual encounter tinged with violence, and effects her transfiguration' (Savran, p.122). It is his virility that will, according to Savran, 'rejuvenate the force that can suddenly and almost magically awaken sexual desire and transform a woman ... from a state of real or feigned innocence to a wary yet vigorous adulthood' (p.122).

It is not only Chicken's 'virility' that highlights Myrtle's sexual interiority, according to my reading, as he uses four exterior visual items to do the same: the lamp light; the switch-blade knife; the carvings; and the kitchen table. In Scene Two, the 'upstairs bedroom is lighted by an oil lamp' with Chicken visible

throughout the scene in 'the very dim-lit kitchen'. Before calling Myrtle, he 'turns up the lamp in the kitchen' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.651). The lamp symbolises the force of light through which he wants to awaken her sexuality. He pushes the lamp 'toward her', as the lack of light will 'strain her eyesight' and prevent her from recognising the sexual carving and inscription on the kitchen table (p.659). Finding the carvings 'insulting to a clean-living woman who is not interested or attracted to – indecent things in her life', Myrtle maintains the suppression of her sexuality (p.660). So, she escapes spatially by her ascent to the upstairs bedroom away from the lamp light.

The double-bladed knife symbolises two aspects: pleasure and death. With the first blade, Chicken amuses himself by carving an 'indecent picture' and 'indecent word' into a kitchen table. The other blade implies death from which Myrtle escapes, reminding her of the end of the 'mobile hot shot' who was stabbed by a knife.⁵⁹ Thus, the image of Chicken folding the 'switch-blade knife' and putting it 'in his pocket', visualises him as a force that can control this destructive aspect of sexuality.

The kitchen table is the most significant among these visual items as it represents the place where the 'one-ness' between Chicken and Myrtle is created. It is a 'small square kitchen table' around which Chicken controls Myrtle's movements, either by giving up his chair or pushing the table towards her (p.692). First he manages to change her 'standing up' to a sitting position. He gets her an 'old auto cushion' which he puts on the chair to make her a 'nice soft seat' as he knows that 'woman don't like a hard seat' (p.676). By sitting 'on the edge of the

⁵⁹ Myrtle is like Blanche in Streetcar who fears the two opposites of death and desire. However, unlike Blanche who is entrapped within these two opposites, Myrtle through Chicken breaks free from the entrapment of these two opposites.

auto cushion', Myrtle at this point is still on the margin of this area. When she comes to understand the arrangement between Chicken and Lot, that the former runs the farm owned by the latter, she resumes the standing position; she rises stiffly with her breathing 'audible and rapid' before leaning for support against the table (p.681). However, not until Scene Six does she move from 'standing up' to being seated on the chair, the position that best symbolises her spatial involvement within this 'one-ness'. Chicken asks her 'do you write standing up?', so she sits down to write the letter by which she declares that 'the place and all on it will be Chicken's, all Chicken's, when Lot Ravenstock dies' (p.691).

The portrayal of Myrtle's hand between Chicken's after she signs over the paper represents her first visual bodily involvement within this 'one-ness' with him. Holding her shaky hands, he wants her to feel his bodily marks: the 'calluses' which he gets from the hard work on the farm (p.690). He makes further bodily advances towards her, from 'sitting in chairs on opposite sides of the small, square kitchen table, chairs angled toward the audience', he 'rises and moves close to her' (p.692). Adopting this position close to her body, he asks: 'can you kiss and like kissin' a man that's been accused of having some black blood in him?' (p.692).

Myrtle's movement after this statement dramatises her hesitance: 'she rises from her chair and pulls it back from the table', because she still has a 'typical Southern lower-class dread and awe of Negros' (p.695). She tries to maintain a spatial distance between them, justifying it by expressing her fear that he should swing his 'boots with mud on 'em stainin' my blouse', but her blouse 'was awready stained' (p.695). Here the 'stain' stands as a visual symbol of Chicken's violation of her body. He asks her to move her chair 'back to where it was' in order that she should be within his dominance again. She submits to his order by moving the chair

to where he points. Thus, the scene ends with Myrtle sitting on the chair 'so close to the table that she is between his boots' (p.693). Through their sexual contact at the end of the scene, they achieve bodily unity.

Kolin argues that by the end of the play, Myrtle 'has had an epiphany thanks to Chicken, who subsequently becomes her *savoir*'. He brings a real light of salvation to her life; thus, 'the darkness between the scenes is replaced with light', and this emphasises 'the script's message about a new relationship being born' (Crandell, 1996a, p.240). My reading of the play supports this suggestion of a reinvented relationship, which is integrated with the rebirth of Myrtle's body within her 'one-ness' with Chicken. Therefore, the first words of Chicken after the sexual act are: 'let there be light' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.693). He echoes God's own words in order to announce Myrtle's metaphorical rebirth within this 'one-ness'. Hence, their 'one-ness' is given a theological rituality achieved through sex. He thinks that 'there's nothing in the world, in this whole kingdom of earth that can compare with one thing and that one thing is what's able to happen between a man and a woman' (p.701). Having a woman who is sufficiently physically attracted to him to say 'Daddy I want it' enables him to get a 'square deal out of life' (p.701). Despite the sexual connotations, the use of the word 'Daddy' maintains and emphasises Chicken's God-like characteristics. Here he becomes Myrtle's force of light, which she cannot stand to be left without. When he departs she shouts 'don't leave me alone here' (p.679).

Her words imply a clear reference to Chicken as a God-like force within their 'one-ness', although from Chicken's perspective he is so obsessed with the evil in himself that he can only conceive of a God of wrath and not a God of love. Thomas P. Adler in 'The Search for God in the Plays of Tennessee Williams'

(1973) views Chicken as one of the three characters who 'become so obsessed with the evil in themselves and in those around them' that they relate this evil to God. Like Shannon in Iguana and Sebastian in Last Summer, Chicken denies himself 'the possibility of redemption' because of his own distorted image of God (Stanton, p.141). Quoting John J. Fritscher in 'Some Attitudes and a Posture: Religious Metaphor and Ritual in Tennessee Williams' Query of God' (1970), Adler connects this 'God of Wrath' to the psychic wounds left by Williams' 'experience of wrath and love'; according to this argument 'sin in Williams is not so much an offence against some God, but an establishment of alienation between people which keeps them from meaning God to each other', which in this case prevents 'person-to-person goodness' (p.138).

Chicken develops this exploration of 'person-to-person goodness' into what I call 'person-to-person salvation', by offering Myrtle survival by taking her up to the roof at the end of the play in order to save her from the flood. As this is a 'kingdom of earth' rather than a 'kingdom of heaven', Myrtle gains bodily rather spiritual salvation. However, this term of survival helps her reconcile her sexual interiority, and the roof represents the spatial area of liberation. Although it is not staged we know about what is happening there through the dialogue, which maintains the status of salvation as unseen and mysterious. It seems that Williams' vision of liberation in this play is an abstract one. He suggests that it is through 'one-ness' that the characters can transcend their isolated selves in order to be liberated from confinement. While Myrtle and Chicken survive at the end of the play, content with the more immanent 'kingdom of earth', Lot chases after the decaying 'kingdom of heaven', trying to transcend the faded Southern past of his mother into the heavenly spaces beyond the stage.

This is dramatised by Lot descending the stairs for the first time at the end of the play, with the 'crown' suggesting a king-like image (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.702). His staggering movements visualise his kingdom's gradual decay. Michael R. Schiavi in 'Effeminacy in the Kingdom: Tennessee Williams and Stunted Spectatorship' (1999) reads this decay in relation to Lot's transvestism and effeminacy, and views Lot 'as anti-body ... gasping for breath'; he is portrayed as conducting a 'one-man war with physicality': costumed in his 'mother's white silk wrapper, he is rendered an unearthly sorcerer wielding a fuming magic wand that defines substance by transforming it to air' (Schiavi, p.108). On losing 'his bodily battle' he collapses in the parlour, bowing as if he was acting to an 'applauding audience' (p.108). In my reading his audience can be interpreted as his own self, which he cannot transcend until his body confines him in death. This is visualised by his collapse in the parlour, the place which symbolises his refined Southern past. Chicken enters the parlour to 'sit gingerly on one of the gilt chairs for a moment' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.702). This symbolises his violation of Lot's kingdom of heaven. The act of sitting on the chairs maintains the triumph of his earthy, sexual and animal-like kingdom of earth.

The spatial movement of Myrtle is described in her retreat to the kitchen where she moves towards the utensils (p.702). She heads to the wall where the 'knife' and 'pan' are hanging. This symbolises her transformation from 'the easy life queen' who brought electronic machines with her at the beginning of the play, into a 'hard' woman who appears carrying knives and sharp utensils. She has to change into a hard woman to survive in Chicken's kingdom where 'a man and his life both got to be equally hard. Made out of the same hard thing' (p.683). In contrast, the fragile Lot dies in a feminized 'gauzy white dress' adopting a

‘kneeling position’ which contrasts with Chicken standing over Lot’s ‘summer gauze apparition’ pronouncing ‘Chicken is king’ (pp.702-04).

Chicken’s final words to Myrtle, ‘up, quick’, implies that he is the only one who can elevate her up spatially and spiritually. He is her saviour from the flood water that is approaching with its ‘great booming sound’ (p.705). Standing behind him unable to be left alone, she is trapped but also liberated within their ‘one-ness’, outside of which she feels vulnerable. Within this ‘one-ness’ she can belong to the spatial kingdom of earth, while she does not have the power to confront the exterior threat of the flood alone. Thus, Myrtle prefers to stay within this area of ‘one-ness’, which is further developed in Williams’ plays of the 1970s into a wider circle of collective unity. This marks a movement in Williams’ concept of marginality in his later plays, from an individual experience to a collective one, as the following part of this chapter will demonstrate.

CHAPTER III, PART III

IN THE BAR OF A TOKYO HOTEL (1969)

In his later plays of the 1970s and 1980s, using free dramatic forms, Tennessee Williams moved towards adopting the absurdist concept of silence in relation to the experience of marginality. However, he is rarely viewed as an absurdist writer, because in his late drama silence operates in a different way from in the work of the absurdist. Silence in absurdist drama is viewed by Karen F. Stein, in 'Metaphysical Silence in Absurd Drama' (1979), as a symbol of emptiness but 'rich' in 'ambiguous interpretation' (Stein, p.423). This is related to the absurdist theme of silence 'when the Romantic impulse to make literature transcend itself and reach the absolute [leads] to a frustration with language itself' (p.423). The absurdist use of silence is an attempt to lay 'existence bare' and stems from the belief 'that existence itself is chaotic' (p.423). In this sense, silence for the absurdist dramatist 'is no longer an indication of mystical possibilities but of absence, lack of meaning, the void', symbolically 'linked with the existential mystery' (p.425).

Williams in his later plays departs from this view, to use silence as a symbol of the characters' marginality, and paradoxically as a liberating outlet from the confinement of language. Williams' later characters resort to silence to achieve liberation from their interior bodily confinement and entrapment within language. Thus, by using incomplete and broken sentences confined characters project their anxiety onto other characters, who find themselves obliged to comprehend and complete their sentences. In doing so, these characters are implicated within the confinement of the former. This confinement can be viewed as a circle which is

fully visualised in Williams' In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969). Within this circle, two confined characters are merged, simultaneously building up a new exterior and interior space; exterior because it transcends the character's confined self to be projected onto another character, and interior because it combines the interiorities of the two characters.

Unlike Williams' early plays, the stage (the exterior space) is used here as an exterior projection of the characters' interior conflict, in order to create a larger space of liberation which in the previous part of this chapter I called the 'one-ness'. However, after establishing this 'one-ness' the characters fail to come to grips with each other within it. Thus, the space of liberation paradoxically also suggests confinement. It stands for a space of freedom as a refuge from the hostile exterior space but, at the same time, it gradually becomes an unbearable place of confinement due to lack of communication between the two characters. This liminal space is where the experience of marginality lies in Williams' later plays. For example, the previous part of this chapter ended with discussion of Chicken in Kingdom of Earth (1968) creating his 'one-ness' with Myrtle as an outlet for his bodily confinement. However, by projecting his confinement onto Myrtle, both start to share within this 'one-ness' an experience of confinement. This sense of confinement originates from the two characters' unequal roles within it. Chicken's words 'Let there be light' position him as Myrtle's new God, in his echo of God's words at the moment of creation. As a light- and life-force, Chicken plays a superior role to Myrtle within their 'one-ness'. However, here an earthly light is offered by Chicken, which replaces the heavenly light of faith which Shannon eventually discovers in Iguana (1961).

Williams' late characters continue to search for the earthly light, as presented in Earth, to replace the heavenly light of faith which they cannot achieve, mainly because this religious light did not seem real within the context of the rising social movements which came to dominate America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While Williams never subscribed to any one social movement at that time, his work reflected the desire within America to find new spaces of liberation. I will argue that these spaces of liberation are portrayed in complex ways in Williams' later work.

The main aim of the following part of this chapter is to explore the development of the marginality concept in relation to the concept of 'one-ness', through the later phase of Williams' dramatic career, spanning the late 1960s until the end of the 1970s. I will focus on the plays in which this concept is most evident: In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel and Small Craft Warnings (1972) which offer the best examples of the transition of Williams' dramatic technique. The conclusion of the thesis will chart the attempt in the final phase of his career to move beyond language, with particular reference to Vieux Carré (1977).

The idea of 'one-ness' in relation to light will not be considered as Williams' movement beyond the concept of God, but rather as a re-establishing of this concept. He can be seen to develop the theological content of his plays, here God is changed from a higher power who exists on a transcendent place, to one inhabiting the earth closer to the characters. This development parallels the spatial set-ups of his later plays. For example, Williams moves from using a transcendent setting embodied by the three-storey house in Earth and the hilltop hotel of Iguana, into the more enclosed Tokyo setting of In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel. Here the characters move horizontally, unlike previous plays where characters mainly move

up and down. Through this technique Williams transforms religion from an abstract ideal into a tangible bodily experience within the circle of 'one-ness'. This circle is developed further in the plays of the 1970s, as a movement from an individual experience to a collective one, where a group of characters work together to reach their goals and to prevent their solitary alienation. So the circle of 'one-ness' is recreated and widened to include two or more characters, in order to operate on a collective level. In other words, a group of people work together to prevent an individual's confinement. Here the identifiable self-confined minorities of Williams' early plays are replaced with a community which parallels the 'beloved community' popularised by Martin Luther King in his civil rights vision of the 1960s, and which for Williams, was an antidote to the growing cynicism in American life in the 1970s.

As the emphasis of this chapter is to explore Williams' development of the circle of 'one-ness' in relation to the experience of marginality, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel is a good play to consider first as it charts his departure from realism towards freer forms of expression. Tokyo Hotel witnesses a movement from the long poetic speeches and monologues of Iguana to shorter and incomplete sentences. This movement is not manifested only through language but also by the setting of the play. There are many references to the action on the stage as symbolic rather than concrete and realistic. Apart from the two main characters, the only others we are introduced to are the unnamed and indefinite 'Barman' and 'Hawaiian Lady', who are there to serve the interaction of the main characters rather than being realised dramatic characters themselves. Moreover, the play takes place in an indefinite Tokyo scene, where the dramatic action is static. This emphasises the spatial setting as a visualisation of the interiority of the two

characters, Miriam and Mark. They travel to Japan on a trip planned by Miriam, but the journey has ominous consequences for Mark and leads to his nervous collapse. As an artist Mark is in danger of isolating himself in his art, which in turn creates tension with Miriam. The action of the play starts in the midst of this tension, with Miriam contacting Leonard, Mark's agent, to convince him to come to Tokyo to take her husband back to New York.

Although written only one year after Earth, Tokyo Hotel develops some of the themes of marginality of the previous play. However, the way these themes are presented is adjusted to cope with the free dramatic forms adopted. So, Tokyo Hotel moves further from presenting the concept of 'one-ness' as a fluctuating mental space established between two individuals, as between Chicken and Myrtle in Earth, and presents it as a visual and physical space on the stage. Reference is actually made in Tokyo Hotel to 'the circle of light', and a round 'centre table' is described, around which the characters move. Dialogue and language, in itself becomes a vicious cycle as the characters remain at best stagnant. So they resort to projecting their anxiety onto each other, and have no choice but to go on within this endless circle of anxiety and entrapment.

Here in Tokyo Hotel we are not introduced to the stages of how Miriam and Mark's circle of 'one-ness' is created, as we are in Earth. Rather, the play explores what happens within this circle and how the 'one-ness' develops into an experience of marginality. The emphasis of this part will be on reading this experience of marginality in relation to the anxiety of the two characters in order to examine how this circle becomes a space of confinement. This part of the chapter links this concept of 'one-ness' to the marginality of language which characterises Williams' plays of the 1970s.

Tokyo Hotel starts with a detailed description of the main setting of the play, the barroom in an unnamed Tokyo hotel. Miriam is located in ‘a small area of intense light’ and seated at a ‘small round table’ (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 7, p.3). The circularity of the table suggests a visual image of Miriam being located within a circle with her husband, Mark. This table is lit by an ‘intense light’ from above which maintains the circle of light.⁶⁰ Miriam’s first words verbalise her feeling towards the atmosphere of ‘vitality’ in Tokyo which accompanies her expressed appreciation of the ‘rate of suicide’ (p.3). When asked by the Barman why there are no suicides, she replies that in America there is ‘an explosion of vitality which is world-wide’ (p.3). Her answer implies that Americans are exporting their ‘vitality’ all over the world. This implicitly refers to the United States in the early 1970s as a rising influential power spreading its ideas and values across the globe.

Thus, Miriam adopts in her relation to the Barman a chauvinistic American attitude. She asserts that the idioms which he uses are the ‘idioms of my native country’ (p.6: my emphasis). With the word ‘native’ preceded by a possessive pronoun, a sense of nationalism is connoted. This sense is apparent in her attempt to differentiate between the idioms the Barman uses and the idioms which ‘real’ Americans use. For example, the word ‘venerable’ is still a native word but no longer has currency (p.6). Miriam thinks that she hasn’t heard the word for a long time, implying that although it is a native word, what it stands for no longer exists. This implicitly connotes the superiority of the Americans over other national cultures. Setting the play in Japan, Williams explores the growth of American influence on Japan. Yet, as Leonard puts it, ‘the Japanese make such

⁶⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, the circle of ‘one-ness’ brings the light of salvation to the characters.

lovely, compact electric appliances, such as their Sony transistors' (p.44). Williams is interested in its 'exotic' culture in a similar way as he was in the Mexico of Iguana. This helps him to dramatise the experience of his characters' marginality by alienating them from their exterior society. Again, the focus is on reading this experience on a psychological level and not on explicitly socio-political one.

The concept of 'one-ness' is central to the following argument and needs to be defined within the context of the play. Miriam's 'one-ness' with Mark implies her 'infantile dependence' on him (p.14). Hence, she is stuck within the circle of light and cannot move or go anywhere (that is why she always sits at the table). Miriam and Mark are visualised as two fragments of one entity. For example, when Miriam holds her large mirror to make him look at himself in the glass, he 'stares above it at her'; he looks at her as to see himself through her (p.18). This 'one-ness' is also conveyed verbally in their conversation. They complete each other's sentences, which is very different from Miriam's conversation with the Barman where the meaning of their sentences is implicit within their conversation. Mark tells Miriam that 'I've always felt that. After the work, so little is left of me. To give to another person'; to the word 'another person', Miriam simply replies: 'Mark'; then he responds: 'Miriam' (p.28). This can be read to imply that the 'another person' is both Mark and Miriam at the same time. This is put explicitly within Miriam's question: 'are we two people, Mark, or are we -', she stops here as Mark asks her to do so, then lifting 'her hands to her face' the words continue as she completes the sentence saying: 'two sides of ... **One**' (p.30: my emphasis). However, the word 'one' implies equality which Mark tries to escape or deny, by exerting power over Miriam in his role of controller of the circle. When she asks him this question, he physically tries to prove his

superiority over her by asking her to stop and calling her a 'bitch', while she goes on telling him that they are 'two sides' of one: 'an artist inhabiting the body of a compulsive –' (p.30). Her sentence implies that within this circle of 'one-ness', Mark functions as the spirit which inhabits her body. As a body, Miriam projects her anxiety through sex, while as a spirit Mark projects his anxiety through art. However, when Miriam insists on continuing to talk about this 'one-ness', he flings her physically through the arch: in other words, he physically pushes her out of the circle of light as he 'seizes her shoulders' and she 'staggers to her knees' as he 'lifts her and flings her through the arch, out of the bar' (p.30). Mark's physical act of 'seizing', 'lifting' and 'flinging' Miriam is the only physical action he uses throughout Part I.

Asked by the Barman, Mark tells him that 'I think that I will stay here till my wife returns from' (p.31). The sentence is again left incomplete and Mark adopts a static seating position in a chair at the table, implying that he will wait for Miriam until she is back. This visualises his dependence on her as his 'other half'. The physical action of flinging Miriam off the stage indicates the stage as a spatial area within the circle of light. Hence anyone who appears on the stage is described as entering this circle not the stage. For example, when Leonard comes on the stage, he 'enters the circle of light' (p.34). This implies that the circle of light is the setting of the play and the arch stands for a visual boundary between this spatial area and the outside world, off stage.

From the very beginning of the play, Miriam is introduced as a sexually frustrated woman who flirts with the Barman and makes several sexual advances to him. He is located 'behind a bar of polished bamboo' which represents a visual exterior image of his interior space (p.3). The polished bamboo stands as a

spatial boundary between him and Miriam's circle of 'one-ness'. Thus, Miriam's movements towards him can be read as an attempted violation of this space motivated by her sexual drive. Miriam is read by Henry Hewes' review of the play in 'Tennessee's Quest' (1996) as a 'boldly lecherous operator, obsessed with the physical attractiveness of younger men' where 'she sees her pursuit of her compulsion as a necessary affirmation of her vitality' (Crandell, 1996a, p.246). Hewes' argument is based on the stereotypical reading of Williams' earlier females' sexuality, while Miriam's sexuality links back to her anxiety with regards to Mark.

Miriam's anxiety can be understood in the light of her relationship with the exterior space: 'I look. I absorb. I go on' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 7, p.9). The three actions are passive rather than active; she tries to absorb the exterior space. The act of absorbing implies her attempt to interiorise the exterior space. She does not establish any belonging to the exterior space, as the phrase 'go on' implies. This is in contrast to Mark, who Miriam thinks would take 'an hour to absorb a pagoda' (p.9). Mark needs a long time to absorb a place as he tries to dominate the exterior space around him, while Miriam accepts and absorbs it. Hence, this maintains her survival within the circle of light. She realises that she is not capable of defeating the circle of light as she is wholly entrapped within its circularity; as she puts it: 'I'm fully aware, of course, that there's no magical trick to defend me indefinitely from the hideous product of calendars, clocks, watches. However I've made a covenant with them' (p.13).

This agreement (expressed in the religious terms of a 'covenant') is summed up as 'one pill' which is enough to take out her life (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 7, p.13). Miriam alludes to the fact that she comes to

an agreement with this circularity, and that in a case of 'incurable illness', taking the one suicidal pill will be the solution (p.13). The anxiety that results from the feeling of being confined within the circularity, she projects onto 'concave' or vertical shapes, namely the Barman's crotch, the cablegram, the flower on the table, and the pagodas. She dwells on the similarity between herself and the flower, as she feels they are both 'stuck' within the circle of light. Thus, by asking the Barman to remove it, she tries to free herself from her feeling of being confined. Meanwhile, she repeatedly asks the Barman to come in front of the bar, trying to violate his space by crossing behind the bar, his spatial barrier. Through this power-relationship she escapes from the confinement which she feels within the circle of light. Here in the play, the Barman is presented as a symbol of the exterior space: he is positioned on the stage as a male object of her gaze, onto whom Miriam projects her anxiety, which relates back to her frustration over Mark's sexual impotency.

There are many hints in the play that indicate the Barman as an object for this anxiety and not as a dramatic character. When asked about his name, he says 'I am the Barman' (p.4). Using a definite article and a capital letter to refer to himself and his profession as one thing, he is presented as an abstraction. Hence, at the very beginning of Part I, Miriam refers to his occupation as a confinement: 'why don't you look for an occupation that's not so confining' (p.4). By using the word 'confining', Miriam projects her own experience of confinement within the 'circle of light' on him.

The visual action of removing a large mirror from her bag symbolises the attempt to externalise her interior confinement within the circle. She tells the Barman that she likes to see 'what is going on' about her (p.4). However, the mirror

stands here for a visual means to reflect what is going inside the 'circle of light', for those positioned outside this circle. The Barman is positioned spatially outside this 'circle of light' because, unlike other characters, he is able to move freely out of this circle, on and off the stage. Miriam tries to project the light from the mirror onto the Barman, but he escapes by carrying a tray of drinks off stage. He avoids facing the projected light: 'the light from the mirror is in my eyes', and he refers to it as burning through his clothes, implying that the light is destructive to those who are positioned outside the 'circle of light' (p.5).

The free dramatic forms which are used in the play also maintain the image of the Barman as an object of anxiety. His dialogue with Miriam includes many ellipses and incomplete sentences. When Miriam asks him 'are you sure it isn't my observation of you?' he replies 'I am'; then she tells him 'you are. So I am' (p.5). The incomplete sentences cast doubt over the status of the Barman as a real entity. In fact, Miriam's acts of observing things around her in the 'circle of light' cast doubts over whether they are a reflection or a reality. The only action the Barman has on stage is with the drinks shaker, which Miriam sees as 'very distracting' as it is put in opposition to her physical confinement within the 'circle of light' (pp.4-5). She does not (or cannot) move around within this circle; her only movements are her touching of 'the feathers on her head', rearranging her bracelet and moving her head (p.7). The 'ornamented glass pendants – suspended from the arch of a door leading offstage' signify a visual parallel to her movement within the circle, and they 'chatter musically when the wind blows through' (p.7). This is used as a **'way of underlining or punctuating**. Each time the pendants sound, Miriam touches the feathers on her hat and makes her humming sound, then rearranges the bracelets on her arms and moves her head from side to side more noticeably' (p.7:

my emphasis). This 'way of underlining or punctuating' is related to the parallel between the sound of these pendants and Miriam's movements, where she checks her confined status within the 'circle of light' every now and then: by moving her head from side to side and rising and crossing toward the bar. Her spatial restlessness visualises her failure to violate the exterior space. She has no control over the exterior subjects around her, so the Barman does not cross beyond the bar and the flower is returned to the table. There are always 'instructions' that control these subjects, and keep them fixed in their space. This maintains Miriam's frustration and confinement within the exterior space which reflects her confinement within the 'circle of light'.

In her monologue, Miriam describes the two destinies which she fears: death and ageing as the two unpredictable and inevitable fates. Like death, ageing can happen overnight:

some women grow suddenly old. They go to bed young, well, reasonably young women and when they wake up in the morning and go to the mirror, they face- what? – a specter! Yes they face a specter! Themselves, yes, but not young (p.36).

Meanwhile, she fears death which serves to 'remove, wrench, tear!' (p.37). With talk of ageing Miriam refers to herself, while with death she refers to Mark. Miriam implies that death will break up the 'circle of light' and the 'one-ness' between her and Mark. She feels that the longer she stays within this circle the closer is she to this fate. This causes her feeling of being confined within this circle, yet she adopts a conflicting attitude towards it. In other words, she wants to flee from him, at the same time she is afraid of death that will deprive her of him. So she is left alone 'in

solitude' where the only way out of it is through the 'mortal pillbox' she holds in reserve (p.37). She escapes death by the possibility of becoming an agent of death, the very thing which parallels her relation to the 'circle of light'. In other words, she resorts to the logic of the 'circle of light' to avoid the loneliness which she associates with 'terror'. After she utters the word 'terror' she 'wrenches her brilliant bracelets up and down on her arms'; the bracelet is here a symbol of the 'circle of light' (p.37). She wants to fly away to become 'free', but also thinks that 'space between two people is sometimes' (p.43). Leaving the sentence incomplete, Miriam here refers to Mark and herself as 'two people' whereas earlier they were described as one. Her changing attitude towards the circle of 'one-ness' reflects her own conflicting status of being free and confined at the same time.

She wants to free herself from Mark by creating a space between them. This space is not approved by Mark, who cannot get back his breath when he hears her talking about space. He realises that Miriam has an ambivalent attitude to the circle; her begrudging dependence on him and her 'fear' of losing him may push her to commit suicide by taking out her 'little Regency snuffbox' (p.44). This attitude is caused by her realisation that Mark's relationship with his art pushes him away from the 'circle of light': he is not 'living for' her, but rather for his art (p.45).

Mark dismisses the circle of 'one-ness' with Miriam to build another with his art. He seeks to build it through a physical contact with his canvas:

I've understood the intimacy that should, that has to exist between, the, the- painter, and the- I! It! Not it turned to me, or I turned to it, no division between us at all any more! The 'one-ness', the! (p.17).

This physical contact is implied within the word 'intimacy', which Mark tries to create out of his art. Throughout the play, his canvas paintings are personified. For instance, he talks to them as if he is 'talking to another person in the studio' (p.28). So, in order to control (and build this intimacy with) his work, he has to be excluded physically by staying all the time in his studio, as 'the work of a painter is lonely', and pushes Miriam away from him (p.28). She cannot take the loneliness which has become 'a worn-out thing to discuss' (p.28).

However, Mark fails to achieve his concept of 'one-ness' with art. It is a territory which he tries to enter, even though he has no 'permission' to do so (p.19). On entering he feels terrified and unstable, causing him mental instability and verbal incoherence. An elaboration of why his art may be viewed as a territory is significant here. Art represents a combination of Mark's fluctuating mental space and the exterior uncontrollable space. His fluctuating mental space is formulated by the 'images' which 'flash' in his brain: he has to 'get them on nailed-down canvas at once' (the canvas here stands for uncontrollable exterior space) (p.17). Thus, he crawls naked on the canvas in order to achieve bodily 'one-ness' with his art. His bodily nakedness aims to establish 'intimacy' with his art. Despite his increasing inability to speak coherently, he still feels that his work is hard to 'confine' within its 'controllable limits' (p.18). Using 'spray guns' on these canvases implies a battle that is going on between Mark and the canvas where the overriding question is who is violating whom (p.14).

Mark's experiences with these canvases blend feelings of 'tension', 'excitement' and 'terror': 'I'm terrified of the new canvasses' he exclaims (p.21). He views himself laying his life 'on the line' and he feels 'terrified of the new canvasses', pushed to the edge of sanity due to his inability to control the new

territory with which he attempts to merge (p.21). By crossing into this territory of art he aims to devise a new style which may seem 'stronger' than him, but which he will eventually learn to control. Given the fact that he is so terrified to go in his room, he is incapable of building an equal relationship with these canvasses. They start to violate him instead of his controlling them. The painting actually begins to stain his suit, hands and hair, which stands for a visual symbolic violation of the art over the artist. Using the words 'country' and 'frontier' to describe the artwork visualises it as an unconquerable spatial area with which Mark engages in a territorial fight (p.19). The bedroom area where Mark works on the canvasses is not staged and the action there is reported only through the dialogue. This maintains the status of his art as an unseen and mysterious area.

The territorial fight ends with Mark being punished for his attempt to cross over the frontier of this prohibited territory. This punishment is visualised by his mental instability and his physical appearance on the stage. He appears on the stage with cuts on his face and spots of blood as symbols of this punishment. Miriam realises this when she tells Leonard: 'he's arrived at a departure that's a real departure', from which she doubts he will ever return (p.41). She describes his new style of art as that of 'drip, fling, sopped, stained, saturated, scraped, ripped, cut, skein of' (p.41).⁶¹ These adjectives connote the violence through which he tries to control his art.

⁶¹ This is reminiscent of the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock (and Abstract Expressionists more generally). In an interview prior to *Tokyo Hotel*, Williams claimed that when he wrote the play, he was writing about artist Jackson Pollock who was like Mark in the play 'crawling naked in the floor with a spray gun, just spraying canvas and just streaking it over the canvas with his fingers' (Williams in Albert Devlin's *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*, (1986), p.294, in Kolin, 2002, p.89). Pollock is known for transforming his canvas into 'a modern-day arena' of an epic struggle between man and material (Kolin, 2002, p.99).

This punishment can be read as the consequence of trying to achieve 'one-ness' with the divine (where art stands in for God). Through his art, Mark starts to discover new spaces which 'drift skyward to some clearer space and then to another space even higher and clearer' (p.49: my emphasis). Unlike Chicken in Earth, Mark chases after the kingdom of heaven by trying to transcend earthly space through his art and move into the heavenly spaces beyond the stage. This pushes him away from the 'circle of light' with Miriam, who herself is content with the more immanent kingdom of earth. This is connoted within his use of the word 'drift', implying that through art Mark will have the ability to drift skyward: Mark 'burst out of the star-chamber, my studio, bare-assed as when I first added my cry of protest to the' (p.49). Using the word 'bare-assed', Mark implies a process of rebirth achieved through his art. He compares his experience with his art-canvas to his first arrival in the world. His physical movement out of his studio is compared to bursting out of his mother's womb:

shambled dizzily to the. Opened the sliding-glass doors, noticed the presence of no one but my wife. Shouted to her, "God damn but I think I've done a painting" ... nobody gave me a magnum or a quart or a baby's bottle of confidence, and I didn't have a long, white beard and a stepladder to the vault of the Sistine (p.50).

His words here highlight the importance of Miriam in his life, since the day of his first painting when she gave him the confidence that he needed, but she now no longer gives him the same confidence. The consequence is that he tries to substitute his loss of confidence by establishing through art his 'one-ness' with the divine. He wants to escape the 'circle of light' with Miriam as he feels that she uses him to project her sexual and bodily anxiety. He feels that he is treated as a sex object

within this circle, as he views himself: 'anyone's whore, including my own' (p.49).

Leaving the sentence incomplete, Mark suggests that he is Miriam's whore, whereas he sees her as a:

three-masted schooner today, billowing out of a harbour with a cargo of that stuff made from coconuts. Copra? And a crew of some of them shanghaied, but the wind and the sea are favourable to her sailing around the Cape of, and if she's becalmed in equatorial waters she'll get the crew at the oars, oh, they'll row for the lady and live on hard track (p.49).

The metaphor of 'schooner' refers to Miriam's uncontrollable sexuality. By using the image of 'crew' who 'will row for the lady and live on hard track', Mark refers to how Miriam pushes him to the 'hard track' for her sexual satisfaction.

This utterance is followed by Mark leaning 'on the end of the bar and peer[ing] at Miriam's face' (p.49: my emphasis). By leaning on the end of the bar, he dramatises how he is pushed to the margin of the 'circle of light' by Miriam and her voracious sexuality. Compared to his self-image of a 'whore' which how he feels when he is with Miriam, Mark wants to establish another image as a 'serious painter' who has two requirements: 'a long white beard and a – and a stepladder' (p.48). This implies that he tries through his art to establish the 'one-ness' with God. He wants to resemble God on earth (with his 'long white beard') as he thinks that the artist has an ability to paint 'the creation of the creation of the creation' (p.48). So for Mark, the world is remade through art and he tries to prove it through his territorial fight with his canvasses. Mark tries to paint his creation on the ground on his cross-like canvas, described as cloistering himself in his room, 'crawling

naked over a huge nailed-down canvas' (p.17). This description emphasises the image of crucifixion. By crawling naked on this canvas, Mark seeks salvation through art in an attempt to find a new concept of God. His punishment is the threat of being locked in a mental hospital in New York at the request of Miriam, who cannot take his 'disequilibrium' any longer (p.26).

Mark's nakedness suggests his attempt to achieve this new concept of God through bodily and physical contact with his art. Hence, he can no longer function as a God-like source of salvation and light for Miriam. This shifts him away from the circle of 'one-ness' with her; Mark tries to go beyond verbal communication to use his body for performing without the need for language. In other words, he goes through a transitional phase in an attempt to revive through these canvasses the image of Christ on the cross, so he can bring salvation to the world through colour and light. However, unlike Williams' earlier artists, Val of Battle of Angels (1940), and the Writer in The Long Goodbye (1940), Mark is not an artist who is in conflict with his exterior space, rather he attempts to readdress this dilemma. However, like Sebastian in Suddenly Last Summer, Mark cannot relate horror to beauty. The critic George Niesen in 'The Artist against the Reality in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1977) reads this scene in relation to Williams' view that it is not possible to 'reconcile horror and beauty' (Tharpe, 1977, p.465). Nevertheless, Mark tries to defeat the horror he finds in the beauty of his art, by trying to build 'one-ness' with God.

The play ends with Miriam casting off her bracelet, symbolising her freedom from the circle of 'one-ness' with Mark. However, uttering 'I have nowhere to go' she is still entrapped within this circle, outside which she feels incomplete and vulnerable (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 7, p.53).

Hewes views the play's ending in relation to the overriding theological questions with which the play deals. He thinks that Miriam voices a religious belief that 'in this life we must all stay within the "circle of light", which is the approving eye of God' (Crandell, 1996a, p.246). Miriam adds that her husband's error was that he thought that he could create his own 'circle of light'. From his mistake, she apparently realises that to continue her lustful way of life is also a doomed attempt to create her own circle; 'rather than face her husband's fate, [so] she gives up' (p.246).

Within this circle she can mould her life to the logic of the circle, for she does not have the courage or the power to confront the exterior space outside it. Thus, she prefers to stay within this circle, which is no longer a 'circle of light' as she is left in darkness by the end of the play.

Tokyo Hotel ends with the failure of Mark to build his kingdom of heaven outside the 'circle of light'. We are introduced in Small Craft Warnings (1972) to a wider circle of collective 'one-ness' built by a group of characters. The play develops silence as a way of defeating linguistic entrapment, and the body is centralized to represent the human experience of marginality.

CHAPTER III, PART IV

FROM THE BAR IN IN THE BAR OF A TOKYO HOTEL TO MONK'S BAR IN SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS (1972): THE COMMUNAL CIRCLE OF UNITY

The scene is a somewhat non-realistic evocation of a bar on the beach-front in one of those coastal towns between Los Angeles and San Diego. It attracts a group of regular patrons who are nearly all so well known to each other that it is like a community club, and more of these regulars spend the whole evening there (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.715).

With this scene of 'community club' in Small Craft Warnings (1972), we move from Williams' interest in the concept of 'one-ness' between two characters (as discussed in the previous parts of this chapter) towards a complex dynamic involving more characters. This shift does not imply that Williams gives up discussing the experience of marginality during the 1970s, but rather that he develops the medium of its representation to operate on a wider range of characters. It is important to realise that whilst Williams seems to tap into contemporary discourses of community circulating during the 1960s, he does not tie himself to a particular school of thought or movement. It is rather that he questions the dominant American thought in the late 1960s to test the relationships between individuals and groups. In this way, Williams can be read to question the 1960s concept of ideal 'beloved community' (most obviously linked to the Civil Rights

Movement) and how it can be related to the real world. Crucially, Williams suggests that it is important to account for conflict within groups, without giving up the possibility of unity.

In Small Craft, he creates this image of a community through a group of eight characters who are thrown together in the seaside bar in Southern California. With no details given about their backgrounds, they are left in an indefinite state, rather than having fixed identities. Through this lens Williams is interested in presenting their communal experience of marginality rather than focusing on them as individuals. To achieve this, the characters enter into a series of confessional monologues which make them aware of each other's interiority. As I will argue, the shared experience of anxiety results from the characters' inability to maintain the circle of 'one-ness' with each other. However, through this experience they are in a better position to endure the hostility of the exterior space. The result is the achievement of a communal unity. The characters are presented as pairs, primarily because they do not seemingly possess sufficient power to confront the exterior space on their own. Their appearance in the play takes the form of four pairs: Leona and Bill, Bobby and Quentin, Violet and Bill, and Violet and Steve. Also presented is Monk, the bartender, who cares for his customers and listens to their confessions.

All the characters share the experience of repairing to Monk's bar as a communal refuge from the exterior confinement suggested by the image of the dark foggy beach outside with its small craft. The radio voice announces 'heavy seas from Point Conception south to the Mexican border' with 'fog continuing till tomorrow noon' and warns that 'extreme caution should be observed on all highways along this section of the coastline' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-

1980, p.718). The symbolism here is that the fog signifies an external setting of entrapment. The bar can be interpreted as a spatial area of liberation. However, this does not imply that the characters find absolute freedom in the bar; rather it will be looked at as a space of only partial liberation. The characters can be regarded as positioned between two spatial poles: the foggy beach outside the bar's door and the spatial area of abstract liberation in the bar's upper 'living quarters' (an important spatial area which I will discuss in a later part of this chapter). In between these two spaces is the bar's immanent setting where the community gathers. To consider Williams' broader concept of community it is important to consider the series of pairs that make up the broader circle. I will use the term 'one-ness' to refer to the interpersonal dynamics of these pairs, which widen out into a communal circle of unity. In order to understand how this dynamic operates we need to focus on the character of Violet who, as the scapegoat of the play, represents an obviously marginalized character accepted within the circle of unity.

We are introduced to the character Bill who tries to break out of his circle of 'one-ness' with Leona. This circle does not stand for a mutual dependence but refers to the power relationship between the pair. Leona has established herself as a provider who feeds Bill and provides financially for him. She puts him in her trailer because his 'Junior' (his nickname for his genitals) gives her sexual pleasure. Feeling abused, Bill escapes from this situation of entrapment, leaving a notice hanging on the trailer door while Leona talks to him from the stove. Seeking refuge in Monk's bar, Bill asserts himself in an attempt to gain self-respect as a free human being, rather than as one of Leona's belongings. In the bar he utters his wish for release: 'DO YOU THINK I BELONG TO YOU? I BELONG TO MYSELF, I

JUST BELONG TO MYSELF' (p.723). Using capital letters and banging his bottle on the table, Bill visualises his anxiety at his confinement within this circle.

The table in this scene stands for a visual spatial outlet of his confinement, and underneath it he lets Violet feel his 'Junior'. Bill's 'change in attitude at the downstage table' is met by Leona's angry temperament (p.721). However Leona is even confined within linguistic limits that cannot express the true nature of her anger. This results in her stopping speaking and using hesitations, pauses or resorting to physical violence to express this confinement. For example, in the fight scene she uses short incomplete sentences: 'YOUUU ... CUNT!', 'OFF HANDS!' 'DON' YOU ...!'. Following these pauses she 'rushes forward' to attack Bill; caught by Monk she 'kicks at' his shin and 'gives Bill a wallop in the face with her cap' (p.721). Here, the sailor cap symbolises an exterior object that visualises her rebelling against words that fail to express her anxiety. She uses the cap to 'emphasize a point' for as long as she is banned from using violence in the bar (p.719). Monk swears to God that he must 'avoid disturbance' and violence in order to maintain discipline in his space (p.737). Consequently, when Leona fights with Bill, Monk tells her, 'I'm havin' no violence here! Never! Never! Never! From no one!' (p.721).

Leona is identified with the 'juke box' in Monk's bar as a visual spatial outlet of liberation. The juke box visualises a spatial area of healing and hypnosis. Her physical movements towards it are described as 'crossing' with a look of 'ineffable sweetness' as if 'totally pacified' (p.728). The words 'crossing', 'pacified' and 'sweetness' maintain the hypnotic effect of this jukebox on her.⁶²

Leona is clearly trying to escape from the heat of the action through her use of the

⁶² This is similar in its effect to the rum-coco that pacifies Shannon in the three-act version of *Iguana*.

juke box, as it calms and pacifies her. This is illustrated following the fight scene with Bill, when she crosses to the juke box and ‘bend [s]over’ it to find the desired song (p.728). The act of bending demonstrates her identification with the box: it is a physical visualisation of the time, with its songs spanning ‘Rock, Popular and Classical’ (p.720). By choosing a classical song, Leona tries to escape into the past and revive it to counter her feelings of disappointment in her present relationship with Bill.

Leona laments and grieves over the past. This is evident through her on-stage monologue, which takes the form of reminiscing about her brother. There are many pauses, accented words in capitals, repetitions and ellipses: for example, ‘I cry! I cry ... No, I don’t, I don’t cry!’ and ‘the homeliness in ... I mean the, I mean the ...’ (pp.733-34). As the play unfolds, Leona’s changing relationship with Bill can be traced as an escape from her imprisoned relationship with her dead brother Haley:

the companionship and the violin of my brother would be all I had any need for in my lifetime till my death-time! (p.734).

Haley was her saviour, her life and light-force, ‘one beautiful thing’ that saves her heart from the ‘corruption’ (p.734). Leona utters this sentence directly to Bill, which implies that Bill represents the opposite of beauty: that is, corruption. Unlike Bill, until his death Haley fed Leona’s need for power as he had the ‘gift of making people’s emotions uplifted, superior to them’ (p.733). This is maintained by Haley’s visual image standing in the church choir under the light, singing the ‘Angels of Light’ (p.731). The use of ‘light’ to describe him develops his angelic image with natural blond silky hair and ‘two pieces of heaven in a human face’ –

Haley and Leona have a very similar relationship as that between Chicken and Myrtle in Kingdom of Earth.

In contrast to her memory of her brother, Leona cannot build the same relationship with Bill, so she tries to break the circle of 'one-ness' with him. Leona's God-like image of her brother Haley parallels another of Williams' characters in Small Craft, Doc, who has a personified image of his God:

a **black** man with no light on his face, He moves in the dark like a black man, a **Negro** miner in the pit of a lightless coal mine, obscured completely by the ... irrelevancies and irreverence of public worship ... standing to sing, kneeling to pray, sitting to hear the banalities of a preacher (p.735: my emphasis).

He is the 'black ... Negro', who lacks the heavenly light of Haley. However, Doc has established his 'one-ness' with this God through his profession, but now staggers in the darkness by practicing his profession illegally after losing his medical licence for operating on a patient while under the influence of alcohol. By this act he is transformed from a birth force into a death force. However, he denies this by philosophising about the close proximity of life and death: he describes both as 'holy miracles' that are 'dark as the face of a black man, yes, that's right, a Negro' (p.735). Using the imagery of 'a black man', Doc relates death and birth to darkness and irreverence, sensing that both forces overlap each other.

Doc's anxiety results from the loss of his medical licence, leading him to engage with death through abortion instead of with life when delivering children. Doc talks about delivering 'a new Messiah tonight', but this sits uncomfortably with the past and his botched delivery of a three-month premature baby, who he

puts in a shoebox while the mother haemorrhage (p.736). Trying to cover up his mistake Doc drops the box in the ocean and he gives the woman's husband fifty dollars in order to forget his name. To escape this anxiety, he establishes a fluctuating mental space of liberty in Monk's bar in an attempt to contend with his confinement. This liberty is maintained by Monk (who calls him 'Doc') noting that he has 'worked up a pretty good practice for a man in retirement', and helping him to deliver a baby at Treasure Island (p.731). This in turn has the effect on Leona of her relinquishing her threat to report him to the authorities. Consequently he consistently refers to himself in the bar as a 'LICENCED PHYSICIAN' (p.752). Using capital letters, he endeavours to maintain the purity of his profession in spite of Leona's attempt to depose him by preventing him delivering a baby at the trailer camp at the Treasure Island.

At Monk's bar, we also encounter the homosexual pair, Quentin and Bobby. Although they initially ran the Jungle Bar, they use Monk's place to reflect on the break of their circle of 'one-ness'. Passing by Bobby riding his bicycle up Canyon road, Quentin picks him up from the sidewalk and they sit there 'not talking' or not even looking at 'each other' (p.738). Their lack of communication is viewed by Leona as 'embarrassment with guilt feelings' (p.738). Quentin has a sense of guilty anxiety resulting from his sexual disappointment in finding out that Bobby is gay, as Quentin prefers sexual encounters with heterosexual men. Like other characters he establishes an outlet for this anxiety by identifying with the sailfish on the wall of the bar. At this point the sailfish represents a fluctuating space of liberty with the sense of nautical adventure suggested by its name. To further illustrate this, Leona comments: 'Christ, you have terrible eyes, the expression in them! What are you looking at?', and Quentin refers to the fish over

the bar with a hypothetical assumption that if he wakes up some day and sees it 'swimming around' in his bedroom 'free, unconfined', he will not be surprised and he will just say 'Oh, well ...' instead of 'my God' (p.742). Through his not making reference to God, Quentin connotes his lack of trust in God's signs on the kingdom of earth because he has:

asked all the questions, shouted them at deaf heaven, till I was hoarse in the voice box and blue in the face, and gotten no answer, not the whisper of one, nothing at all (p.744: my emphasis).

Quentin's God is therefore a 'senile delinquent' (like Shannon's God in the three-act version of *Iguana*) who is 'deaf', offering no answers to his questions. This leads him to find disappointment in everything that might surprise him. He parallels the expression in his eyes, lacking in surprise, to the illusory feeling of 'amazement' suggested by the sailfish's 'goggle-eyes' that gives it a 'constant look of amazement' (p.715). The fish's suspended position on the wall suggests its confinement, paralleling Quentin's confinement which can be related to his disappointment in his homosexual experiences. He describes his experience as: 'deadening coarseness', 'quick', hard', 'brutal and the pattern of them is practically unchanging' (p.743). His homosexuality gradually makes him lose the feeling of being alive that comes from being surprised at what he sees in the kingdom of earth. So, he tries to compensate for this anxiety by picking up Bobby. He makes this attempt because, unlike him, Bobby still 'has the capacity for being surprised of what he sees, hears and feels' (p.744).

For Bobby, unlike others, the ocean is an exciting experience. They say 'it is the Pacific' while he says in capitals 'THE PACIFIC!' (p.740). Still

confined by words, using block letters, he builds an outlet for his bodily confinement by seeking a haven in this spatial escape. Bobby's search for new adventures and experiences is indicated by his sweatshirt which has embroidered on the back 'Iowa to Mexico', a visual statement of his ambition for sailing and adventure (p.727).

Unlike Quentin, Bobby is not so much disappointed in his homosexual partner, as he is worried about his own sexual confusion:

on the plains of Nebraska I passed a night with a group of runaway kids my age and it got cold after sunset. A lovely wild young girl invited me under a blanket with just a smile, and then a boy; me between, and both of them kept saying "love", one of 'em in one ear and one in the other, till I didn't know which was "love" in which ear or which ... touch
(Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.746: my emphasis).

Bobby moves between words and 'touch', which together symbolically represent his confusion about his own sexual identity. He is clearly confused, embodied in his being visually stuck between the girl and the boy on the plains of Nebraska. He flees from the public disapproval of homosexuality, the 'suspicion and talk and then public outrage and action' against gays in Goldenfield, retreating to a place where he is ironically more confined by his anxiety.

To escape the persecution he stops at the bar and is able to establish an outlet of his anxiety by breaking into a long confessional monologue littered with references to the remote spaces of 'the plains of Nebraska', 'Iowa', and 'THE PACIFIC'. This maintains his spatial escape from his sexual confinement, which contributes to the break of his circle of 'one-ness' with Quentin. By the end of Act

I, he refuses Leona's offer to give him 'protection' by staying with her in the trailer. He announces that he has 'got a lot of new adventures, experiences, to think over alone' (p.747).

These characters find themselves in a communal circle of unity through their shared experience of confinement. This brings them together within the communal space of the bar to confront their solitary anxieties. It is in this way their circle of 'one-ness' is widened to include more than two characters in order to operate on a collective scale and ward off each individual's confinement. Through the image of the bar's community, Williams is concerned with exploring but also transcending the liberal movements of the 1960s. He questions the Christian model of the ideal 'beloved communities' by creating a dramatic place which also allows for conflict. Within this community there are simultaneous signs of unity and tension. For example, in Act I, Monk, Steve, Bill and Doc prevent Leona from dispossessing Doc of his medical kit, when her motive was to stop him from delivering a baby at the trailer camp. By regaining his kit from Leona, they are collectively presented as united, working together to maintain Doc's self image as a birth force. Starting toward the door after snatching his bag, Leona is blocked by 'one of the men' (p.736). She then attempts to move 'in another direction' but her path is blocked once again (p.736). Approached 'from three or four sides by Monk, Doc, Bill and Steve' the whole scene suggests 'a quartet in opera' with 'several voices blended but each pursuing its separate plaint' (p.736: my emphasis). The word 'blended' in relation to voice suggests that the unity within this community takes a verbal form.

This idea is developed by the set of onstage confessional monologues. Listening to the monologues each character realises another's interiority, which

helps to merge them into one unity. Each character projects his or her interiority onto another until we end with a circular chain of projection. One character's monologue provokes another character to start his/her monologue and so on in a chain reaction. For example, the monologues of the homosexual pair Bobby and Quentin provoke Bill into a long confessional monologue. After his monologue, Bill, casts back towards the pair his own anxiety that was caused by his relationship with Leona, through his sentence to Monk 'y' can't insult 'em, there's no way to bring 'em down expect to beat 'em and roll 'em' (p.728). Here, he refers to his own homosexuality. He follows this with the words, 'I don't like beating 'em up. They can't help the way they are', verbalising his own anxiety which resulted from his inability to confront his homosexuality (p.729). This he projects onto the pair, as he cannot admit to his own homosexuality.

The bar's staging maintains the communal unity. It is presented as a unified spatial zone with its parts integrated without barriers, so the characters behind the bar can hear what other says at the table downstage. Whenever any character enters into a verbal monologue, he or she does not stand in spatial isolation, rather the stage dims and a 'special spot comes up' to illuminate the character (p.728).

Act I ends with Monk 'collecting the empty cans and bottles, emptying ash trays on a large serving tray' (p.747). At this point Monk is symbolically gathering the remains of the characters' disappointments and anxieties. The circular shape of the tray suggests that it is a symbol of the communal circle. He says in his concluding monologue: 'I want a small steady place that I can handle alone, that brings in a small, steady profit' (p.747: my emphasis), maintaining Monk's image as the monitor of this circle. The word

‘handle’ suggests his territorial dominance over the bar. In addition, he controls the characters to a large extent; for example, during the fight scene he gives Violet permission to come out of the ladies’ lavatory: ‘Violet, you can come out, now’ (p.729).

To realise this territorial dominance, Monk locates himself spatially in a superior position to other characters through the visual image of his upstairs ‘living quarters’. By locating these quarters above the stairs superiority is suggested, which the other characters must look up to:

it hits them dimly that you might need the solace of their companionship
up there some nights when they find it convenient to offer it to you
(p.716).

Doc’s words describe the arrangement between Monk and the characters in the bar. On the other hand, Monk needs these characters’ ‘companionship’. He loves ‘to come down those steps’ to ‘the place for the evening’, as it makes him ‘feel not alone’ (p.748). He feels that he will ‘die some night up those steps ... in the night alone’, and has a fear of loneliness that is associated with the night (p.748). He escapes the night by going down to the bar, listening to these characters’ confessions to offer them a fluctuating refuge of liberation. Here the set of monologues creates a fluctuating space of unity between these characters, through which each can share their anxiety and thereby liberate their loneliness. Drawing on Thomas Adler’s argument in ‘The Dialogue of Incompletion: Language in Tennessee Williams’ Later Plays’ (1975), Monk is viewed as ‘something of a combination priest/analyst’ (Adler, 1975, p.51):

I'm fond of, I've got an affection for a sincere interest in my regular customers here ... and all their personal problems, I want to know that, too (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.748).

Adler sees these characters as 'patients' whose relationship with Monk is reciprocal, since hearing 'the stories, the jokes, the confidences and confessions ... makes him feel not alone' (Adler, p.51). However, in my reading Monk holds a superior status to the others. Stagewise he always refers to his spatial superiority: 'they see those stairs. They know I live up there' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.716). Everyone in the bar looks for him going up the stairs toward his living quarters.

When Leona suddenly tries to rush for the stairs, Monk's use of the possessive pronoun 'my' refers to the stairs as his spatial territorial: 'Nobody's up my stairs! Come down those' (p.722). He controls the movements up and down these stairs towards the territory of salvation: 'the living quarters'. Left unstaged and hidden, the living quarters imply a sense of holiness. This is maintained by the visual description of the stairs as 'masked above the first few steps' (p.715). This suggests the ambiguity and mystery related to this 'flight of stairs' which 'ascends the bar-owner's living quarters' (p.715). The very use of the word 'flight' suggests an escape for these characters from the immanent spatial area of the bar.⁶³ The characters look at it as an area of escape to which they resort whenever they feel confined within the space of the bar or when the action gets heated. To emphasise this, Leona tries to rush for the stairs when she feels frustrated in the fight scene

⁶³ This is a reference to the shift from the horizontal shape suggested by the bar into the vertical shape of the steps. Although Williams still sets the concept of unity in this play within an immanent setting, the vertical spatial area of the stairs initiates the return to the vertical, triangle-like setting of his plays before Small Craft such as Iguana and Earth. This will be developed later in the conclusion, which discusses the play Vieux Carré (1977).

with Violet, as she gets no reaction or sound from her. However, the characters continue to move horizontally within the space, and most of their spatial movements are those of 'starting towards', 'crossing', 'returning to the table's bar', 'turning about on the bar's stool', and 'coming downstage'. Nevertheless, there is an exception in Violet's vertical movement up the stairs towards the living quarters at the end of the play.

Metaphorically, by going up these steps to the 'living quarters', a licence to be part of the bar's communal circle of unity is given to Violet. Her vertical movement up the steps visualises her being elevated spatially and metaphorically. In this sense, after his reference to them as 'my stairs', Monk is the guardian through whose permission she can ascend the stairs. This is implied towards the end of the play where Monk differentiates between three spatial areas: 'there's taverns licenced for rooms, and taverns licenced for liquor and food and liquor, and I am a tavern only licenced for ...' (p.764). Left incomplete, the sentence suggests that he is licenced for the 'vulnerable vessels' (p.718). Overlapping the incomplete sentence with Violet's 'tone and suggestion of such ultimate supplication that it would break the heart of a stone' Williams conjures up the image of her resorting to Monk to accept her as one of these vessels (p.764).

It is not until she is accepted within the circle that Violet functions as a symbolic object for the other characters' anxiety. She is there to amuse them, by using her hand which is always 'out of sight' as a release for their anxiety. She is identified with the amusement suggested by the name of her place of residence: 'the amusement arcade' (p.717). Her hand's position parallels the structure of her living space. In other words, she lives in a 'room with no bath that's directly over the amusement arcade at the foot of the pier ... over the billiards ... the pin ball

games, and the bowling alleys' (p.722). The description of her place visualises her as stuck spatially 'at the foot of the pier' and objecting to violation by the exterior space, through being exposed all day to the sound of the 'billiards' and the 'bowling' games (p.722: my emphasis). Her space is violated by the exterior spatial sound of 'bang, bang, loud as a TV western, all day and night' (p.722). Thus, she resorts to Monk's bar to escape from this violation, establishing a spatial identification with the downstage table under which she feels men's genitals. This area is again ironically violated by the characters in the bar.

Violet is marginalized within the bar's community and is isolated from their circle of unity. This is visualised from the very beginning of the play when she sits at the 'downstage table' with her suitcase (p.715). Being positioned downstage maintains her spatial inferiority to the other characters. This is further maintained by her physical appearance that 'suggests a derelict kind of existence' (p.715). The word 'derelict' maintains her marginality within the bar. This is affirmed by Doc's description:

She's a noticeable thing. She has a sort of not-quite-with-it appearance.

Amorphous, that's the word. Something more like a possibility than a completed creature (p.716).

The word 'amorphous' implies that she is still in the process of being defined – something she has not yet achieved. Consequently she is a 'possibility' more than a 'completed' creature (p.716). This incompleteness is linked to her inability to be part of the communal circle of unity which can change her from an object into being a part of this unity.

On the one hand she is exposed to Steve's violation. He projects on her his bodily confinement which results from his ageing. He describes her as a 'pig' and 'one of those scraps', 'the bone', but 'something's better than nothing' (p.729). His description of Violet emphasises Doc's initial description of her as an object and a low-level creature rather than a complete human being. Steve uses her to release his sexual frustration, as 'unmarried, forty-seven years old, employed as a short-order cook at a salary he can barely get by on alone, he can't be choosy' (p.729). Thus, he has to be satisfied by continually going to her. She gives him sexual pleasure for providing her with a 'few beers' and a 'hot dog'. Stagewise, in common with other characters, he pushes her away from this communal circle of unity. So in Act I he decides to 'sit at the bar and pay no attention to her when she comes out' (p.730). She comes out of the bathroom to 'edge into a bar stool' (p.730). The word 'edge' visualises this marginality within the bar. This is maintained by the attitude of other characters towards her: 'Steve glares at her. She avoids looking at him', and 'Bill grins and chuckles at his table' while 'Leona ignores the fact that Violet has emerged from her retreat' (p.730). Not until she is called by Steve again to 'get off that stool and sit at the table', does she leave this stool (p.731). Leona then tries to involve herself in the action by telling her 'you got to move her. She's got to be moved' (p.731). She is moved in or out of the scene as an object, called on for amusement. When she is not needed she is pushed back to the two marginalized spatial areas: the 'ladies' or a 'bar stool'.⁶⁴

In response to this, Violet carries on 'singing a bit' in short phrases: 'the wheel of fortune keeps turning around ...' (p.715). Leaving the sentence incomplete, she cannot remember beyond this line. Apparently, words are futile as

⁶⁴ The 'ladies' toilet is positioned in the play as a marginalized spatial area as it is set in the wall at the right.

an expression of her feeling of confinement. Throughout the play she is identified with the following sounds: 'sobbing', 'scream', 'shrilly', 'howling out' 'sobs' and 'wails'. She does not enter into a confessional monologue; rather she is identified with these sounds that she 'cries out in affected terror' (p.730). Only towards the end of Act I does Violet have a short monologue, with the light focused on her, in the context of Leona's accusation of her living out of suitcase 'upstairs from the amusement arcade' (p.762). Violet looks at it as a 'temporary arrangement', constantly repeating the same sentence. She implies that she plans to be part of the communal circle of unity in order to achieve a sense of belonging, and realising that Monk is the key to this plan she repeatedly appeals to him. This is demonstrated when, on being moved by Steve to the upper table, she protests by reaching for Monk's drink twice. This is verbally answered by Monk: 'that's mine! Here's yours' (p.731). The time has clearly not come yet for her to be accepted by Monk as one of this communal circle.

In order to achieve acceptance Violet has to initially be invited to share the table with the characters of this circle.⁶⁵ Sitting with Monk at the table, Leona casually invites Violet: 'Aw, hell, Violet. Come over and sit down with us, we are having a night cap, all of us' (p.761: my emphasis). With the use of 'all' and 'us', there is an implicit reference to this communal circle where Violet is ultimately accepted and is allowed to sit at the table. When the drinks are poured from the bottle, she hitches her chair close to Monk's. Then she deliberately drops a matchbook under the table, 'bends to retrieve it and the hand on Monk's side will not return to the table surface' (p.762). Realising that Violet has become part of this communal circle as she notices her hand is under the table, Leona reflects on

⁶⁵ Here the reference is to the circular shape of the table as a visual image of this circle of unity.

Violet's constant need to cling to 'something she hopes can hold her together' (p.763). This parallels the visual image of Violet holding Monk's genitals. Unlike others, Monk grants Violet access to the communal circle, while in the eyes of the others she is just an object of anxiety. They can only offer her a 'temporary arrangement', whilst with Monk she is offered a more permanent state of belonging in which they can build a state of 'trance together' (p.764).

Finally, Violet goes up the stairs, taking off the shoes and heading towards Monk's 'living quarters'. The act of taking the shoes off adds a theological dimension to the ascent of the stairs. This implies that the 'living quarters' represent a spatial area of resurrection, as suggested by the word 'living'. Her ascent provides a rebirth for Violet and prepares her to be part of the communal circle of unity that operates on the spatial area of the bar. In order to enter it she has to first be clean: 'do not forget to shower ... I'm not going up there till I hear that shower running' (p.765). This casts Monk as a guardian who licences her entrance and mediates between her and these 'quarters'. Philip C. Kolin in his essay 'Having Lost the Ability to Say: "My God": The Theology of Tennessee Williams' Small Craft Warnings' (2002) argues that like Thomas Merton (the contemporary Trappist monk), Monk 'offers the characters in Small Craft Christian acceptance, mercy, hope, "principles proposed by Jesus Christ ..." in his secularly sacerdotal capacity' (Kolin, 2002, p.119).

Although the present study does not relate Monk to a particular religious figure, he is still seen as having fulfilled a holy task in mediating between the bar's community and the absent and abstract God. Violet's words 'God love you, Monk, Like me' while crossing the stairs with a touch of 'labyrinthitis' (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.764) are read by Kolin as 'redolent of a

faith that is at once simple and sensual but also one that brings her a resurrection (sustenance and love) upstairs in Monk's apartment' (Kolin, 2002, p.117).

Finally, when Violet ascends the stairs, neither she nor the audience knows what will occur or what kind of procedure she has to follow to be a part of this circle. We simply know that she will stay temporarily:

dirty, worn out-slipper still being worn ... but still set by the bed to be worn again the next day, walked on her ... I will not touch her, I'll have no contact with her (Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980, p.765).

Monk's words imply that his task moves from the sensuality suggested by Kolin to someone who introduces Violet to these 'quarters' where the abstract God resides. This God loves Violet as he loves Monk. He is the loving, caring and life-giving God. He is the God to whom the bar's community confesses. Using the stage light to highlight their monologues, a visual image of theological confession to this God is suggested. Locating most of these verbal confessions in the downstage area symbolises the characters' spatial inferiority during these confessional moments to the God who resides above them. As Monk is always positioned in the bar area, he plays the role of mediator between the crowd and the absent God.

Here the bar is viewed as their only area of spatial liberation, as discussed previously. However, setting it between the salvation of the upper 'quarters' and the entrapment of the ocean outside, suggests it is a middle area. In such an area lies the liberation of the characters. Certain visual techniques in the play externalise this concept. The sailfish is a visual symbol which parallels what I will call the 'in-between' situation of the characters. 'Hooked and shellacked and strung up' the sailfish is like the characters in the play stuck and suspended

between an 'over' position like a flag and a 'lesser' position like that of 'creatures' that have never sailed in their lives (p.727).

The characters enjoy a degree of liberation as they realise that absolute freedom cannot be achieved. Paradoxically they need to feel entrapped to be free, as this liberation is monitored by God's absent power that controls the characters' movement between liberation and entrapment. It is the unseen power of God that offers them liberation and confinement and to whom they confess. There is a reciprocal relation between liberation and confinement which is visualised through the interdependency between the exterior foggy beach and the bar. For example, crossing to open the door at the end of the play, Monk leaves the door open 'for a few minutes to clear the smoke and liquor smell out of the place, the human odors' (p.765). Here the fog is an indirect visual image of the entrapment which awaits them outside the bar whenever they leave this communal unity, and which is why their liberation is not absolute. Monk is the only character who understands this mechanism by understanding the sound of the ocean: 'it has a private sound to it, a sound that's just for itself and for me [Monk]' (p.765). After opening the doors for the smell to be cleared, he closes it to reset the bar once again as a place for liberation. Here 'taking advantage of the ocean (water) as healing, cleansing, and life-giving', the play closes with 'the boom of the ocean outside', the sound of resolution and purification' (Kolin, 2002, p.112).

CONCLUSION



Poster designed by the author using shots from Tennessee Williams' early plays to visualise the idea of 'one-ness' as a suggested vision of liberation for Tennessee Williams' minorities.

⁴⁶ Self-effacement is a term used by Thomas P. Adler in 'The Search for God in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1973) and it includes 'transferring God to another person'. Adler views it as 'difficult, since it requires not using or abusing the other for one's own aggrandizement' (Adler, 1973, p.48).

CONCLUSION

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS BEYOND MARGINALITY:

VIEUX CARRÉ (1977)

Hell is yourself. When you ignore other people completely, that is hell
(Tennessee Williams in 'The Angel of the Odd' (1962), p.53, in
Stanton, p.139).

As this thesis has demonstrated, the solipsistic obsession with the self is the 'hell' that confines the characters of the plays Tennessee Williams wrote between 1940 and 1960. However, as I have argued, in his later plays, beginning with Small Craft Warnings (1972), Williams' focus on the confined self expands to include unity within a community of selves, representing a degree of freedom rather than a single character's confinement. In Small Craft, for example, the vision of community is shown in Monk's bar. Self-effacement within this unity is suggested as an avenue for liberation and, at the same time, an assurance that a loving God exists.⁶⁶ This is represented through a set of confessional monologues that dramatises the ability of the community to work together to be liberated from marginality, moving towards

⁶⁶ Self-effacement is a term used by Thomas P. Adler in 'The Search for God in the Plays of Tennessee Williams' (1973) and it includes 'meaning God to another person'. Adler views it as 'difficult, since it requires not using or abusing the other for one's own aggrandisement' (Adler, 1973, p.48).

an 'in-between space of liberation' to escape the confinement of the hostile exterior space.⁶⁷

However, five years later, Williams' idea of a loving God is developed further in Vieux Carré (1977), in an abstract vision of what the deity stands for. This vision is made manifest through the symbol of 'Sky'. Only briefly described in the stage directions, Sky represents this symbolic vision, rather than being a dramatic character himself.⁶⁸ The play introduces, through the character of the Writer (the memorialist-narrator), the fulfilment of 'one-ness' within this vision, by transcending the self-effacement through the communal unity of the rooming house. This is not to imply the abandonment of this unity, but rather that it is used as a means for this transcendence.⁶⁹

The 'past' which confines Williams' earlier characters, such as Amanda in The Glass Menagerie and Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire, still functions in this play as a means of confinement. However, it is developed into an antagonistic force that entraps the Writer and prevents him from achieving his liberation away from the rooming house's tenants who signify communal unity. This image of the past returns throughout the play in the form of the ghost of his dead grandmother, who occasionally appears in the alcove of his room.⁷⁰ The play dramatises the Writer's maturation by moving away from his confinement to

⁶⁷ Small Craft ends with a suggested fluctuating 'in-between form of liberation' (offered by Monk) and confinement (suggested by the small craft vessels). As I have argued, the characters' centrality and liberation lie in between these two areas.

⁶⁸ Sky is described as a 'lean, gangling young man, whose charming but irresponsible nature is apparent in his genial grin' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.69). His indefiniteness is maintained by his referring to himself as a 'fugitive from - from legal wedlock in Tampa, Florida, which the prettiest little bitsy piece of it you ever did see. There now the ribbon's reversing, it slipped out of the slots like I slipped out of matrimony in Tampa' (p.69).

⁶⁹ This should be contrasted with Mark in Tokyo Hotel, who fails to achieve 'one-ness' with God by breaking away from the circle of light and his 'one-ness' with Miriam. He is punished at the end of the play by death.

⁷⁰ The full-length play is an expansion of Williams' short story 'The Angel in the Alcove' (1943, pub. 1948), which takes place in the same boarding-house in New Orleans.

achieve unity with the vision of the abstract God, attained by following Sky. This development parallels the spatial construction of the play. Here Williams returns to using a vertical setting, in this instance the 'three-storey building' of the rooming house which recalls the staging used in his plays of the 1960s: The Night of the Iguana and Kingdom of Earth (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.4).

By following Sky, the Writer does not break away totally from communal unity with the tenants of the rooming house and revert to his individual self-cell, as is the case with Williams' earlier plays where characters are entrapped within their selves. Rather, he controls his self-effacement within this unity by internalising it within the fluctuating space of his memory. In this way he crosses the threshold of an 'in between form of liberation' that separates pure freedom from total confinement.⁷¹ This vision operates within his mental fluctuating space. He can monitor this unity by recollecting it as a memory whenever he wants, by narrating the storyline of the play.

In this sense, the play develops the circle of communal unity in Small Craft from an exterior experience into an interior one that acts on the 'lighter areas' of the Writer's memory (p.5). The characters' movements on the stage are shaped in relation to this area, which is visualised through the circle of light. Here the use of the word 'light' signifies the use of the 'spotlight' that shifts from the Writer when he narrates the story to focus on the characters involved in the action. His words at the beginning of the play, 'now they enter the lighter areas of my memory', imply that there are two spatial areas in his memory: a shadowy area and a lighted area (p.5). He recollects these characters and their experiences, pushing

⁷¹ This is a reference to the 'in-between area of liberation' that is suggested in Small Craft.

the ‘shadowy occupants like ghosts’ into the ‘lighter areas’. For example, the first appearance of Mrs. Wire is described as she ‘assumes her active character in the play’ (p.5: my emphasis). The word ‘assumes’ suggests that she is taking an active role in the play after she is revived by the Writer’s memory.

With the movement of the ‘spotlight’ there is a shift in the play’s setting. Through the use of the spotlight, we move from the front stage to the Writer’s cubicle, then to the studio area. When a spatial area is the focus of the action, the light is simply shone onto it. Moreover, the spatial movements of the characters are always described in relation to the ‘lighted spot’. They are made part of the action by being within this circle of light, while they are taken out of the action by crossing its edge. When the Writer leaves, he is described as ‘crossing out of the light’, which precedes his exit from the scene (p.32). Here, taking place within this ‘spotlight’, the play is set in one zone, where no spatial boundaries separate the characters. It is of less significance whether or not the characters are all in one room at the same time, involved in dialogue that brings them together, than it is that they share the experience of being bound together within this ‘spotlight’.

Within this dramatic space, the play explores the rooming house’s community as an image of communal unity in disintegration. Rodney Simard in ‘The Uses of Experience: Tennessee Williams in Vieux Carré’ (1985) views the characters in the rooming house as trying ‘to connect and form bonds that would make them survivors in a modern oasis’ (Simard, p.5). The word ‘oasis’ parallels the description of the city, which is ‘eight feet below sea level’ (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.38). This represents a visual image that externalises the interiority of the characters. They experience visible decay with no salvation, and all are individually doomed in different ways. It is the Writer who,

having witnessed their failure to break away from their unity, abandons them in order to survive. In this sense, the play is a dramatisation of the Writer's survival; he seems to have the drive to preserve his self-integrity and maturity away from the demands of the communal unity. Williams reveals that, if carried to the point of a consuming obsession, such unity will become a form of confinement. This is visualised by the characters of Jane and Mrs. Wire; unlike the Writer, who is ready to move away at the end of the play, these characters demonstrate what happens when one depends totally on this unity.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to explore the movement beyond the 'in-between area' of communal unity, towards liberation. The character of the Writer charts this movement, and the play will be seen to express the Writer's experience of maturity, from a confined marginalized character into a liberated person. Here the memory of the Writer is read as a place of his confinement, from which he will be liberated by the end of the play. The play centralises the Writer by exploring the space which the characters occupy within the scope of his memory. This will be read in relation to his escape from the communal unity that has developed into a space of confinement. However, the main focus is not on unity, but rather on the decay of the characters within it. The Writer helps the audience visualise other characters' confinement through the act of narration, and becomes a symbol of liberation rather than being a dramatic character himself.

These themes will be examined in relation to the decline within this unity of the character of Jane, to the Writer's own enlightenment and maturation, and at the same time his departure into the abstract concept of liberation. This conclusion will argue that Williams is successful in creating, toward the end of his

dramatic career, a character ready to move beyond the margin. Here 'margin' will be considered as the threshold of the 'in-between area', which other characters cannot pass over; it is the departure from the confinement of the Writer's memory which constitutes the last fluctuating barrier between him and his freedom.

The action of the play takes place in 'a rooming house, No.722 Toulouse Street, in the French Quarter of New Orleans' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.4).⁷² The time is the 'period between winter 1938 and spring 1939', a transitional moment between two seasons (p.4). This parallels the visual setting: 'various playing areas may be distinguished by sketchy partitions and doorframes' (p.4). The 'partitions' and 'doorframes' suggest spatial barriers between two areas, where each stands for a specific stage in the Writer's own enlightenment and maturation. By crossing over these barriers, spatially and in time, a transformation is suggested. This is illustrated further by the description of the two alcove cubicles separated by plywood which 'provides a minimal separation (spatially) between the Writer and an older painter' (p.4). Here the plywood stands as a 'spatial barrier', on one side of which the Writer's symbolic transformational area is implied.

Nightingale is depicted as 'an older painter, a **terribly** wasted man, **dying of tuberculosis**, but **fiercely denying** this circumstance to himself'; words which relate him to death, physical sickness and illusion (p.4: my emphasis). Locating both Nightingale and the Writer within 'a pair of alcoves' with the minimal barrier of plywood, the vulnerability of the Writer to these diseased characteristics is suggested. In this sense, Nightingale is pivotal in 'revealing the nature of the Writer's character'. The setting puts Nightingale's corrupted and

⁷² It is the same building in which Williams rented an attic room in New Orleans in the late thirties.

earthly form of art in contrast with the Writer's pure art and innocence. However, the Writer needs to cross over the barrier before he can move into maturity.

Elsewhere on the stage, there is the studio inhabited by Jane Sparks, a fashion designer, and Tye McCool, a drug addict who works at a Bourbon Street strip-joint. Located on the third floor, it is separated from the gabled cubicles by a narrow hall with skylight. There are curved stairs that join two areas: the lower area, the 'rear of a dark narrow passageway from the street entrance', and the upper 'kitchen area' (p.4). Most of the action takes place in the kitchen, which symbolises a shared spatial area, where the communal unity between these tenants takes place. Also featured in the play are Mary Maude and Miss Carrie, who look for food in bins and are comic in their scruffily genteel attempts to maintain their dignity, and Nursie, the maid who offers comfort for Mrs. Wire with her wisdom and religious beliefs. These three characters seem to play no important role in the Writer's emotional illumination, rather they serve to complete the variety of the communal unity in the play.

These characters are all watched by the domineering landlady, Mrs. Wire, who revives the image of Monk in Small Craft. Echoing Monk's relationship with the inhabitants of his bar, these tenants are Mrs. Wire's 'solace of companionship', and she brings them together within a communal unity. In Scene Seven, when the patrol forces enters the boarding house, after she pours hot water into the photographer's basement, a visual image of this unity is presented by all the tenants gathering in the kitchen area.⁷³ In this scene, she is described as a 'field marshal' who holds them together: 'all, all! Will stay right here', 'everybody in

⁷³ The photographer is one of the tenants on whom Mrs. Wire spies, and on whom she pours boiling water through the hole in the floor that has exposed his orgiastic party. He is not involved as a character within the action of the play; it is unclear whether he appears on the stage.

here stay here and sit tight till the facts are reported' (p.59). Her purpose is to unite these characters and to provide a structural focus for their unity.

However, Mrs. Wire does not function as a liberating force for the characters; rather she entraps them on the premises. She tries to monitor their spatial movements; for example, in Scene One she sleeps in the entrance hall, and asked by Nightingale why is she doing this, she replies: to 'watch on the comings and goings at night of tenants in my house' (p.11: my emphasis). With the use of the possessive pronoun 'my', her territorial surveillance is suggested. She moves freely within her territory; in Scene Nine, she appears a few steps below the Writer, and then she moves to appear again behind him. On hearing Tye insulting Jane, she simply bursts into their room.

To maintain her surveillance, she entraps the characters within darkness; visualised by the dark setting where the light bulbs are burned out. Reading 'light' as a symbol of salvation, Mrs. Wire in this sense cannot act as a light-force who can bring salvation to this unity.⁷⁴ She even doubts God and what is written in the Bible. For example, she challenges Nursie about her view on God's word 'let there be light' by telling her 'you hear him say that' (p.6). By denying Nursie's words, she doubts His existence and the very significance of the divine light. Leaving all the parts in the house dimly lit, with no light bulb in the hall, the characters stumble into darkness. Mary Maude and Miss Carrie cannot 'distinguish night from day any more. Only Shadows come in' (p.37). Using her flashlight to reveal who is entering into her territorial place, we are introduced to each character as they make their way through the entrance. The flashlight stands as a visual

⁷⁴ This is in contrast to Monk in Small Craft, who mediates between his bar's community and the light of salvation: a symbol of the loving God up in the 'living quarters'.

symbol of Mrs. Wire's surveillance over her tenants, and at the same time functions as the actual light allowing them onto her premises.

Following her argument with Mrs. Wire about the divine light, Nursie stumbles across the heavy knapsack with the word 'Sky' on it. Left by 'some crazy young man' who 'dropped' it 'on the floor and said he'd pick it up tomorrow', a parallel is suggested between the concept of light in the play and 'Sky' (p.6). Describing the knapsack as having 'something written on it that shines in the dark', there is an implicit reference to the divine light mentioned in the scriptures, which can rescue the tenants from the darkness of the house (p.6). By asking Nursie to carry it upstairs, Mrs. Wire creates a spatial distance between the tenants and this knapsack as a light force. The word 'knapsack' is synonymous with the word 'backpack', which may be related to what Nursie mentions about 'bag people':

they's lots of folks my age, black an' white, that's called bag people.

They just wander round with paper bags that hold everything they possess or they can collect. Nights they sleep on doorsteps: spend days on boxes on corners of Canal Street with a tin cup. They get along: they live-long as intended to by the Lord (p.7).

This quotation equates this light with wandering, adventures, lack of spatial coordinates, and the opportunity to 'live-long as intended to by the Lord' (p.7). So, for the characters to achieve this light, they must follow the ideals that marginalized 'bag people' stand for. However, Mrs. Wire neither affords this to her tenants, nor allows them to achieve it. She tries to entrap them in order not to be left alone; when Nursie suggests retiring and becoming one of those 'bag people', Mrs. Wire assures her that Nursie's place is there with her.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Wire cannot maintain her control over this communal unity for long, as she lives an illusion. Her illusion is related to her confinement within the past into which she retreats. The visual image of Mrs. Wire resorting to the bottle that 'belonged to the late Mr. Wire' after her shocking experience in the court symbolises her retreat into the past whenever she feels alone (p.65). This is embodied in her view of herself in relation to the rooming house. She describes it as 'the most historical street in the Vieux Carré', with 'valuable paying tenants, distinguished society ladies', where she is the taxpayer 'responsible. Reputable. Known to the authorities on the list of attractions' (p.89). Her illusion is related to her purpose; maintaining the morality of her house by putting up a fight 'against the corruption and evil that this Quarter is built on' (p.57). This corruption refers to the characters' 'vice', something she cannot tolerate, unlike 'the society folk in this city' (p.55). In this sense, as Simard argues, Mrs Wire tries to play the role of 'a guardian of morality and a regulator of new-found freedom' (Simard, p.4).⁷⁵

Towards the end of the play, her mind begins to slip as she realises that she lives the illusion of a communal unity which no longer gives her the 'solace of companionship'. She realises gradually that 'there's so much loneliness in this house that you can hear it. Set still and you can hear it: a sort of awful-soft-groaning in all the walls' (p.65). The loneliness resides in the sound of 'groaning' that she feels like an 'ache in ev'ry bone' of her body, and the only way for her to project this loneliness is through screaming. Although as the landlady it is not permitted for her to scream as 'it would disturb the tenants', she nevertheless in Scene Seven ends up doing so. Her 'piercing cry' dramatises her confinement

⁷⁵ Her intolerance is like that of Mrs. Fellowes in *The Night of the Iguana* who plays a similar role in her treatment of Charlotte. She will not tolerate Charlotte's sexual relationship with Shannon, the thing which maintains the conflict of his interior sexuality with the exterior space.

within her physical pain, resulting from her anxiety within this unity and specifically the fear of loneliness in her age.⁷⁶ This fear is generated after the 'night court' scene, where she starts to feel 'completely alone in the world, a solitary old woman cared by no one' (p.65).⁷⁷

The absence of the light as a salvation force within this unity transforms the stage into a space of entrapment. Like the city they inhabit, the characters within this unity are 'below the sea level', yet believing that they are all 'above water level' (pp.31-38). They drown under their frustrated anxiety that results from their constant 'evasion', made by not speaking what they feel. The visual image of the city symbolises the characters' anxiety; as Jane says, 'the climate here is debilitating. Perhaps because of the dampness and the, and the – **very low altitude**, really there's **no altitude** at all, it's slightly under sea level' (p.31: my emphasis). The only possibility of altitude is for them to seek a way up to elevate them spatially and metaphorically. However, with the absence of a life-force in Vieux Carré, the characters remain confined, symbolised by them being stuck 'below the sea level'. The word 'below' suggests the falling of these characters into an area that can be described as underneath the 'in-between area' of liberation.⁷⁸ In other words, with the word 'below', a spatial and metaphorical degradation is suggested. Hence, the way out for them is to go up from this lower area. However, these characters are hesitant to make this crossing.

⁷⁶ This recalls the image of Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire, who also projects her anxiety through sound; however in her case the anxiety is manifest as self-entrapment as discussed in the first chapter of the thesis.

⁷⁷ Monk in Small Craft sets himself as superior to his tenants by bearing his loneliness. This helps him function as a life-force for his customers. In contrast, Mrs. Wire in Vieux Carré is too weak to be the life-force for the tenants in the rooming house.

⁷⁸ This is a reference to the 'in-between area of liberation' evident in Small Craft.

Within the communal unity, Jane is dependent on Tye, who stops her from feeling lonely. However, to be with him, she has been degraded spatially and socially. She flees her New England home with a dream of being a fashion designer, and searches for a start in New Orleans. She witnesses a spatial degradation by moving from 'the Adirondacks' where she used to live on 'high ground, good elevation', to New Orleans with its debilitating climate and no 'altitude at all' (p.31). Meanwhile, she is degraded metaphorically by sharing her life with Tye who works 'all night at a Bourbon Street strip joint', involved 'with all the underworld elements of this corrupt city' (p.33). Jane carries on her relationship with him out of her constant need for comfort. He has a hypnotic effect on her that confines her movement; through his bodily hold she achieves a form of comfort. In Scene Nine, when she asks him to move out of the house, he insists that he 'just want to comfort' her: 'can't we just rest together? Can't we? **Rest and comfort** each other?' (p.88: my emphasis). A temporary comfort is achieved through lying down, hence Tye repeats through the scene sentences that maintain this position: 'come back to bed'; 'I'll undress you'; 'lie down with me and hold me'. These declarations have a dream-like effect on her and maintain her gradual degradation. This is symbolically visualised by the parallels between her words in Scene Seven and the offstage voice saying 'Edwina, Edwina, come see this dream of little courtyard. Oh, my, yaiss, like a dream' (p.85). These sentences follow Jane's words: 'among other things, many other undreamed of before, you've taught me to practice deception' (p.85). Here, 'deception' parallels the word 'dream' in the first context, as she has been living with him in a dream that allows her to accept the fact of 'living with a young bum employed by gangsters and using her place as a depository for hot merchandise' (p.81). However, Jane's 'sensual streak' encourages her to ignore these aspects of Tye's character (p.82).

As with other characters, Jane's anxiety is manifest through sound. This sound takes the form of 'moaning' which is read positively by the communal unity in the house; Mrs. Wire views it as a sound of pleasure. In fact, it is the sound of her entrapment with Tye, out of which she cannot break. For example, in Scene Nine she decides to rid herself of him, requesting him to move out with his belongings. However, by the end of the scene she surrenders to his hypnosis of comfort by 'sobbing on the bed'. This comfort does not only operate as sound, but also in visual symbols.

Beret, the cat, symbolises the unseen comforting presence to which Tye resorts whenever the action between him and Jane becomes heated. For example, whenever Jane threatens to walk away from him, he calls Beret. By the end of the play Beret is serving Jane the same way, when she feels that Tye really has walked away and will not be back, after she discovers that her fatal blood disease is no longer in remission. She tries to 'spare him the unpleasantness of her decline', and he leaves unaware of the 'nature of her illness [suspecting pregnancy], planning to return from work early to rouse her sagging spirits' (Simard p.3). Thus, she resorts to Beret as a symbolic comfort. Unlike human beings, cats can 'go away and come back and – you don't have to worry about them' (p.104). Jane realises that if Tye goes away he will not come back. Thus she seeks comfort through holding Beret after her fight with Tye in Scene Twelve. She realises that 'nothing existed' for him except his self-absorbed 'image in the mirror'; he has become 'invalid, of no use, financial or sexual' (p.110).

Tye does not provide Jane with the light of life and salvation. This is embodied by the constant darkness in their room and her own physical deterioration. Tye is content with the darkness, in which there is for him a clarity

which he cannot find in lighted areas. In Scene Eleven he recognises that Jane's 'gotten sort of – skinny', which he had not recognised during the day in spite of her constant complaints. Meanwhile, Jane's deterioration results partly from her inability to recognise herself. She feels that she has been degraded from a 'Northern equivalent of a lady' into a 'fallen' whore (p.96). She repeatedly defends the fact that she is not a whore, but in the same scene she is ironically named by the tourists when she staggers naked out into the gallery: 'there's a whore at the gallery window! Practically naked' (p.99: my emphasis).

Realising her decline into the position of a 'fallen' lady, Jane decides to withdraw from Tye's life. However, instead of moving away from the studio or the house that stands for their unity, she spatially 'withdraws into another dimension' (p.110). This is embodied by her repeatedly looking through the window at the scene outside. She describes it as a:

sky that's visible to her from her bed under the skylight – at night, these – filmy white clouds, they move, they drift over the roofs of Vieux Carré so close that if you have fever you feel as if you could touch them, and bits would come off on your fingers, soft as – cotton candy (p.111).

Her words highlight the concept of 'sky' as a symbol of liberation. It is her way to be elevated from the room 'that smells, that reeks of marijuana' (p.105).⁷⁹ Jane helplessly tries throughout the play to free herself spatially from her room, and approaches the window when she feels confined. She tells Tye to open the shutters, so she can breathe the 'clean air' in which she hopes to die, and the windows with

⁷⁹ Shannon in the three-act version of *Iguana* achieves the same numbing peace through drinking the rum-coco and opium tea.

their shutters portray a release of freedom from the confinement of the room (p.99).

In Scene Eleven, to the gallery 'with its closed shutters, moving from one piece of furniture to another for support. Now she opens the shutter doors and staggers out onto the gallery' (p.99). Her bodily staggering parallels her degradation; and she needs something to hold onto in order to be liberated from her decline.

At the end of the play Jane 'staggers to the window; shatters a pane of glass; and shouts' (p.115). By shouting, she projects through sound her anxiety that cannot be verbalised by language.⁸⁰ Vieux Carré ends with the image of Jane 'absorbed in her solitary chess game' which symbolises her loneliness (p.115). She realises through Tye's footsteps, which 'picked up speed on the second flight down-started whistling ...', that he has walked away (p.114). Tye's whistling then stands for a sound of release, his liberation from the room, which is paralleled by his spatial movement on the second flight down.

Beret is visible for the first time in this scene. Described as 'white and fluffy as a piece of cloud', a parallel is suggested between the cat and Jane's vision of the sky (p.115). It is her source of light and elevation. However, found by the Writer when he went down the second flight 'on the cot in the dark passage way', Beret has deserted Jane, symbolising Jane's failure to achieve the way to her vision of the sky as a means of salvation and liberation (p.115). So by the end of the play, left alone without her comfort, Jane surrenders to her confinement. This is visualised by her leaning 'against the wall, panting, her bleeding hand behind her' after she 'shatters a pane of glass' (p.115).

⁸⁰ This action recalls Blanche in Streetcar, who uses her voice in order to project her own self-entrapment on others and on the exterior space around her.

Although Jane's and Tye's relationship has no grandeur, and its gaudiness exposes no depth of characterization, they display a tangible example of the deteriorated unity that helps to achieve the Writer's enlightenment. The Writer would have been like Jane, had he not deserted the communal unity and compromised his compassion. Unlike Jane, however, he achieves a spatial and metaphorical elevation above the lower area and towards the liberating vision of Sky. This is not only realised by his following Sky to the West Coast, but also he ends up literally free from the confinement of his memory, which has constituted a fluctuating barrier between him and his freedom. The play dramatises his liberation from his memory's confinement within the past. This liberation operates by shifting people from the shadowy side of his memory into its lighter side, pushing these people into the spotlight of his memory. By the end of the play he liberates himself and sees the house 'empty now', while at the beginning of the play 'it was alive' in his recollection. Gradually, by entering the 'lighter areas' of his memory, the characters start to disappear behind him, becoming 'shadowy occupants', as if the 'earth seems to swallow them up; the walls absorb them like moisture' (p.116). They remain with him 'only as ghosts; their voices are echoes, fading but remembered' (p.116).

This is presented at the end of the play in the 'cacophony of sound' and the 'urgent call of the clarinet' (p.116). The 'cacophony' includes the 'waiting storm of his future – mechanical racking cries of pain and pleasure, snatches of song', which fades out to be replaced by the second sound of the clarinet (p.116). The clarinet that takes the form of an urgent calling belongs to Sky, and the sound makes the Writer turn at the door for a while until he utters the final words of the play: 'this home is now empty' (p.116). Here the door stands for a symbolic spatial

area of departure between two fluctuating spaces in his memory: the lighted area of the house (the communal unity in the house) and the darkened area of his future (the way to the skylight). It is dark, and he is 'frightened of it', and it is a 'desperate undertaking' to open the door heading into this area (p.116). This is visualised as he is 'forced back a few steps' until he 'crosses to the open door' (p.116). By crossing the door he succeeds in moving away from the communal unity into the world of adventures and liberation.

Not until he realises this stage of maturation does the Writer leave the communal unity to follow the light of Sky. This is foreshadowed from the very beginning, as the Writer 'shoulders the sack and mounts a step or two to the kitchen level' while the name on the sack 'shines like a prediction' (p.8). This prediction comes true when the Writer decides to leave with the musician, Sky, and head to the West Coast. By this decision he succeeds in going beyond the space underneath the 'in-between area' of liberation within which the communal unity of the house are confined, as discussed earlier. This is verbally symbolised by the reference in his final words in the play to the two stages of childhood and adulthood. He passes the first stage by growing up from a child into 'a man, about to take his first step out of his waiting station into the world' (p.107). The 'waiting station' refers to the house and its people and memories that confine him. Moving on from this house is the first step in his liberation, and leaving this 'waiting station' the Writer finds a degree of maturity.

In Part One, we see the Writer in a stage of childhood. Mrs. Wire adopts him as a surrogate son and associates him with her own son Timmy, and her motherly qualities of protection are pivotal for the fulfilment of the Writer's own familial needs during his time in the house. During this stage, he stumbles with

words; using incomplete sentences with ellipses and sometimes silence. Moreover, others refer to him as a 'kid', 'too young', and a 'boy'. He objects to Nightingale's constant spatial intrusion into his cubicle 'without knocking', until he surrenders to his homosexual advances (p.48). However, he undergoes a remarkable change at the beginning of Part Two; he moves from innocence to hardened experience, probably as a result of his intimate contact with Nightingale. He achieves a new coarseness after only three weeks. Mrs. Wire notices a 'shift from the gentlemanly innocence' he once had and, by the end of the play, he shows little human compassion. Even his condensed speeches become cruel as the play progresses, and his purpose seems to be a destroyer of the characters' evasions, rather than a point of compassion. He starts to develop a different language, longer and more complete, without pauses.

He adopts a different attitude towards the parental approach of Mrs. Wire, confronting her and saying that he is 'nobody's child. Was maybe, but not now' (p.107). His words imply his maturity, and movement away from his childish dependency on Mrs. Wire's ensnaring love. He even projects this maturity onto others, for example in Scene Five he confronts Nightingale with the reality about his TB condition in a hard and quick voice that contrasts with Nightingale's voice of uncertainty and fear:

I think there has been some deterioration in your condition and you ought to face it! **A man has got to face everything sometime and call it by its true name**, not to try to escape it by - cowardly! – evasion – go have your lungs x-rayed and don't receive the doctor's bill when it's sent! But go there quick, have the disease stated clearly (p.51: my emphasis).

His words distinguish between evasion and facing everything by referring to it by its true name. Here the Writer plays the role of a force of comfort for Nightingale. He catches Nightingale and 'assists him back to his cot' in order to lie down (p.90). The very action of lying him down and placing 'the pillows gently' under his back visualises his attempt to comfort him (p.91). He uses special mechanisms to comfort him: 'pills for sleep', and blowing the candle out to make him 'feel a comforting presence', which Nightingale finally achieves by his death in Scene Ten (p.93).

The Writer progresses with a rapidity that some critics, such as Simard, misread as lack of 'believability' (Simard, p.2). However, according to my reading, this is a technique of Williams to have the Writer serve the narration of the other characters' confinement, until he is developed into a liberating symbol rather than being a real dramatic character himself. Williams presents through the Writer a case study of a character that succeeds in moving beyond the margin towards liberation. However, this does not imply that liberation lies at a specific destination.⁸¹ Rather, it is within the very act of moving. In other words, unlike Williams' other characters (Blanche, Laura, Shannon, Myrtle, Miriam and the community of Monk's bar), the Writer succeeds in liberating his interior space (which stands for the fluctuating space of his memory) from its ties to the exterior space (including his past, and his communal unity with others). This liberation pushes him away from the experience of marginality; here liberation is a fluctuating

⁸¹ The West Coast was associated with the counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to written statements and a number of Tennessee Williams' published letters, Williams' attitude to the West Coast was close to that of the Writer. In one of his letters to his mother, Edwina Dakin Williams, in 1939 from San Antonio, Texas, he refers to his journey to the West Coast with Jim Parrott, a musician similar to Sky. He offered to drive Williams free of charge as he had been promised work in Hollywood and he thought he could get Williams 'some scenario work there in the studios' (Devlin and Tischler, 2000, p.148). Williams seemed to be inspired by his trip to the West Coast, and referencing its cultural life, with Sky beckoning the Writer towards a creative place of liberation. Given that *Vieux Carré* was published in 1977, however, it is retrospective in its view of the West Coast counter-culture which, arguably, had lost its force by the early 1970s.

space that lies within the Writer's interiority, which helps him to look back in time and to observe his interactions.

Jack Barbera in 'Strangers in the Night: Three Interior Dramatic Monologues by Tennessee Williams' (1999) argues that:

Williams' interior dramatic monologues allow the reader to see the speaker's self seeing itself ... the interior dramatic monologues encourage the reader to consider the speaker's situation and limitations of perspective, facilitating an understanding on the part of the reader of a different and perhaps more encompassing perspective than that of the speaker (Barbera, p.77).

According to my argument, the Writer functions as an 'observing ego', through whose interior dramatic monologue we are allowed to see the character's self seeing himself. This raises questions of whether Williams, by the end of his career, had moved beyond an exploration of the concept of marginality towards dramatising a turn back to the self as the source of salvation and liberation.

According to such a view, it is through the self that Williams' loving God is made possible. However, this is not the confined, destructive, rejected self, or the abnegated self, but rather the self that is ready to move.⁸² Through the Writer, Williams dramatises this movement away from the confinement of the self, and the fear of 'not knowing what isn't meant to be known' (Williams' The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore (1963), as quoted in Adler, 1973, p.53).⁸³ So,

⁸² This is a reference to Williams' earlier characters who are entrapped with their selves as discussed in the first chapter of the thesis.

⁸³ This is taken from Milktrain where Christopher Flanders, the Angel of Death, tells Sissy that she does not suffer from a 'malady of the body but from an emptiness of the spirit that no physical love can assuage' (see Adler 1973, p.53).

the Writer follows Sky to the unknown, and all he is expecting is to exist and survive. He accepts a life like that of a fugitive, on the road with Sky, by exercising his wits and his 'personal charm' in order to experience the 'wide open spaces between here and the coast' (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.78). Within these spaces, the Writer is elevated away from Mrs. Wire's rooming house that remains 'below the sea level'. The Coast represents a spatial area of openness, adventure and rootlessness that can elevate the Writer up to the sea level. Here Sky represents 'a ticket out of a situation for which the Writer no longer has use' (Simard p.5). According to my argument, Sky will help him to discover his 'true nature', which is the 'instinct' which the characters of Menagerie strive to avoid in order to maintain their illusory unity within the Wingfields' apartment:

instinct, it must have been ... directed me here, to the Vieux Carré of New Orleans, **down country** as a – river flows no plan. I couldn't have consciously, deliberately, selected a better place than here to discover – to encounter – **my true nature** (The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume 8, p.69: my emphasis).

Thus, Sky's first appearance in the play coincides with these words, presenting him as a saviour who will rescue the Writer moved 'down' the country like a river does. This positions Sky as a symbolic vision of what the loving God stands for. By following him, the Writer is following the light which Sky represents, towards the abstract God.

This reading of Vieux Carré helps to draw this thesis to a close, suggesting a radical change of perspective in Williams' later plays, while also sharing lines of continuity with his earlier work. The thesis has examined the development of the minority concept, from the identity of a certain group in the 1940s and 1950s into a broader experience of marginality by the end of 1960s and 1970s. It has focused on reading Williams' dramatic texts in relation to their stagecraft, including reading the visual and aural images, the stage directions and the characters' body language and movements on the stage, as well as their spoken words. Williams' theatricality and stage craft are used to shift this concept from a simple philosophical or sociological meaning to one expressing real human experiences. Williams moves away from the plastic theatre and realism of his early plays, to use certain visual techniques in Iguana that externalise and project the confinement of the characters onto the stage itself.

In his early plays up to the end of the 1950s, characters including Laura in The Glass Menagerie, Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire and Catharine in Suddenly Last Summer are categorised as identifiable minorities. In Williams' early plays there is a focus on the self within which the characters are entrapped; this self is defined in Chapter Two, with its reading of Iguana, as 'the interior space', which is later witnessed as a conflict existing between the 'interior space' and its opposite the 'exterior space'. In Last Summer, the characters start to move from the self by projecting their self-entrapment onto the exterior space, symbolised by the liberation of Catharine's vision of the truth of Sebastian's death by the end of the play.

Towards the end of his career Williams moved towards dramatising the experience of marginality itself, in such plays as Kingdom of Earth, In the Bar

of a Tokyo Hotel, and Small Craft Warnings. In these plays the concept of minority is developed in more metaphorical ways, as an experience of complex marginality in relation to a small group of characters that are alienated from their social world and suffering from varying degrees of anxiety. Here the concept of marginality has become more abstract, concerning the characters' interaction with one another to create their own space of liberation. This place is referred to in Chapter Three as 'the circle of 'one-ness'.

The use of the word 'circle' signifies the circularity of the marginality experienced in these plays, where the characters resort to projecting their anxieties onto one another and have no choice but to continue within this endless circle of anxiety and entrapment. In these plays this circle takes the form of the mental fluctuating space that is created between two marginalized characters, who come together in order to be liberated from their own self inflicted prison. Gradually this circle is re-created and widened to include two or more characters that learn to operate on a collective level: in other words, a group of people work together to prevent an individual's confinement, as discussed in relation to Small Craft. The discussion of Vieux Carré reveals Williams moving beyond the experience of marginality by dramatising the unity with God, as well as a return to the self as the source of salvation and liberation.

Vieux Carré marks a major turning point in the representation of the idea of God, which plays a significant role in the dynamics and development of issues of minority and marginality in Williams' work. As discussed throughout the thesis, the presence of the father figure is given priority in Williams' plays, and the image of the patriarchal father is developed from a personified image of God in Williams' early plays into a more abstract image in the later works. The absent

Godlike father abandons Williams' earlier characters and contributes to their self-entrapment, such as the personified image of the Godlike father figure of Mr. Wingfield in Menagerie. In Williams' later plays the unity with an abstract God is suggested as a step towards liberation, as described in the discussion of Vieux Carré. With its three developmental drafts, Williams' 1961 play The Night of the Iguana is a pivotal text in his portrayal of minorities; these drafts signal Williams' transitional phase regarding the use of language, space and characters to convey minority issues.

The main objective of the thesis has been to demonstrate that, in Williams' drama, the way towards liberation lies within the self. With this emphasis on the self, it is plausible to relate Williams' vision of liberation to contemporary society. Williams' vision encourages effective communication, and sustained dialogue. It will also be significant to pursue this concept in the dramatic work of Williams' contemporaries.

This thesis therefore proposes a new framework for the study of Williams' dramatic work. Williams presents the concept of liberation as a developing process of freeing the self from self-obsession. This is illustrated in Williams' texts by the self-entrapment which stems from the fear of rejection. Williams' intention is to call for liberation from the self: not in a space of pure freedom but in negotiation with others.

Tennessee Williams is unrivalled in his daring attempt to challenge the status quo through his dramatic texts. He achieves this, not by aligning himself within certain schools or movements, but by questioning and transcending the dominant social ideas to explore universal topics such as selfhood, self-entrapment,

liberation and anxiety. By exploring these topics Williams enables his minorities and marginalized characters to exist on his stage.

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