DECONSTRUCTING PESSIMISTIC DISCOURSE IN THE PLAYS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

IRSHAD AHMAD TABASUM

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THESIS DECLARATION LETTER

(By the candidate)

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Irshad Ahmad Tabasum

Date ________________
I hereby submit that Mr. Irshad Ahmad Tabasum, UMT ID 080394001, has been working under my supervision for his PhD thesis titled “Deconstructing Pessimistic Discourse in the Plays of Tennessee Williams.” I believe that the content and scope of the thesis are commensurate with research at the doctoral level, and consequently recommend that it be submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Management and Technology Lahore, for local and foreign examination.

Signature of the supervisor
Prof Dr. Asim Kreem

Date ______________
THESIS DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have examined the defense, which is satisfactory with overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Department of English Language and Literature, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Management and Technology Lahore for acceptance.

Thesis title: Deconstructing Pessimistic Discourse in the Plays of Tennessee Williams

Submitted by: Irshad Ahmad Tabasum
Name of the candidate

Doctor of Philosophy
Degree name in Full

English Language & Literature
Name of Discipline

Prof. Dr. Asim Kreem
Supervisor
Signature of the supervisor

Internal Examiner
Signature of Internal Examiner

Prof Rao Jaleel Ahmad
Head of English Department
Signature of HOD

Prof Dr. Abdul Hameed
Dean SS&H
Signature of Dean

Prof Dr. Hassan Sohaib Murad
Rector UMT
Signature of Rector

Date
Dedicated to

My mother, father and elder sister who kept on praying for my success in PhD till they breathed their last
ABSTRACT

This study uses deconstructive theoretical underpinning to debate the presence of an optimistic discourse contrary to the pessimistic discourse as stressed by the critics and researchers of Tennessee Williams. It is qualitative in nature and inductive method is employed to carry it out. Pessimistic discourse in the plays of Williams is crafted in such a way that it has to be decoded and deconstructed to make optimistic sense of them. The study explores optimism in the chaotic world portrayed in these plays. It proves that Williams’ art focuses on ceaseless struggle to bring order to chaos. Focusing on binary pairs of opposites like conscious/unconscious, fertility/sterility, hope/hopelessness, soul/body, self/other sanity/insanity, regeneration/degeneration, saviors/killers, reality/illusion etc. this study tries to uncover certain contradictions and instabilities in the plays of Williams. By deconstructing the warring forces of signification in these plays it searches optimism in the bleak situation of human life. If the individual is at war with the society, he is also at war with himself. He becomes a hero when he refuses the role of victim and tries to change the course of events with an act of rebellion. In his desire to become his own liberator, he tries to transform his world. The external forces pounce upon him to crush him but they fail before his insatiable desire for existence. In his struggle for a better world Williams’ protagonists sometime fail but such a failure becomes a blessing in disguise as it makes them better human beings with great knowledge of things around them. This is what brims the dramatic world of Williams with hope and expectancy. This study highlights the importance of determination in making the best of life in the worst situation. The agony of entrapment in the plays of Williams and self realization through the act of defiance to it, in fact, help us recognize our own humanity and our desire for a better world. Williams unveils the complex and unruly human feelings without ignoring their strength. The study critically evaluates the plays of Williams and claims that he is not a pessimist playwright because the saviors in his plays are more powerful than the killers. It explores how Williams seeks hope in creativity and regeneration in degeneration.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The present study is a textual analysis of Tennessee Williams’ plays which argues that Williams, in fact, talks about the brighter side of life’s panorama by portraying its dark aspects. There is a constant resistance to exploitation and social perversity in these plays. The dehumanizing forces of modern life fail to crush the life affirming forces. The study uses deconstructive theoretical underpinning to debate the presence of an optimistic discourse contrary to the pessimistic discourse as stressed by the critics and researchers of Williams. By deconstructing the painful dynamics of dysfunctional family and its debilitating and corrosive effects on the individual as portrayed in the plays of Williams, this study explores how search for sustained familial relationship continues and saves from total collapse. By the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the plays of Williams the invisible is made visible and the marginal is given prominence in this study. Williams talks about several aberrations afflicting modern society without ignoring the tender side of human life. The researcher interacts with an American playwright to bring forward different meanings and interpretations. Similarly, different meanings are evolved as they emerge in various plays of Williams as well as with different other texts (Kristiva’s Intertextuality). In order to understand, articulate and justify the evaluation of these plays in a coherent and logical manner and express his personal and academic response to them, the researcher relies on deconstructionism.

Deconstructionists believe that a text has an almost infinite number of possible interpretations and claim to dismantle the biased beliefs of the researchers and makes them see a text from new perspectives based on the new binary inversions. Derrida, the proponent of deconstructionism maintains that it is an approach to reading, and literary analysis is more a strategic device than a methodology, more a strategy or approach to literature than a school or theory of criticism (Bressler 2011: 106-7). Derrida insists that deconstructionism is not a theory per se, but rather a set of strategies or ways of reading a text (Klages 2007: 53). Instead of setting up a new philosophy, a new literary theory of analysis or a new school of literary criticism, the deconstructionists present a new reading
strategy, one that allows us to make choices concerning the various levels of interpretation we see operating in a text. All levels, they say, have validity. They also believe that their approach to reading frees the reader from ideological allegiances that restrict the comprehension of meaning in a text. (Bressler 2011: 116-17).

This study searches the binary oppositions working in the plays of Williams and how these binary oppositions create the basic structures through which Williams’ protagonists think and work in their world. It dismantles the previously held views on the plays of Williams by reversing the present binary operations. It creates various levels of meaning in these plays on the new binary inversions. In this way it explores optimistic elements in pessimistic discourse of these plays, which has escaped the attention of Williams’ critics over the years. Pessimistic discourse in the plays of Williams is portrayed in such a way that it has to be decoded and deconstructed to make optimistic sense of them. Stephen J Greenblatt believes that a text, literary or historical, is a discourse, which consists of ideological products or cultural products of a particular era (Greenblatt 1990: 50). Discourse, for Jan Blommaert, is all forms of meaningful semiotic activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use, and plays a pivotal role in making up the fabric of our social life (Blommaert 2005: 3). The present study looks at how the discourse generates meaning in the social, sexual, psychological and economic world of Williams.

1.1 Optimism in Pessimistic Discourse

It is an established fact that Williams’ world is replete with death, destruction, deception, degeneration, dysfunctional family, insanity, alienation, lynching, castration, sterility, cancer and cannibalism but the present study aims to construct a parallel mode of optimism that even moves to achieve a level of parallel discourse in his art. It searches how love, compassion, endurance, survival, rejuvenation etc pervade throughout his work. Williams’ world is pathetic but there is sweetness in this pathos as P.B. Shelley says: “Our sweetest songs are those that tell us of saddest thoughts” (Shelley 1909: 558). The supreme quality of his art lies in its ceaseless struggle to bring order to chaos. There is a constant conflict between the opposing forces but, for Williams, opposing forces are
always two sides of the same coin. Focusing on binary pairs of opposites like conscious/unconscious, fertility/sterility, hope/hopelessness, soul/body, self/other sanity/insanity, regeneration/degeneration, light/darkness, saviors/killers, reality/illusion, dysfunctional family/functional family etc, this study uncovers certain contradictions and instabilities in the plays of Williams. By deconstructing the warring forces of signification in these plays it searches optimism in the bleak situation of human life.

1.2 Tennessee Williams’ Art

Tennessee Williams is one of the most outstanding American dramatists. He occupies a prominent place in modern drama because of authenticity and depth in his plays. Williams’ art portrays the marginalized people hovering at the end of tether, but such marginalization fails to suppress their individuality. They are weak but capable of changing weakness into their strength. They lead “a life of clawing and scratching along a sheer surface and holding on tight with raw fingers to every inch of rock higher than the one caught hold of before” (Williams 1978: 16), because man is made for such a life. The significance of Williams’ dramatic achievements lies in his clinging to the mysteries of life and searching for light in the darkest moments of life. There is a lot suffering in his plays but such suffering is not without meaning. Those who bear their suffering have courage and hope which make them worthy of it. They remain unique in their suffering and experience genuine inner achievement as Viktore Frankl states “If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying” (Frankl 2004: 9).

This study focuses on the following major plays of Williams in which the element of hope is most fully realized: _The Glass Menagerie_ (1945), _A Streetcar Named Desire_ (1947), _Summer and Smoke_ (1948), _The Rose Tattoo_ (1950), _Camino Real_ (1953), _Cat on a Hot Tin Roof_ (1955), _Orpheus Descending_ (1957), _Suddenly Last Summer_ (1958), _Sweet Bird of Youth_ (1959), _The Night of the Iguana_ (1961), _The Kingdom of Earth_ (1975) and _A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur_ (1978). The tragic elements in most of these plays arouse pity and fear but all of them do not end on a pessimistic note. _The Rose Tattoo_ and _The Night of the Iguana_ end on a hopeful acceptance of life. Both Serafina and Shannon break the ivory towers of their illusions and accept the values required for
their earth-bound survival. *The Glass Menagerie* ends on a tragic note but the expression of compassion between the mother and the daughter and their tragic grandeur at the end of the play show that life can be made endurable and sustainable even when the thick and dark clouds of miseries loom large upon us. Though they are lost and isolated souls, their act of embracing each other at the time of calamity represent a redemptive humanism. By consoling each other in one way or the other these protagonists keep on hanging for life till the last moment. Their passion for life does not diminish even in the face of death, derangement and destruction. Some of the protagonists, e.g. Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and the Princess in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, try to reconcile with the universal order by making compromises even for an existence which fulfills their dreams of normal living.

In his plays, Williams talks about the behavior of common man in adverse situation. The basic problem of such a man is quest for meaning in despair and denial. Meaning, in fact, is central to the meaningless existence of Williams’ protagonists. By presenting the small events in the lives of small people, like Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, Blanche, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* or Hannah in *Night of the Iguana* etc, Williams portrays the wider world. Maggie is badly marginalized but she asserts her will and emerges as victorious. Blanche believes that the living of life can be noble so she does not surrender even in the worst moments of her life. She searches for sanity in the face of insanity, and kindness in the face of cruelty. She seeks it in the kind person of Doctor of Asylum. Lonely Hannah believes in the philosophy of looking out, not in. She accepts a life that is not so enviable but her excellent quality of endurance leaves a positive impact on such a life. She survives because she knows how to tolerate suffering and carry on the journey of life. Her sense of acceptance is so inspiring that Shannon is influenced by it. Similarly, Maxine does not have lofty aspirations but she accepts what is suitable, sensible, and feasible under the current circumstances. In *Milk Train*, Chris inculcates in Mrs. Goforth how to live and how to die. She decides to go forth alone because she reaches a state of being where acceptance is wisdom. Walter Meserve states that the concept of acceptance sustains a persistent motif throughout Williams’ work. It should not be surprising that a number of the major characters in Williams’ plays are survivors – people who know exactly what
they want and through the line of action in a given play accept the reality of the situation and work toward their dreams or desires (Meserve 1997: 251-53). There is mystery and grandeur with which these protagonists confront their marginalization, the indifferent world and the great nothingness that surrounds it. The qualities of their head and heart are so powerful that they attain a central place.

Williams’ protagonists are nonconformist and dreamy. They are entrapped in the web of frustration and hopelessness and fight for emotional freedom in the stifling atmosphere. The hopeful affirmations about life’s potential help them overcome such an atmosphere. They do not lose their belief in unprecedented possibilities of their future even when they are faced with the gloomiest situation. Delma Eugene Presley comments that Williams’ hero travels the difficult road from despair to hope – from the shadows of tragedy to the light of the comic vision. This journey becomes a kind of pilgrimage characterized by the hero’s repetition of familiar affirmations (Presley 1997: 276). Reinvention in the most depressing and doubtful moments of their lives gives prominence to Williams’ protagonists. The complexities of modern life are mind-boggling but the force with which they represent life is so thrilling. They are badly trapped in the exploitive web of society but they emerge so powerful because of their creative and regenerative force. They think that there is always another corner of the setting to uncover, another alternative of their identity to try. Potential life and expected possibilities remain more seductive than the current situation. Their present is sad and gloomy but there is hope behind the workings of their imagination. That is why they do not give up hope nor passively await their annihilation but act to assert their belief that they are alive. They resist against the annihilating forces and emerge successful because they are never ready to surrender before such forces.

Williams’ main interest lies in human nature and he explores the hidden motives of human psyche. He stresses that the tragedy of a peasant could be as real as the tragedy of a king. Man in relation with the self and the society is the main concern of his drama. Individual is regarded as a full entity and the common process of life is seen at its most intense in an individual experience. The deepening sense of unease and insecurity in his plays is because man is threatened from within as well as from without. If the individual is at war with the society, he is also at war with himself. He becomes a hero when he
refuses the role of victim and tries to change the course of events with an act of rebellion. In his desire to become his own liberator, he tries to transform his world by erecting a new world. The external forces pounce upon him to crush him but they fail before his insatiable desire for existence. In his struggle for a better world Williams’ protagonist fall sometime, but such a fall leads him to maturity and makes him capable of facing the existential forces of life heroically. So failure becomes a blessing in disguise because it makes his protagonists better human beings with great knowledge of things around them.

Williams’ dramatic art explores the pathologies of oppressive urban life, their negative impact on human psyche and man’s attempt to cope with them. Based on the complexities of modern day life, it touches upon the inner psychological realms of human life. Because his protagonists have profound and exuberant passion for life, the oppression becomes a source of motivation for them. They are frustrated souls but their resolve to create a better world does not diminish and most of the time they succeed in their pursuit. This pursuit for a better world in the most disappointing moments, in fact, shines like some light at the end of a tunnel. The suppressing situation activates the hidden strength of his protagonists. Their pessimistic condition sharpens their sense of troubling realities and helps them see things more accurately. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi aptly states: “The best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is the something that we make happen.” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 3). The childless Maggie, for example, is stretched to the limits of her annihilation but such a situation increases her perception of danger, sensitizes her to potential threat of the Goopers and causes her to evaluate the situation more carefully. She devises some innovative ways to protect herself in the most vulnerable situations. So her pessimistic situation calls for a keen sense of reality which becomes a saving force for her. She eyes the adverse situation from a broader and long-term perspective. Without losing her emotional balance she sees new possibilities, connects them with present predicament and reassesses them with positive outlook. This thing creates some space for her in the straitjacketing situation. Her resilience is so superhuman that leaves her much less vulnerable to the harsh realities of the moment.
The agony of entrapment in the plays of Williams and self realization through the act of defiance to it, in fact, help us recognize our own humanity and our desire for a better world. Williams unveils the complex and unruly human feelings without ignoring their strength. It is their relentless struggle for survival in the face of unbearable suffering that makes Blanche, Amanda, Maggie, Lady etc. heroic figures. Blanche is destroyed and stretched to the limits of lunacy but not ready to accept her defeat. She never lets go a little moment of life even in her death-like moments of lunacy. Her extended hand towards the Doctor of Asylum seeking his kindness reflects her dogged determination to live even with mental illness. She finally gets the gestures of human kindness in the person of the Doctor of Asylum. She finds her real self by quitting inflated pretensions and accepting her diminished reality as Jung says that in order to achieve reconciliation between the ego, center of the conscious personality, and the Self, unifying center of the total psyche, conscious and unconscious, which is the aim of individuation—the personality must divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand and of the suggestive power of primordial images on the other. (Jung 1966: 174).

Williams’ protagonists suffer from various weaknesses. They are flawed and fallible, but they are brave and ever hopeful. They exhibit nobility of mind in the worst moments of their lives. Unlike the two tramps of Samuel Beckett, they are not passive sufferers because they exert themselves with full force to come out of the pit. Jordan Y. Miller’s comments in this regard are worth quoting:

Blanche exits with the poise of the true lady, doomed, but commanding sympathy. Maggie the Cat has made her stand and probably has won; Tom, tortured by his memories, views his past agonies with compassion; Shannon has survived, and Hannah has secured release, with futures uncertain but far from hopeless. Chance Wayne has surrendered, but sacrifices himself for his sins and awaits his fate not whimpering, but with the strong positive nature that seems to make more of a man of himself in the end than could have been anticipated in his previous lifetime. In his approach to the tragic idea, at times verging on the classic, Williams permits his characters to achieve an ultimate dignity, perhaps still badly tarnished, but nonetheless ennobling. (Miller 1997: 220).

The unique quality of these protagonists is that they neither assert themselves as God nor claim that God is dead but rather try to become their own saviors when no one comes to their rescue. This is what brims the dramatic world of Williams with hope and
expectancy. The mysteries of their lives are so absorbing that they attract us in spite of all their failings. They are poorly equipped and have limited choices but they appeal because they have the will to struggle and control the uncontrollable. Their identity is constantly threatened by the pressure of the real but they try to resist it by the redesigning and reinventing power of their imagination. They lack many things in their lives but they sustain their lives with the power of their imagination. This lack plays a pivotal part in their subjective and objective reality. It becomes a motivating force and sustains their lives in the form of unfulfilled desires. They put up brave struggle to pursue their dreams and try to create a new world of their own. This pursuit in their marginalized living usually ends in the realization of their dreams.

The lives of Williams and his protagonists are anarchic but they have something to hold on. And that something is their sense of creativity even in the face of death and destruction. So, imagination becomes a powerful force in the plays of Williams and the dimension of fantasy acquires a central role in personal as well as in social life. It is their imaginative ability which saves them from a complete breakdown. It is the transforming power of creativity with which they are capable of turning the undesirable events of their lives into something desirable. During the lowest moments of their lives, they articulate their inner selves by creating art which serves them as a therapy and bulwark against their expected breakdown. They try to relieve the pain of existence by self theatricalizing. Another characteristic of these protagonists is that they seek solace by breaking barriers and building bridges in a hostile mysterious world. The need for compassion pervades in their lives. Their sincerity is so dominating that it becomes a therapeutic force leading to their salvation. Like a psychologist, Williams probes into the dark recesses of their inner world. He portrays that sometime their behavior is spiteful and their vision of life is perverted but it is all due to their disturbed and distressed lives.

1.3 Deconstruction and its Handling of Tennessee Williams’ Plays

towards exposing metaphysical assumptions and internal contradictions in philosophical and literary language. Many others have written deconstructive texts but Derrida remains the key figure for an understanding of what deconstruction is about. So, deconstruction in its more contemporary usage is best understood in terms of its association with the writings of Jacques Derrida. It is neither a methodology, as Derrida points out: “Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one.” (Derrida 1991: 273), nor a philosophy but it is a strategy of playing with language and meaning that teases and delights. Deconstruction destabilizes things but such destabilization is inventive and opens up a new and novel way of moving ahead as Derrida remarks: Destabilization is required for progress as well. As the de- of deconstruction signifies not the demolition of what is constructing itself, but rather what remains to be thought beyond the constructivist or destructionist scheme” (Derrida 1988 147). One key element of Deconstruction is Derrida’s skepticism of logocentrism. Logocentrism implies that monologic text has uniformly established meanings and a dominant singular perspective. Derrida deconstructs this monologic and centrally conditioned language/text to generate an infinite sequence of meanings. Deconstruction declares meaning to be essentially undecidable. What a text means and how it means, they say, cannot be determined because it is not possible to systematically find the grammar of a text. Instead one can find many meanings in a single text, all of them possible and all of them are replaceable by others. Instead of looking for structure, then, deconstruction looks for those places where texts contradict and thereby deconstruct themselves. Instead of showing how the conventions of a text work, it shows how they falter. The result is that a literary work can no longer have one unifying meaning that an authority (critic or author) can enunciate. Instead, meaning is accepted to be the outgrowth of various signifying systems within the text that may even produce contradictory meanings.

Ferdinand de Saussure argues that language refers not to objective reality but to mental concepts. In deconstructive terms, it does not even refer to mental concepts but only to itself. It consists of ongoing play of signifiers that never come to rest. Our thinking, then, is always in flux, always subject to changing signifiers that move from one to another. We may wish for stability, but we are caught in language which refuses to stay fixed. Such play does produce illusory effects of meaning, but the seeming
significations are the results of a trace, which consists of what remains from the play of
signifiers. Because we recognize a word by its differences from other words, it continues
to have traces of those that it is not. A word which is present signals what is absent. This
ongoing play Derrida calls differance, a deliberately ambiguous coined term combining
the French words for “to deffer” and “to differ,” suggesting that meaning is always
postponed, leaving in its place only the difference between signifiers…. Difference
asserts that knowledge comes from dissimilarity and absence, making it dynamic and
contextual. When these ideas are applied to a text, the concept of difference makes it
impossible to think about that work in isolation. The meaning of any given text will be
derived from its interrelatedness with other texts, in an ongoing process that gives it a
series of possible meanings and readings.

Deconstruction challenges Western way thinking about ultimate reality. By
making new ways of seeing reality, Derrida breaks the shackles of traditional
assumptions and ideologies and gives voice to that which has been systematically
silenced. Western philosophy since Plato has been logocentric which states that reality is
static, unified and absolute but deconstruction negates it by saying that reality is
relativistic, dynamic and open. Deconstruction, in fact, is Derrida’s critique of Plato’s
metaphysics. Derrida observes in his Disseminations that, for Plato, all reality embodied
in unchanging telos. Plato’s ontological vision is perfectly teleological, rigidly
hierarchical and beautifully ordered. All that exists is oriented towards an ultimate,
eternally unchanging telos which absolutely and ultimately entails the meaning for every
existent thing’s Being. This telos can be thought of as the Good, the Idea or the
Transcendental Signifier. “it is there that true being dwells, without color or shape, that
cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul’s pilot can behold it, and all true knowledge is
knowledge thereof.” (Phaedrus 247: 494). True knowledge is the knowledge of Forms;
metaphysics is the way we are able to gain true knowledge, to see the universe’s
ontological structure, to see its telos. Via metaphysics, Plato determines that this absolute
embodiment of Being is unchanging, because to change is to need to become different,
and the telos is perfect and in need of nothing else.

In Dissemination, Derrida explores Platonic metaphysics which says that logos
(speech) has higher truth value than writing (pharmakon). In terms of logocentrism,
spoken words are present whereas written words are only representation of absent speech. In Plato’s *the Phaedrus*, writing or pharmakon is described as a deluding drug, an enchanted poison, philtre: hence charm or spell. Being mere external marks, writing as pharmakon affects memory and hypnotizes it in its very inside, causing people to think they remember wisdom when in reality they forget truth, turning their eyes from Form to script. (Derrida 1981a: 110) By way grammatology, Derrida discovers that the pharmakon’s essence defies the non-contradictory logic of logocentrism. Pharmakon is “enchanted poison, philtre: hence charm or spell,” but more inclusively and ambiguously, Liddell and Scott (Greek-English Lexicon 1917) tell us, “drug, whether healing or noxious…healing remedy, medicine…generally remedy, cure” In the case of *Phaedrus*, the word pharmakon derives meanings from other pharmaceutical words even if they do not actually appear in the text. Derrida is interested in finding out how the meaning of ‘Pharmakon’ is not closed upon itself, but is connected through lexical similarity with other words in the pharmaceutical family, words that might be absent in *the Phaedrus* but are nevertheless semantically present.

This lack of full ‘presence’ is the concept behind Derrida’s neologism differance, a process of interminable semantic deferral and substitution. Meaning does not emanate from a transcendental signifieds, i.e, there is no metaphysical bond between a word’s meaning and an absolute meaning. Whatever meaning we can infer from language, as Ferdinand de Saussure says, is the result of differences between words; table means table because it is not fable, cable or label. Derrida expands upon this idea by emphasizing that table is not table in and of itself. Any meaning instantly contains a lack of meaning in that meaning emanates from a word’s difference from and deference to another word or words. As Terry Eagleton puts it, “you will never arrive at a final signified which is not signifier in itself. Meaning, if you like, is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifiers.” (Eagleton 1983: 128). So pharmakon has meaning because it is different from pharmakeus, and Pharmakos and because the connotations of the latter two defer to pharmakon and vise versa. Part of the meaning of pharmakon is erased or rewritten by the connotations of other pharmaceutical words, such as pharmakeus and pharmakos. Thus, through the action of differance, pharmakon also connotes pharmakeus, “a poisoner, and sorcerer” (Greek-English Lexicon 1917). Writing as pharmakon in
Phaedrus tacitly implies that it is a drug – “alternately or simultaneously beneficent and maleficent.” (Derrida 1981a: 70) used by a wizard, a magician a poisoner, an alchemist. Writing is something practiced by degenerated deformed people, by beings who fall outside the teleological hierarchy and the logic of logocentrism.

Derrida shows that the pharmakon also implies pharmakos – a synonym for phamakeus – “one sacrificed or executed as an atonement or purification for others, scapegoat” (Greek-English Lexicon 1917). Phamakos is absent in the text of Phaedrus yet critically present in meaning (Derrida 1981a: 132). Quoting J. G. Frazer, Derrida illustrates: “The Athenians regularly a number of degraded and useless beings at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought, or famine befell the city, they sacrificed two of these scapegoats” (Derrida 1981a: 133) The pharmakos is concomitantly shunned and cared for, “Beneficial insofar as he cures – and for that, venerated and cared for – harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil – and for that feared and treated with caution.” (Derrida 1981a: 133).

Writing is demeaned in Platonic thought but nevertheless essential to doing Philosophy. As Derrida says “A text is not a text unless it hides from the first corner, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game” (Derrida 1981a: 63). Writing as pharmakon causes us to suspect that the laws of the Phaedrus’ composition and the rules of its game are somewhat other than Plato discloses. Derrida points out “the essence of pharmakon lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no proper characteristics, it is not, in any sense of the word, a steady substance (Derrida 1981a: 125). It is fluid like water. In liquid opposites are easily mixed. Liquid is the element of pharmakon” (Derrida 1981a: 152). The lesson of Grammatology is that meaning is the result of differance, and differance is social/cultural/political/historical. Meaning does not have a specific Origin, a Transcendental Signifier, God, Form, Idea, or any telos; differance is incompatible with the static, synchronic, taxonomic, ahistorical motifs in the concept of structure. (Derrida 1981b 74). Centrisms and structures are idealisms. Insofar as differance and dissemination can be thought of as laws governing the structure of a text, they dictate the laws of its composition and the rules of its game (Dissemination 63).
Language (i.e. the lexical system) is the beginning and end of writing; discourse (spoken or written) is thus the beginning and end of Western Philosophy. As Gayatri Spivak writes in his translation of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, “The deconstructive reader exposes the grammatological structure of the text, that its origin and its end are given over to language in general, by locating the moment in the text which harbors the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of a text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction.” (Derrida 1976: xlix). What appears to be contradiction in *the Phaedrus* regarding pharmakon’s identity is in fact necessitated by the disseminating action of difference inherent in language. The pharmakon simply manifests where logocentrism fails. What this means is that *the Phaedrus*’ seemingly disjointed construction is not result of bad composition resulting from Plato’s mythical excursion but Plato, in fact, uses myth to talk about something non-logocentric (pharmakon).

This study implies this deconstructive mechanism to read Tennessee Williams as a plural text, not centrally determined and conditioned by logocentrism. The available research on Williams predominantly focuses on pessimism that emerges as a kind of discourse and governs the textual meanings. This predominance of pessimism constitutes a kind of logocentrism that needs to be deconstructed to generate other perspectives. This study therefore employs antilogocentric part of deconstructive philosophy to break the shackles of pessimistic discourse and generate meanings moving around optimism. Deconstructing the plays of Tennessee Williams seeks to show that text has no organic unity or basis for presenting meanings, only a series of conflicting significations. One way to begin is to follow Derrida’s own process, which he calls “double reading” (Derrida 1988: 40). That is you first go through a text in a traditional manner, pointing out where it seems to have determinate meanings. The first step in deconstructing Williams’ *The Night of Iguana*, for example, might be to make a commentary on Maxine’s loneliness, Hannah’s less than ideal life and Shannon’s psychological breakdown. The cumulative effect of the images trapped iguana, the death of Maxine’s husband and the impending death of Nonno leave a pessimistic effect on the whole play. On second reading, however, you would look for alternative meanings and use them to negate any specific one. Discovery of contradictory or incompatible meanings results in
the deconstruction of a text. They undermine the grounds on which it is based, and meanings become indeterminate. The text is not unitary or unified in the manner logocentrism promises. Recognizing that a text has multiple interpretations, the reader expects to interpret it over and over again. No single reading is irrevocable; it can also be displaced by a subsequent one. Thus interpretation becomes a creative act as important as the text undergoing interpretation. The pleasure lies in discovery of new ways of seeing the work.

There are contradictions in *The Iguana* that go unacknowledged. For example, the Hannah enjoys the pleasure of travelling with 97 years old Nonno but her spinstrish life reflects her loneliness. Shannon searches for God but ends up in the company of Maxine. Nonno’ last poem eulogises about life but he himself ends up in his death. He favors the beauty of nature but chooses civilization. When the play continues, death and souls are decentered by life and body. In the end contradictory hierarchies (death/life, life/death, soul/body, body/soul) are privileged by the protagonist even though they are incompatible. The apposed conditions cannot exist together, though that is never overtly acknowledged in the play. Their incongruity underscores the fragmented, conflicted nature of the protagonists. It also asserts the lack of fixed, unchanging meaning in poems or in life itself. In this way the chain of signifiers rolls over and over, moving from one provisional meaning to another.

Another deconstructive approach is to take what has heretofore seemed marginal and make it central. Elements customarily considered to be of minor interest can come to the focus of interest, with binary oppositions and possible reversal of their own. The comment that ordinarily receives little attention is brought to the center to see what new understandings surface, or a minor character may be scrutinized as critical to what happens to the plot. For example, in *The Iguana* a close look at the light colot paintings of Hannah are revealing. Seemingly of slight importance to what happens in the play or what it may mean, the color paintings turn out to be surprisingly significant. It is through her paintings that Hannah exchanges her dreams with reality. The paintings, which have no sounds and not even language, displace isolation as a center of meaning and thereby change the direction of the play.
The hidden contradictions and discrepancies between what the text seems to say and what it actually says are important. Such incongruities are often found in what is not said, in gaps of information, silences, questions, or sometimes figures of speech. The author’s intent is of no help in this process because what the author thinks was said may not be the case at all. In fact, by identifying those places where a slip of language occurs, that is, where something is said that was not meant to be said, you have found a point at which a text begins to deconstruct itself. By discovering a pattern of such inconsistencies and trying to account for it, a different interpretation becomes possible. The reader of *The Iguana* wonders, for instance, about the idea of freedom through prison. Maxine pinions Shannon in a hammock and the latter feels imprisoned. His freedom is curtailed but he takes pleasure in the hammock. Such a situation becomes mysterious for Hannah but soon she becomes aware of the real game of Maxine. Pinioning of Shannon connotes threat or mystery but his reaction to it connotes aesthetic pleasure. The threat of hammock is replaced with the company of Maxine so it is, finally, not there, or at least is there only momentarily. The hammock here has no permanent, stable, consistent self because instead of imprisoning Shannon, it leads him to Maxine’s bed.

Looking at the binary opposition – such as presence/absence, e.g. reversed by Derrida so that absence is favored – often helps a reader to deconstruct a text. In *The Iguana*, it is significant that all the protagonists seek company to combat their loneliness. Their desire for company comes unspoken from the inner self. It appears to exist only in thought. Phonocentric views would give them a privileged position because they are closest to the man. They represent him, stand in for him, and displace him. The inner words ultimately appear in writing, however, displacing speech (which in this case is unvoiced), which displaced unspoken thought, which initially displaced the man. The presence of being is far removed. The words of the persona are supplements for him. Desire turns into reality when Shannon consents to live with Maxine and absence is thereby privileged over presence. Shannon is seen to be a logocentric being who looks for a center, a god. Finding only momentary meaning, he moves on to seek a center in work and community by working in Maxine’s hotel and living with her.

By studying different contradictions and inconsistencies in the plays of Tennessee Williams, this study tries to explore optimism hidden in the dark and violent world
created by him. The analysis of the text is contextualized with the three stages of critical discourse analysis that are description, interpretation, and explanation. The primary sources (texts of Tennessee Williams’ plays, his *Memoirs* and literary essays) are the actual empirical material and the ultimate basis for developing the ideas. The findings are based on the data taken from these texts. By interpreting the data, a theory is developed that Williams is not a pessimistic playwright. Bressler’s comments on the construction of a theory that when we clearly articulate our personal philosophical framework when reading a text and explain how this mind-set directly influences our values and aesthetic judgment about a text, we are well on our way to developing a coherent, unified literary theory – the assumption (conscious or unconscious) that undergird our understanding and interpretation of language, the ways we construct meaning, and our understanding of art, culture, aesthetics and ideologies (Bressler 2011: 8). Existing literature on Williams (secondary sources such as criticism on Williams’ plays) is used as context knowledge for grounding the argumentation.

After documenting the data collected from the primary as well as secondary sources, the study proceeds to the next stages of research process i.e. assessment, interpretation, generalization and finally presentation. The process of documenting the data comprises mainly three steps: recording the data, editing the data and constructing a new reality in and by the produced text. The collected data are interpreted and analyzed by theoretical concepts. It includes the constant comparison between the concepts reflecting the element of optimism in the dramatic world of Williams and the formulation of questions by contrasting these elements with the bleak world of pessimism. These concepts actually serve as the basic building blocks of theory. The development of theory that Williams is not altogether a pessimist playwright involves the formulation of network of concepts and the relations between them. By using these strategies, the text is addressed regularly and answers are explored by disclosing the text.

**1.4 Significance of the Study**

The present study would be an addition to the existing understanding of Williams’ plays and provide insight into the complexities of his dramatic art throwing light upon the vital healthy forces working in this art. It is an intellectual pursuit of interlocking the
language of the day (Poststructuralism) and the language of the author (Tennessee Williams). Elements of optimism are explored by aligning the language of the text and the language used to read and interpret it. By searching optimism in pessimism, this study helps us recognize our own humanity and our desire for a better world. It reflects the perception of a Pakistani student researching on an American playwright. Similarly, literature cannot be confined to the limits of space and time. The present study explores optimism in an American playwright, but it can leave a positive effect in Pakistani scenario. Moreover, American Literature is taught in almost every university of Pakistan and Tennessee Williams enjoys a prestigious place in American Drama. Determination to make the best of life in the worst situation is the common feature of this study. The study will contribute to the academic as well as social arena of our life. By spotlighting some signs of optimism in the bleak situation of human life, the study can motivate many Pakistanis to find some element of hope in the age of suppression and depression. This pursuit for a better world can urge them to create their own when they fail to adjust themselves in the present. In this way it can leave a positive and constructive impact on our intellectual, social and cultural life. The points in this study are raised differently which contribute to the scope of the study.

1.5 Outline Plan

This study consists of five chapters and the flow of study would be as follows. The chapter I, Introduction, gives the introduction to the topic, objectives and implication of research, the delimitation and a brief layout of the research methodology. Chapter II, Review of Literature, critically and comprehensively evaluates literature written on the plays of Tennessee Williams. Chapter III, Coping Pessimistic Discourse with Creativity, portrays how Williams as well as his protagonists try to sustain themselves and cope with the harsh realities of their existence by the act of creativity. Such creativity helps them search coherence in chaos. Chapter IV, Sexuality and Deconstruction, takes up the idea of degeneration in the plays of Williams and deconstructs it to show that sexuality is a positive force in the plays of Williams because degeneration fails to suppress regeneration. It proves that lasting sexual relationship is achieved in many plays of Williams. Chapter V, Saviors and the Deconstructive Process, discusses that saviors in Williams’ world are more effective than the killers. Sometime the savior turns out to be a
false savior or no one turns up to rescue the protagonists from the crushing problems of life. Under these circumstances, the protagonists try to sustain themselves by becoming their own saviors. Conclusion of the study proves that the element of hope is potently present in the dramatic world of Tennessee Williams.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tennessee Williams occupies a prominent place in American drama and his artistic life spans from 1940 to 1980. Many scholars and researchers have delved deep into the world created by Williams to understand the different layers of meaning hidden in it. The present study is another effort in this regard. Generally the critical studies on Williams consist of Williams’ own critical essays and memoirs, biographies, interviews, critical books, collection of essays and scholarly articles. The investigation, observation and information provided by these studies are helpful for every researcher of Williams. The critical thoughts of various authors evaluate different aspects of Williams’ personal and literary life, attempting to find the objective picture of his place as an artist.

2.1 Williams’ Memoirs

Hundreds of critical books and scholarly articles have been written on the art and life of Williams but the first and foremost among these is Williams’ own autobiography, Memoirs (1975). It gives us the first hand knowledge of his personal as well as professional life. It sheds light on the dark and depressing aspects of his lonely life but one can easily trace positive features of his art and life. Williams portrays the bleak situation of human life but he has never been a misanthrope or a gloom-pot. He, in fact, admits that he has been an almost compulsive comedian in his social behavior. Memoirs reflects many contradictions in the person of Williams which are helpful in finding out optimistic elements in him and in his art.

2.2 Where I Live: Selected Essays of Williams

Where I Live: Selected Essays (1978), edited by Christine Day and Bob Woods is a collection of essays written by Tennessee Williams. In these essays Williams comments
on various aspects of his plays. Here he gives his personal observation and remarks on the context of his plays’ openings and thoughts on the theatre. Many of these essays were published in the newspapers, magazines and collections at or near the times of his play premiered. Williams work is subjective but in his essays he tries to be objective in his approach. In these essays he tries to justify death, destruction, violence in his work because such things cannot be excluded from the real life. By doing so, he in fact, talks about life, construction and love because real life does not complete without these binary oppositions.

2.3 Williams’ Short Stories

Most of Williams’ longer plays originate from his short stories because he worked over them again and again. The reading of such stories can be a natural interest for the researchers of Williams. Gore Vidal edited and presented *Tennessee Williams: Collected Stories* in 1985. It is a comprehensive collection of Williams containing 50 short stories. It includes some of his uncollected or unpublished stories while some others were previously published in *One Arm and Other Stories*, *Hard Candy*, *The Knightly Quest*, and *Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed*. This collection reveals how Williams’ immense talent turned these stories into full-length plays.

2.4 Williams’ Letters

*Tennessee Williams’ Letters to Donald Windham 1940-1965*, edited by Donald Windham (1976) nicely illuminates how the inner working of Williams and the external happenings surrounding his life kept on influencing the development and revision of his plays before they went to Broadway for the final performance. Another collection of his letters: *Five O’Clock Angel: Letters of Tennessee Williams to Maria St. Just, 1948-1982* is also worth-mentioning here. A brief preface by Elia Kazan and St. Just’s commentary make the collection more interesting. Most of these letters are devoted to news of Williams’ travel, theater productions, while others throw light on his personal relationships. These letters reveal that his career in the American theater started to decline.
by 1962 but his will to write plays never diminished. This will, in fact, becomes the redeeming force in his life and his work.

2.5 Williams’ Mother and Brother on Williams

As far as Williams’ biographies are concerned, various scholars have attempted in this field. The very first attempt was made by Williams’ mother, Edwina Dakin Williams. Edwina with Lucy Freeman throws light on certain unpleasant relations of Williams’ father and mother in Remember Me to Tom, (1963), compelling the mother to digress on her Southern girlhood. The digressions, however, are uninteresting in themselves when related to Williams’ plays. Edwina develops her arguments on excerpts from Williams’ early work and some totally irrelevant speculation on Williams and his plays. The book makes clear that there was complete lack of understanding between Williams and his parents and that Edwina was never ready to attribute herself with Amanda of The Glass Menagerie. Another volume complementing Edwina’s arguments is His Brother’s Keeper: The Life and Murder of Tennessee Williams (1983) by Williams’ younger brother, Dakin Williams. Dakin with Shepherd Mead attempts to trace some important aspects of Williams’ familial and theatrical life. It is, in fact, a new edition of Tennessee Williams: An Intimate Biography. Dakin has to tour various places of America to collect material about his brother by interviewing Tennessee’s closest former companions. Such things make Dakin write more clearly than his mother in tracing Williams’ tempestuous life and his career in the theater. He portrays the person and achievements, without ignoring the weaknesses, of his brother with candid arguments and unsparing documents. In this way he succeeds in separating facts from the fiction in Williams’ life.

2.6 Donald Spoto and Lyle Leverich on Williams

Donald Spoto’s The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams (1985) is an exhaustively researched and richly detailed study revealing multiple links between Williams and his work. It draws a close connection between Williams’ checkered life and his creative struggles and portrays that Williams’ life was as
fascinating as his art. *The Kindness of Strangers* takes the psychological approach to Williams and his plays that leads to ambiguity but the same ambiguity is helpful in deconstructing his art.

*Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* (1995) by Lyle Leverich is regarded as one of the outstanding biographies of Williams to date because it is systematically researched and properly documented. Leverich follows Williams’ life objectively and dispassionately and portrays Williams as a beleaguered artist but his brilliance becomes all the more shining in his adverse circumstances. It portrays how the mismatched marriage of his parents, the mental disorder that institutionalized his beloved sister, his stalled academic career, and his confused sexuality failed to deter him from becoming a great playwright. By reading *Tom*, we come to know how masterfully Williams fuses the poetic with the dramatic and creates an art that throbs with the passion for life.

### 2.7 Conversations/Interviews of Williams

During his years in the theatre, Williams gave innumerable interviews. *Conversations with Tennessee Williams* (1986), edited by Albert J. Devlin, selects 35 pertinent set of interviews out of the many hundreds Williams agreed to over five decades. It attracts a considerable interest of Williams’ researchers as it encompasses his literary life ranging from the height of glory to the depths of obscurity. By talking about the obscure aspects of Williams’ life and contradictions about it, *Conversations* gives us insight into the well-known aspects of Williams’ life and his art. It provides an in-depth insight into the fundamentals of Williams’ personal life and his years in the theatre. After reading *Conversations*, one can deduce that human valor is one of the dominant themes in the writings of Williams. This collection of interviews shows that Williams faced the adversities of life with courage and determination and the same is reflected in his work as well.

In *Tennessee Williams: A Portrait in Laughter and lamentation* (1986) Harry Rasky looks at the vigorous and vibrant aspects of Williams’ personality. The book is replete with all the laughter and lamentations that were experienced by both Williams and Rasky. Most of the material of the book is based on taped conversations rather than on
notes and scholarship. It portrays how, out of the loneliness and self-destruction and pain, the best plays of Williams have been created. Human compassion and will to survive leave an optimistic note in the plays of Williams. A Portrait, in fact, portrays Williams’ desire to give love and tenderness a chance to pull us out of our own angry darkness, to make us more than animals.

2.8 Critical Books on the Plays of Williams

Among the critical books evaluating the worth of Williams’ plays, Nancy M. Tischler’s *Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan* (1961) is noteworthy because of its high standard of scholarship. It is an early work of criticism on the plays of Williams. Its scope may be limited as it does not touch most of the prominent later plays of Williams but it is a serious critical examination of his work. *Rebellious Puritan* is an inspirational work of criticism as it throws evocative and insightful light on the life and art of Williams. Benjamin Nelson’s *Tennessee Williams: The Man and His Work* appeared in the same year. It throws light on various themes, techniques and basic beliefs in the early plays of Williams. It touches upon the inconsistencies and contradictions in the early plays of Williams which is helpful in finding out the bright elements in the dark world of Williams.

In 1961, Signi Falk’s *Tennessee Williams* appeared; it was revised and updated in its second edition published in 1978. By comparing with the other figures of Southern Renaissance, Falk proves that Williams is the indispensable part of the rich tradition of that movement. Falk compares Williams’ romantic spirit with Thomas Wolfe’s and Williams’ sensationalism with that of Erskine Caldwell. He explores how Williams glamorizes violence and decay and paints them forcefully to create the sense of awful in his art. The work covers a wide range of topics – personal, psychological, and sexual imagery, among others – and has been often quoted and praised.

It is a fact that Williams’ plays failed to invite any proper scholarly attention during his own life time but after his death in 1983, his work attracted the critical attention worthy of great art. Roger Boxill’s *Macmillan Modern Dramatists: Tennessee Williams* (1987) gives the comprehensive analyses of some of his major plays like
Menagerie, Streetcar, Summer and Smoke and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Delma E. Presley’s The Glass Menagerie: An American Memory (1990), provides a deep and careful study of the different psychological aspects of the contemporary American ways of life. Thomas P. Adler’s A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and the Lantern appeared in the same year. It analyzes the play critically and explores reasons responsible for the destruction of the maladjusted individuals in the society. Ronald Hayman’s Tennessee Williams: Everyone Else Is an Audience (1993) focuses on Williams’ fears of failure and death, and his relationship with women. But this study is flawed as it summarizes the previously published sources and fails to produce any genuine analysis.

C.W.E. Bigsby presents a critical analysis in A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama, Vol., 2 Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee (1984) by covering a wide range of aspects in Williams’ plays. The book critically evaluates almost all the major plays of Williams. It perceptively renders the various forces at work on the psyche of Williams and his protagonists. It analyzes how the individual sustains himself against social, sexual and physical violence, and how the social and metaphysical meet in Williams’ work. Bigsby also produced Modern American Drama 1945–1990 in 1992 and made it more comprehensive and widely acclaimed in its 2nd edition, Modern American Drama 1945–2000, published in 2000. This edition not only evaluates the postwar American Drama but it also delves into the artistic beauty hidden in the most recent works and performances. He adds a new chapter, ‘Beyond Broadway’ in this edition which analyses the contribution of theatre in constructing the American culture. It is regarded as a thought provoking and invaluable volume for the researchers of Williams. Bigsby portrays how Williams blurs the edge of divide between his life and art and the failure of adjustment in the real world not only results in neurosis and psychosis, but also in the form of great art. Brenda Murphy scholarly assesses the collaboration between Williams and his most important director, Elia Kazan, in Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan: A Collaboration in the Theater (1993). Nicholas Pagan tries to examine the old material in a new way by applying new theories in his Rethinking Literary Biography: A Postmodern Approach to Tennessee Williams (1993).
Communists Cowboys and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams (1992) is the result of two years of passionate involvement of David Savaran. Relying on historical sociology, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and rhetorical analysis, it studies not only American dramatic literature but also the patriarchal postwar culture in America. It is a bold and radical critique on the queer elements of Williams’ plays and communist elements in those of Arthur Miller. By reexamining the plays, films and short stories of these playwrights, the study shows how each of these playwrights confronted the questions of gender, sexuality, anticommunism etc. campaign in the historical context of 1940s and 1950s. Instead of exploring the most successful and widely respected works between the mid 1940s and the early 1960s, Savaran takes up many short stories, two novels, Memoirs, letters and later plays of Williams. He tries to discover a revolutionary Williams struggling to attack, undermine and undo the hegemonic notions of gender, sexuality and political praxis that have prevailed in the United States since World War II. By talking about the network of sexual, economic, and racial subjugation Savaran shows a way to the researchers to explore sexual, economic, and racial freedom in the plays of Williams.

Memory, Myth and Symbol by Judith J. Thompson (2002) studies seventeen full-length Williams’ plays but the main focus of his study remains on the major eight plays Williams produced during 1945-1961. Idyllic or demonic memories of the past recur in these eight plays but the protagonists try to live in a romanticized past by ignoring the corrupt present and guilt haunted past. The protagonists of these plays reflect man’s potential for courage, honor and love in spite of the fact that he is destroyed by the circumstances beyond his control.

Myths and Symbolism in the plays of Tennessee Williams written by Fatima T. Sugarwala (2004) explores how creative imagination of Williams uses the myths and symbols in his plays to delve deep into the inner world of his protagonists. Sugarwala searches the way how Williams revitalizes the Classical, Greek and Biblical myths in his plays and gives them new meanings and new direction by contemporanizing them. Williams synthesizes the contemporary American myths of Quest, the myths of Success and the mythic ideal of America as paradise, and shows their force and influence on the
modern man. In his plays, the mythecized memory of the past helps his protagonists cope with their marginalized subsistence.

2.9 Critical Essays on the Works of Williams

Numerous critics and scholars have paid tribute to Williams’ greatness by critically evaluating and reevaluating his plays. Many researchers have researched on the plays of Williams to explore various meanings out of them. Renowned scholars have been contributing their articles and essays to various literary journals and magazines, dissecting varied aspects of Williams’ life and his work. These scholarly discussions take the book form under the editorship of different men of learning. *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute* edited by Jac Tharpe (1977) is one of the most comprehensive collections of essays on Tennessee Williams. It was published during life time of Williams. It is the largest collection of original essays published on Williams as it consists of 53 original essays by scholars like Jacob H. Adler, Esther M. Jackson, Philip C. Kolin, Jerrold A. Phillips, Mary Ann Corrigan, Nancy M. Tischler, Robert Emmet Jones, Delma Eugene Presley and Judith J. Thompson. The ideas of these scholars encompass various aspects of Williams’ life and art.

In 1988, Harold Bloom edited *Tennessee Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Tennessee Williams’ The Glass Menagerie*. Both these books are the collection of literary essays on Williams published in *Modern Critical Interpretations* series. Bloom collected the essays of Williams’ veteran scholars exploring the dramatic and lyrical talents of Williams. It is true that most of the essays included in the *Critical Interpretations* are reprints but the original publication of every essay is also mentioned in the chronological order. Bloom’s *Critical Interpretations on A Streetcar* needs a detailed discussion here. The study starts with Robert Brustein’s essay “America’s New Culture Hero: Feelings without Words” which presents Stanley Kowalski as a hero in the new American culture. Alvin B. Kernan’s “Truth and Dramatic Mode in A Streetcar Named Desire” studies the conflict between the pragmatic Stanley and the idealistic Blanche. Leonad Berkman’s “The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois” portrays Blanche as a tragic figure and her defeat at the hand of Stanley as heartbreaking for all those who
live in a romantic world. C. W. E. Bigsby, however, disagrees Berkman’s views in his “Tennessee Williams: Streetcar to Glory” and tries to prove that Blanche’s fate reflects dwindling belief of modern man on the futility of Romanticism. Mary Ann Corrigan’s “Realism and Theatricalism in A Streetcar Named Desire” portrays Streetcar reconciling those stage rivals, realism and theatricalism. Leonard Quirino focuses his discussion upon two images: the cards of destiny and the voyage of experience in “The Card Indicate a Voyage on A Streetcar Named Desire” while Bert Cardullo talks about lack of understanding and intimacy in Streetcar in “Drama of Intimacy and Tragedy on Incomprehension: A Streetcar Named Desire Reconsidered.” John M. Roderick’s “From Tarantula Arms to Della Robbia Blue: The Tennessee Williams Tragicomic Transit Authority” tries to find Williams’ achievement in Tragicomedy. Kathleen Hulley deconstructs Streetcar in “The Fate of the Symbolic in A Streetcar Named Desire” to show the role of the death and desire in human life and our ambivalent attitude towards them. The Glass Menagerie: An American Memory by Delma E. Presley (1990) and A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and the Lantern by Thomas P. Adler (1990) are regarded as the two main books of the year on Tennessee Williams. Both these books from the two veteran scholars of Williams make the part of Twayne’s Masterwork Series. Both these books offer minute readings of Williams’ and delve deep into the inner complexities of Williams’ protagonists. Perceptive reading with intelligent objectivity is hallmark of these books as they analyze each play quite astutely and give a summary of critical thought, including brief chronologies and bibliographies.

Confronting Tennessee Williams’ ‘A Streetcar named Desire’: Essays in Critical Pluralism (1992) edited by Philip C. Kolin deals with a collection of 15 original essays. The advocates of Critical Theory, Marxism, feminism, reader response, deconstructionism, formalism, mythology, and gender theory develop a lively and interesting discussion in this study. Critical Essays on Tennessee Williams edited Robert A. Martin (1997) is one of the most comprehensive collected works of many prominent scholars ever published on Tennessee Williams. It contains a considerable collection of early reviews and a large variety of more modern critical studies. Preserving the integrity of works first published elsewhere, the editor very expertly has maintained stylistic consistency between the old and the new critical thoughts. Among the authors whose
articles and reviews are reprinted are Walter Kerr, Mary Ann Corrigan, John Gassner, Ruby Cohn, Jordan Y. Miller and Kimball King. In addition to a comprehensive introduction by Robert A. Martin, there are also six original essays added in this volume, new studies by Brenda Murphy on the revision of *Camino Real*, R.B. Parker on *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Two Character Play*, Thomas P. Adler on *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Esther M. Jackson on the concept of ‘plastic form,’ Walter J. Meserve on survivors and dreamers in Williams’ plays, and Nancy M. Tischler on death as a metaphor. This book is a noteworthy contribution to the study of American literature.

*Tennessee Williams: A Guide to Research and Performance* edited by Philip C. Colin (1998) is regarded as one of the best exhaustive critical studies on Williams and his works. It maintains high standards of scholarship regarding research as well as a history of performance of the varied Williams cannon. It contains twenty-three chapters, written by the talented and well-reputed scholars of the American theatre, which critically and objectively analyze the key works of Williams. Each of the 23 chapters contains Biographical Context, Biographical History, Critical Approaches, Plot, Symbols, Characters and Problems of the play under discussion, its Chief Productions, Film and Television Version and Concluding Overview. Its “Critical Approaches” section cites the most valuable studies of a particular play or work. Then the contributors develop their arguments focusing on the plot, symbol and characters of the play. They make their arguments persuasive by using pertinent quotations from important critical books, scholarly articles and so forth. After studying the recent critical/cultural theories and assessing and evaluating the previous critical responses to the Williams’ works, each contributor offers her or his own point of view in “Concluding Overview of the Work” section. These views are innovative and carefully constructed and offer new possibility of understanding Williams works.

Many critics have been talking about the influence of Lawrence and Chekov on the life and plays of Williams, but that of Hart Crane has been largely ignored by critics. Gilbert Debusscher in his essay “Minting their Separate Wills: Tennessee Williams and Hart Crame” published in *Modern American Drama* 2005 traces the influence of Hart Crane on the plays, their titles, mottoes of Tennessee Williams. Debusscher states that *The Glass Menagerie*, traditionally considered autobiographical, owes more to Crane
than hitherto suspected. Similarly, the motto of broken world in *A Streetcar Named desire* has been taken from Crane’s poem “The Broken Tower.”

*The undiscovered Country: The Plays of Tennessee Williams*, edited by Philip C. Kolin (2002) is the collection of fifteen original essays by many leading scholars commenting on Williams’ later plays. Critics have been hard on Williams’ later plays for imitating himself. Some critics consider these plays as if they were a performance of his *Memoirs*. Booze, drugs, the failed dreams of an artist was the stuff out of which Williams’ scripts were made. Saddik, for example, comments that Williams himself, rather than his works, was becoming the main attraction. Bigsby argues that the characters in Williams’ later plays have been analyzed as his psychic look-alikes, while Harold Clurman regards the one-eyed Fraulein in *The Gnadinges Fraulein*, a picture of Williams fallen upon hard times, battling off the critics who wanted to mutilate him just as the cocaloony birds. Many scholars, however, pay much attention to post-*Night of the Iguana* 1961 canon of Williams. Without ignoring the biographical elements in the later plays, they regard them as creative, original works that testify the evolution of Williams’ art over a period of three decades. Gene D. Phillips, for example reexamines *Seven Descents of Myrtle*, the much neglected work of Williams, as the symbol of life in the face of death, disease and destruction, and Verna Foster proves *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* as life affirming play.

### 2.10 Critics on American Drama

*New Essays on American Drama* (1989) edited by Gilbert Debusscher and Henry I. Chevy, exhaustively analyzes the most representative works of the major American playwrights. The essays on Tennessee Williams reflect that Williams puts a character, not a story, at the center of his dramas, and directs our attention to the inner lives of these characters. These essays prove that the endings of Williams’ plays are often shattering and destructive. *Staging Masculinity Male Identity in Contemporary American Drama* by Carla J McDonough (1997) focuses on masculinity as the central theme of the selected plays of Eugene O’Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Amiri Baraka. The study shows how the gendered behavior of men and women in modern American Drama is measured by the yardstick of masculinity. It highlights how these leading playwrights often return to issues of fracturing and failings of troubled manhood, though they usually
mask these issues behind other topics such as family, business, war, success, and personal freedom.

*The Other American Drama* by Marc Robinson (1997) studies the works of prominent American playwrights like Eugene O’Neill-Arthur Miller-August Wilson and shows that artists like Gertrude Stein, Sam Shepard Maria Irene Fornes, Adrienne Kennedy and Richard Foreman, who were not so prominent, have been unjustly undervalued by the critics. It, however, proves that Tennessee Williams maintained his identity as a great playwright without being overshadowed by any artist of his era. The essays on Williams show that his characters attract our attention through the lyrical splendor of their language. Their inner world is exposed whenever they speak.

*American Drama (1945-2000): An Introduction*, by David Krasner 2006, examines American experience through American Drama from 1945-2000. Krasner believes that the American dramatists, including Tennessee Williams, try to discover American experience by mirroring of their own attitudes and apprehensions. They imaginatively present reality through the prism of theatricality. Krasner explores the influence of history, philosophy, art, music, culture, literature, race, gender, ethnicity and politics on American drama, in the hope of attaining some understanding of how these concepts bear on the creation of a national literature and genre.

This literature review may not cover all publications on Williams, nor does it in any way select one work over another. The inclusion of academic sources, critical books, essays, journals etc. by the scholars of proven credentials, in fact, is an effort to appreciate and understand the life and works of Williams. In addition to that it reflects the more serious and substantial effort in the development of the doctoral dissertation.
CHAPTER 3

COPING PESSIMISTIC DISCOURSE WITH CREATIVITY

3.1 Introduction

Pessimism as interpreted by the majority of Williams’ critics dominates his art which assume a status of discourse. This pessimism has been worked out with reference to themes, characters and contexts. This study argues that pessimistic discourse serves as a logocentric paradigm that needs to be deconstructed to generate alternative perspectives. This deconstruction is essential as it would liberate the text from confined monologic and centralized interpretations to generate plurality, decentralization and multiplicity. One of the meanings associated with deconstruction is related to the fact that deconstruction destabilizes things but such destabilization is inventive as well as creative and therefore opens up a new and novel way of moving ahead. This factor parallels deconstruction with creativity as such as both delve in destabilizing the monologism and generate many counter meanings. In this chapter it will be argued that creativity serves as a deconstructive paradigm and dismantle the above referred logocentric paradigm of pessimism and generates counter optimistic and positive plural meanings. Some of the dimensions of creativity that deconstruct pessimism are discussed below.

3.2 Creativity and Deconstruction

Creativity is a process oriented approach to bring out the unfamiliar to the limelight. This study argues that creativity in Williams assumes substantial processes to serve as a deconstructive force to break monologism and generate multiplicity. In the first place creativity works as a healer. Healing is a kind of deconstruction.

Another phase of creativity as a deconstructive force can be identified as a heroic defiance in the face of marginalization. Williams’ protagonists are marginalized by unequal circumstances of their existence but, with their imaginative force they offer
heroic defiance to the arbitrary social values. In this way they are capable of turning such marginality in their peculiar strength. So, both Williams and his protagonists create order in their chaotic existence with the deconstructive power of art. When the anarchic lives of Tennessee Williams and his protagonists are deconstructed, the chaotic turns to be orderly. Most of his artists are leading marginalized lives but their passion for life makes them central figures. The power of imagination becomes a healer for the wounds of mind and help transform the anxieties and ugliness of life into a thing of beauty. Their tender feelings serve them as a source of inspiration in their moments of creativity. It is this imaginative power which proves therapeutic and helps them seek meaning in their lives and avoid their complete breakdown. Reality is bitter and uncontrollable but they try to have a hold over it with their imaginative power. Durant Ponte aptly remarks that:

Art exists to show us what the human creature is capable of achieving – to what heights he can soar or to what depths he can sink, or to what limits he can persevere to endure…. The artist selects and combines and thus controls the reality with which he deals.” (Ponte 1997: 260).

With his poetic imagination Williams projects some of his deeply felt experiences of alienation and transmutes them in his dramatic art. Williams is able to turn the torments of his psychosis into creativity as C. W. E. Bigsby states: “By the act of writing Williams tries to re-impose a sense of order. The creative act itself thus becomes an act of defiance...” (Bigsby 1988: 46). The most powerful aspect of Williams’ art lies in the fact that he is fervently involved in life and writes about it with great passion. While replying in an interview, Tennessee Williams makes it very clear that it is a creative force that ensures our existence:

I think back of existence there has to be a creative force. Otherwise, there could be no existence. Something has to have created existence. And just like, yuh know, the plainest kind of geometry, consequently there is a creative force. So we could not exist otherwise. Nothing could exist (Rasky 2000: 28).

In his plays Tennessee Williams presents people who are entrapped in a world which is incompatible with their soul and spirit. Such incompatibility is made compatible with the power of imagination. They are nonconformists who try to reshape their world with the power of imagination. Like Jung, Williams believes that human life is a journey towards search for self and soul. Jung’s theory of archetypes provides justification for
Williams’ belief that experience provides hope of individual reconciliation. He uses art as the vehicle by which his protagonists such as Blanche, Maggie, Kilroy, Val and the Princess etc journey through the dark woods of life attaining salvation and reconciling with their reality. They are artist by nature and try to combat the brutalities of life with the infinite possibilities of their creative imagination. They are sensitive romantics with peculiar strength of mind but they are entrapped in a world where rationality combined with materialism rules the roost. Sometime they behave in such a way that their life becomes a piece of art. Some of them, like Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, also recollect and remold certain elements of their lives and turn them into a piece of art. So their lives become their art as Mrs. Venable, *Suddenly Last Summer*, tells about her artist son, Sebastian:

Sebastian was a poet! That’s what I meant when I said his life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and—vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet, I mean you can’t separate them, I mean—well, for instance, a salesman’s work is one thing and his life is another—or can be. The same thing is true of—doctor, lawyer, merchant, thief!—But a poet’s life is his work and his work is his life in a special sense.¹

Art to Williams is not illusory but life-affirming. The pleasure of making art sometime looks illusory but it is “art, a saving sorceress, expert at healing” (Nietzsche 1967: 60), which lifts the drooping spirits of his protagonists. They face the intense emotional pain and control the most turbulent moments of their lives with the power of their art. Most of the protagonists find themselves trapped in the dark world of pain and anxiety and they try to find some light at the end of tunnel with their artistic creation. It is due to their creative ability with which they turn the negative aspects of their life into something positive. The buffets of life are too heavy for them but they make their life endurable and create meanings with their creativity. They seek solace in their art because “art alone knows how to turn [our] fits of nausea into imagination with which it is possible to live” (Nietzsche 1967: 60). It, in fact, stimulates these protagonists to affirm life and enables them to reach inside themselves and drag forth from their very soul an idea life in the face of death. Their lives are strange combination of fact and fiction. Their dark present is a reality but they ingenuously interweave it with imaginary past or future.

¹ Williams, Tennessee. (1976). *Five Plays by Tennessee Williams*. London: Secker & Warburg. P. 240. All the subsequent references of *Suddenly Last Summer* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
With the power of imagination they try to translate experience into narrative and life into textual representation. This activity brings them psychological catharsis and emotional emancipation. Their losses lead them to self discovery because they transcend loss with the healing power of art. It is the power of their imagination with which they create order from chaos with Nietzschean rapture. Like Nietzsche, Williams also believes in the sublimity and transcendental character of art. Nietzsche states in *The Portable Nietzsche* that the world is a work of art that gives birth to itself. He believes that art is the supreme source of joy for man because it provides him the supreme delight of existence. Joy for Nietzsche does not require justification because joy justifies itself, it justifies human existence and life is affirmed through joy. For Nietzsche, art is not the imitation of nature, but a metaphysical complement that will enable the transcendence of nature itself. Art is the fundamental metaphysical activity of Man; art is the highest form of human activity (Nietzsche 1954: 518-26).

Most of Williams’ artists unleash their inventive genius by thinking backwards, and such an activity provides an outlet for their disturbed lives. In this way they succeed in overcoming the negative thoughts and emotions that are associated with depression. Tom, for example, enacts and reenacts his past life in such a way that his life long story turns into a piece of art. He pours out his experiences of life in such a masterful manner that we start identifying with him. He seeks power in the weakest moments of his life with the power of imagination as Jan Blommaert comments that creative art is empowering and that it provides people with the opportunity to produce a lasting, consequential, thoughtful discourse artifact (Blommaert 2005: 96). With the help of such an activity Williams’ protagonists seek “psychic self-regulation” (Mattoon, 1981: 225) by probing their inner world and theatricalizing it with the power of imagination. They are Romantics and try to look within themselves. It is their deep desire to give spontaneous vent to their inner self. Their turbulent soul finds soothing solace in the magic world created by their imagination. Like their creator, they are escapists and create an imaginary world as a refuge because they are unable to adjust themselves to the brute and hostile realities of life. The actions and reactions of these imaginary figures many times help us understand the unchanging truths of life, giving us an opportunity to explore our own selves.
Past keeps on haunting the imagination of these protagonists and they cannot dissociate themselves from their past. They try to rediscover themselves by returning to their past people and problems. Many a moments it seems that past has become present with them as Williams states in the Foreword of his *Memoirs* that, “many of the things which concerned me in the past continue to preoccupy me today.”

So the past experiences become the permanent part of their mental process which they try to transform as wishes fulfilled. These are the moments when the chains of reality are overstepped by the wings of imagination: the moments when the act of creativity evaporates the border between fiction and reality as he presents Felice and Clare, in *Out Cry*, in dramatizing their life story forgetting whether it is a reality or a drama. C.W.E. Bigsby rightly states: “Indeed, acting and being are presented as being synonymous. It is the proof of existence. I act, therefore I exist. For Williams, as for Nietzsche the ability to lie, it seems, is the source of transcendence” (Bigsby, 1987: 132).

There are certain artists in Williams’ plays who find refuge by attaching themselves with the female members of the family. They consider such attachment as curative and therapeutic but “excessive attachment with the female members of the family” rob them of their manliness. Seen from psychological point of view, this attachment can be regarded as the main cause of their homosexuality. It does not help them develop heterosexual drives as Jung views that “in a male homosexual the heterosexual libido is tied up with the mother so that sex cannot be experienced with a woman. In such men masculinity is underdeveloped, that is, only partially conscious, hence, it tends to be projected, and the object of projection is another man” (Mattoon, 1981: 222). Psychosexual behavior resulting from the female affection can be seen from some of mother-fixated characters. Mitch, “an anally fixated momma’s boy” (Roderick, 1988: 97), in *Streetcar*, is the example in this regard. He is the typical product of dysfunctional family as his father withdraws financial care to the family and then quits for good. He has never tasted a fatherly touch in his whole life. His attitude towards Blanche seems awkward and he feels embarrassed whenever he tries to assert himself. It

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2 Williams, Tennessee. (1975). *Memoirs*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company. P. xviii. All the subsequent references of *Memoirs* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.  
3 Williams, Tennessee. (1975). *Tennessee William’s A Streetcar Named Desire and Other Plays*. London: Penguin. PP. 9-10. All the subsequent references of *Sweet Bird* have been taken from this text.
is all because his mother has deprived him of daring independence required for self assertion. He wants to lead a life of his own choice by marrying the woman he likes. But at the same time he feels deeply attached to his ailing mother. He feels lonely at the impending death of his mother. Blanche is quick to observe it: “I think you have a great capacity for devotion. You will be lonely when she passes on, won’t you?” He seeks another alternative to fill his void. He finds it in the person of Blanche. On the contrary, his assertion: “You’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother” (Streetcar 207) shows he is unclear whether he wants to marry for the self or for the mother. He is so confused that he makes a mess of the whole affair and remains dependent on male company rather than the friendship of a female. The homosexual poet, Sebastian, in Suddenly Last Summer, is another mother-fixated son. His father dies quite early leaving him at the mercy of inappropriately intrusive and overly protective mother, which hinders his growth as a normal human being. He enjoyed an idyllic life with his mother in the past. His mother also devotes all that is left in her life to defend the reputation of her dead son. Remembering her glorious past spent with her son, Mrs. Venable becomes nostalgic and states:

Most people’s lives – what are they but trails of debris, each day more debris, more debris, long, long, long trails of debris with nothing to clean it all up but, finally, death…. My son, Sebastian, and I constructed our days, each day, we would – carve out each day of our lives like a piece of sculpture. – Yes, we left behind us a trail of days like a gallery of sculpture!” (Five Plays, 248)

Sebastian is actually so much associated with his mother that all his poetic faculties are robbed by such an association. Instead of looking at the delicate aspects of life he searches for the violent face of God. His imaginative faculties are badly marginalized and he produces only one poem in a year.

Williams is the poet of human passion. His soul feels soothed when he portrays all the passions of life with full intensity. By revealing the agonies, vulnerabilities and ambiguities of his artists he, in fact, exposes human condition. Williams’ art portrays sensitive nature characters whose sensitivity is the cause of their desperation. His work reflects his psychic history – his fears, love, loneliness, split between liberalism and

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4 Williams, Tennessee. (1975). Tennessee Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire and Other Plays. London: Penguin. PP. 182. All the subsequent references of Streetcar have been taken from this text.
Puritanism etc. as Lyle Leverich states: “From those myriad reflections of his childhood experiences, those deeply fissured, painful, and powerfully rooted impressions, emerged the man and his art” (Leverich xxii). If seen from the perspective of Freud’s dream theory, Williams’ plays can be regarded as the camouflaged manifestation of his latent wishes. Freud’s dream theory gives the idea that dreams are basically a vehicle for venting tensions, conflicts, and wishes from the unconscious. They help in maintaining psychological equilibrium by providing a partial means for discharging unconscious impulses. Dreams are outlets for tensions that accumulate specifically in the unconscious. Freud finds similarity between dream and artistic activity when he says that “Both involve unconscious wish fantasies that, in more or less recognizable form, achieved conscious and manifest expression” (Olsen & Koppe 1988: 202). Williams’ imaginative art, like dreams, serves him a safety valve to control the most turbulent excitation in the unconscious. Williams always felt uncomfortable with the real world and it is the world of art that gives him escape from such a world. Williams considers art as the main catalyst for the resolution of human predicaments that is why he searches for the self and the soul in his art.

3.3 Poetic Spirit as a Deconstructive Force in *Camino Real*

In this section Williams’ poetic spirit is taken as a deconstructive force engendering hope in his *Camino Real* to shatter the monologic pessimism. The whole structure of *The Camino Real* stands on “the magic carpet of dreams” on which Don Quixote tries to fly. He states: “And my dream will be a pageant, a masque in which old meanings will be remembered and possibly new ones discovered…” (*Camino 7*). He has a dream within this dream and searches for someone who is friendly in the unfriendly world dominated by the inhuman Street cleaners of Gutman. He meets Kilroy in this dream and both of them succeed in escaping from that world. Williams comments on the dream-like atmosphere of the play in its foreword:

> My desire was to give these audiences my own sense of something wild and unrestricted that ran like water in the mountains, or clouds changing

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5 Williams, Tennessee. (1970). Tennessee Williams’ *Camino Real*. New York: New Directions. P. 156. All the subsequent references of *Camino* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
shape in a gale, or the continually dissolving and transforming images of dream. This sort of freedom is not chaos nor anarchy. On the contrary, it is the result of painstaking design, and in this work I have given more conscious attention to form and construction than I have in any work before (Camino vii).

Lord Byron, another idealist in the play states the life sustaining aspects of art and artist: “a poet’s vocation…is to influence the heart in gentler fashion” (Camino 77). It is the poetic spirit of Byron that provides hope for survival in Camino. The non conforming romantics and dreamers hold up the ideals of freedom, courage and brotherhood in this dream play. The play depicts the world surrounded with death and inhumanity and the only way out of it is to sustain idealism. In Block Fifteen La Madrecita reminds the audience that reality is too hard for the humankind to bear. So the bitterness of reality is mitigated by the dreams and determination of the romantics. Presently, the dreamer, Byron, lives at the Siete Mares. He is dissatisfied with the present state of affairs and wants to make departure from his present self to the one he used to be because as he says, “The luxuries of this place have made me soft. The metal point’s gone from my pen, there’s nothing left, but the feather” (Camino 73). His refined and tender sentiments are tired of the destruction and disintegration of the present world of war. He remembers the days when the heart was “A sort of – instrument! – that translates noise into music, chaos into – order…a mysterious order” (Camino 77). The desire for such a pure music amidst the depressing and destroying situation at the Camino Real is unattainable, so he decides to quit the place. By communing with Kilroy and Don Quixote in his dream, Byron succeeds in infusing hope and courage in the other inhabitants.

In fact, Don Quixote, Lord Byron and Kilroy are the idealists and dreamers. They are trapped in the God forsaken world of the Camino. Here they are deprived of everything decent in their lives but they are never ready to accept such a deprivation. They fight for their freedom and find a way out from this land of death. All the romantics have lost their way in the mundane and cruel reality of the Camino Real but have a way to pursue the ideal of honor again. Their spirits are broken and their experiences are nightmarish but they ecstatically observe the mysteries of life and generate hope with the power of imagination. Instead of becoming “the absurd victims of their own romantic expectations…like Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot” (Bigsby 2005: 280),
they learn how to save themselves from abuse and degradation. They are romantics of the first degree who believe in the power of their imagination. They are enmeshed in the world where the dark shadows of death, represented by the frenzied Streetcleaners, loom large on them but it is their zest for life that proves some light at the end of tunnel. Arthur Miller is apt to comment that *Camino Real* ends not in discouragement, not in pessimism, but in a sense of optimism about the force of human determination to overcome death:

> It conveys Williams’ ultimately optimistic resolution of the human condition, no matter how sordidly self-destructive it may seem. For underneath, though always in the true classic sense, in all of his important plays Tennessee Williams is a writer of tragedy, and the ultimate tragic catastrophe must, by its very nature, end on the positive note of human dignity. (Miller 1997: 210)

Byron becomes the chief harbinger of optimism when he says “There is time for departure even when there’s no certain place to go” (*Camino* 78). He proceeds by infusing sense of self-belief in his companions. He encourages the “frightened,” “lonely” and “confused” (*Camino* 97) characters by uttering “Make voyages! – Attempt them! – there’s nothing else…” (*Camino* 78). He challenges the authority of tyrannical Gutman and finds the answers to the difficult questions imposed by real life. His sense of freedom remains undeterred by the repressive rule of Gutman. So he not only restores the eyesight of La Madrecita by uttering the forbidden word, “Brother” (*Camino* 21) but also shows Kilroy and Quixote how to come out of the inferno of Gutman.

The real road of Camino Real brings Kilroy, another romantic dreamer, to place where “The spring of humanity has gone dry” (*Camino* 5). Despite his efforts to defeat the cruel enemies of sensitivity and brotherhood, he is ultimately defeated and killed by the Streetcleaners of Gutman. After his death, he is taken to a medical institution for autopsy. During the autopsy it is discovered that his heart is made of gold which remains intact even after attacks of the most corrosive forces of modernity and materialism. After passing through the suffering and indignities Kilroy tries to survive through dreams. It is the power of imagination which Kilroy achieves the process of rebirth. It not only restores Kilroy’s soul but also frees it from subjugation. After his resurrection, he snatches his heart from the dissection table and asserts, “This is my heart! It don’t belong to no State, not even the USA…. Nobody’s going to put my heart in a bottle in a museum
and charge admission to support the rotten police!” (Camino 152) Kilroy’s reclaiming his heart and running away from the dissection table with it, represents his spiritual rejuvenation because “the access to the spiritual is expressed in archaic societies by symbolism of death. (Eliade 1967: 200). The pursuit of truth with the power of imagination brings Kilroy close to Don Quixote. Lord Byron is already inspired with his imaginative power. It is this power with which the romantics, at last, succeed in overpowering the confining and stifling atmosphere of the Camino. They venture to quit the place for a better world and succeed in their venture.

3.4 Imaginative Force and Deconstruction in The Glass Menagerie

Here in this section it will be argued that through the power of imagination, the artist as well as his protagonists deconstruct the pessimistic discourse and this factor is powerfully apparent his The Glass Menagerie. The whole plot of The Glass Menagerie revolves around the past memories of the romantic and artistic person of Tom Wingfield. His father withdraws financial and basic physical care by leaving the family. He grows up in a dysfunctional family and the trauma of growing up in a dysfunctional family leaves such scars that still hurt him. Instead of making up the deficiencies of parenting, he becomes irresponsible and careless and follows the footsteps his father. He attempts to flee the pain of his father’s action by quitting his mother and sister when they need him the most. His compulsive drive to flourish in turn leads him to further loneliness. He is fatigued and tired and suffers from sleep and eating disorders and dissociative reactions. He carries with him the memories of the past and seeks self-awareness by reenacting them. To heal these dysfunctional patterns of his present situation, he resorts to the power of imagination. He rediscovers himself and manifests his essential self with this power. It is with this power that he succeeds in turning the ugliest aspects of his life into something palatable. He deserts his sister in the most critical moments of their life but remains faithful to the memories of his sister till the last moments of his life. Seeing his ambiguous attitude towards Laura, some critics observe that he is physically attracted towards his sister that is why John Strother Clayton notes: “Brother-sister incest themes run throughout Williams’ work” (Clayton 1971: 110). Many a moment Tom feels lonely
but seeks refuge in his art. Peggy Prenshawe comments on the therapeutic effect of art on Tom Wingfield:

Viewing art as extension of the artist, either for what he is or what he needs, leads solipsistically back to the mortal and flawed being that the artist seeks to transcend.... Tom Wingfield casts a magical web over experience, transforming the ordinary and ugly and even painful, into a thing of beauty. But undermining ...[his] transformations of life into art is his [and his creator’s] lurking doubt that the vision is wholly truthful. (Prenshawe 1977: 24)

Apart from showing art in decadence and/or means of personality derangement, William’s creative process serves essential pragmatic functions for his protagonists. It provides Tom, for instance, much needed cathartic and therapeutic effect to come to terms with agonizing guilt. But most significantly, it provides the means to identify personal role in the crises, aggravating the distressing reality and identifying his antithetical personas. The dramatic method employed in the play is that of storytelling. Dramatic art in terms of staged production /performance embodies a whole set of values, conventions, systems and structures that set it apart from such literary genera as fiction and poetry. Unperformed dramatic texts, however, overlap with literary genera like fiction and epic poetry (Neeland & Dobson 2000: 27). Action or acting/ performance on the stage are very essential prerequisite of the performed dramatic text. Here drama “creatively simulates, enacts and re-enacts events that have, or may be imagined to have happened in the real imagined world” (Neeland and Dobson 2000, 2). Modern development in theory has, however, shifted the focus on action to dramatization of mental states and “structures of mind” (Pizzato 1998: 5). Expressionist theatre specifically focuses on this paradigm shift from focus on environment as upheld by naturalists to psychological conditions and states. It has done away with the conventions of plot, story and linear movement of the story towards some predictable, determinable pattern of conclusion or settlement of the problems/issues. But regardless of the shift towards dramatizing mind/structures of mind, action on the stage remains determinate part of dramaturgy. William creatively carves out an unconventional story telling method, generally associated with fiction with a purpose to find therapeutic outlet for the distressing and long standing guilt. This use of storytelling is in fact a subversion of dramatic convention to achieve possible therapeutic effect. Story telling reveals a
perpetual compulsion on the protagonist’s part to speak out personal selfish act of deserting family in the hour of crises. The story is told retrospectively that transforms him into narrator – actor in the play. This something related to past compels him to repeat it and speak it out. The speaking could be regarded as a form of confession of one’s role in family crises and losses. Here he could be associated with Loman’s self talking in *Death of a Salesman* (Ribkoff 2000: 50), Dimmesdale in Hawthorn’ *The Scarlet Letter* (Pimple 1993: 260) whose guilt of having adulterous relation with Hester drive him to marketplace at night.

The story telling also becomes a means of bringing up the protagonist’s personal role in familial crises and searching personal identity. As the curtain rises, the Wingfield are found plagued and overwhelmed by powerful socio-psychological factors. The very first speech of Tom – who is “A poet with a job in a warehouse” and who resides in the “enslaved section of American society” (*Menagerie* 233) – establishes the societal pressures in the form of joblessness, creating widespread unrest and deep sense of social insecurity (Bigsby 1997: 29-32). All fears, dreams and illusion of the Wingfield family are related to this societal factor. Amanda’s worries surrounding Laura’s education, training and marriage spring from deep social insecurity. Tom’s retrospective narration of the problem, however, brings out his own greater role in accentuating family crises. Being the solitary bread winner of the family in this time of crises, his unequivocal dissatisfaction from the job in the warehouse and dreams of moving away from the stifling conditions brings him into open confrontation with the mother and becomes the second major cause of crises in the family. For instance Amanda is irked by Tom’s casual approach to his job in the warehouse. A bitter exchange of words builds up between the mother and the son on his going to movies, staying out till late at night at the cost of efficiency in the job:

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Nobody goes to the movies night after night. No body in their right minds goes to the movies as often as you pretend to. . . . and movies don’t let out till two a.m. Come in stumbling. Muttering to yourself like a maniac! You get three hours’ sleep and then go on work. Oh, I can picture the way you
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6 Williams, Tennessee. (1976). Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Other Plays*. London: Penguin. P. 228. All the subsequent references of *Menagerie* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
are doing down there. Moping, doping, because you’re in no condition (Menagerie 251).

This fervent disparagement is followed by her pathetic expression, “What right have you got to jeopardize your job? Jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we’d manage if you were_” (Menagerie 251). Amanda’s frustration increases manifold after Laura shows least awareness and capability to take practical steps for realization of stable/independent living. Particularly after Business college fiasco, Amanda becomes deeply concerned about the future of her daughter. Under these circumstances it becomes natural for a compassionate and considerate mother to seek a suitable match for her hypersensitive daughter. The gentleman caller, in fact, becomes Amanda’s obsession, and Tom recalls that:

Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of gentleman caller haunted our small apartment…an evening at home rarely passed without some allusion to his image, this specter, this hope…. Even when he was not mentioned, his presence hung in mother’s preoccupied look… (Menagerie 248).

Then story telling also reveals productive and meaningful development in Tom’s identity from an essentially careless, comic, non serious and casual person to a guilt ridden and imaginative poet troubled by his conscience for acting selfishly in deserting the family in dire predicament. At the start of the play, he appears in a very casual and playful mood of comically providing some hints from here and there; addressing the audience in a playful manner, “Yes, I have tricks in my pocket. I have things up my sleeves. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion” (Menagerie 234). The funniest part of his introductory speech is related to his introduction of father:

There is a fifth character in the play who does not appear except in this larger than life photograph over the mantel. This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up the job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of the town . . . the last we heard of him was a picture post card . . . containing a message of two words: ‘hello_ Goodbye’! and no address (Menagerie 234).

In scene iii, Tom’s whole attitude is reflective of a crazy and foolish being lacking in seriousness, maturity to understand mother’s anxiety regarding his own career and
Laura’s future or help her come out of this particular state and settle the perplexing and distressing issues at home. He picks up quarrel with Amanda on what is his routine habit of acting non-seriously in all matters relating to his job, watching movies, and staying out of home for the major part of night daily. In response to Amanda’s call that she does not believe that he goes to the movies every night, Tom appears at the height of his folly, idiocy and craziness:

I’m going to opium den! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminal hangouts, mother. I’ve joined the Hogan Gang, I’m a hired assassin, I carry a Tomy gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat houses in the valley! They call me killer, killer, killer Wingfield; I’m leading a double life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic czar of the underworld, Mother. (Menagerie 252).

Tom’s casual, careless and comic nature is also apparent in the very manner of arranging a gentleman caller for his sister. Initially he does not try to understand mother’s sensitivity to the gentleman caller issue at home. He avoids having any concern with the problem, but later on very selfishly agrees to arrange one for the sister. But to the surprise of his mother, he suddenly announces they are going to have one. The visit of the caller further reveals the careless and insensitive approach to the issue. It, in fact, creates intensely distressing and discomforting situation for the women as he steadily discloses his engagement and marriage in the near future. Tom knowingly ignores the fact that his sister Laura and Jim (Gentleman Caller) were familiar with each other in the school days and that they are poles apart in personalities and deportment. He does not even try to take Jim into confidence regarding the purpose of invitation to his home or probe Jim’s personal association and future plans despite the fact they are close friends in the warehouse. But once he acts selfishly in deserting the family, Tom is able to reveal his deeply sensitive, imaginative poetic nature. This is how guilt as malaise affects his life and thought processes:

I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by some thing. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I’m walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, fine transparent bottles
in delicate colors, like bits of shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turned around and look into her eyes. Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but ‘m more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I turn into movies or bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger_ anything that can blow your candles out! (*Menagerie* 295).

Each word and expression in this final soliloquy speaks of a sensitive and poetic temperament plagued by his memories and guilt that springs from cutting of human relationship in pursuit of selfish interest and dreaming. This speech establishes his final impression on the readers and audience as a person with deeply sensitive poetic nature. He leaves his family for the sake of self realization, but fails to escape the nostalgic attachment with his sister in particular and other members of the family. Even his irritating and interfering mother and cruelly indifferent father keep on haunting him. He shuns stagnancy to bring some change in life, but it results in further stagnancy and loneliness. The only consolation left in such a life is his memory of the moments spent with the members of the family. Whenever the feelings of lonesomeness surround him, he tries to enact his life history through his art of story telling. Such is the intensity of attachment that it gives shape to a great piece of art. Like his creator, Tom creates a thing of beauty by changing and transforming the unpleasant events of his life.

When Amanda’s husband leaves her for good, she finds herself straitjacketed by the unpalatable circumstances. She has been dreaming of marrying a gentleman caller “who had the Midas touch” (*Menagerie* 239) but the Midas turns into dross with his unfaithfulness. She tries to dignify her miserable life by inventing seventeen gentleman callers with the conviction that “sometime they come when they are least expected (*Menagerie* 237). Her reaction to her wretched situation looks girlish but she is never ready to be controlled by her circumstances. She “puts up a solitary battle” (*Menagerie* 258) even after her husband has deserted her in an abject poverty. She may invent her dreamland of “Seventeen gentlemen callers,” (*Menagerie* 237) “Blue Mountain” (*Menagerie* 240) and “jonquils” (*Menagerie* 276) but she is realistic about the future of her children. She arranges money to get Laura admitted to Rubicam Business College so that Laura could stand on her own legs. Her pragmatism demands to get her daughter married off as soon as possible. “She desperately sets herself to marry Laura off, partly
out of a genuine concern and partly because Laura is a responsibility of which she wishes to rid herself. She thus evidences a strange and affecting blend of pity and cruelty.”
(Bigsby 1984: 40). She flatters Tom to bring a gentleman caller for Laura and performs gallantly and compels Laura to receive the gentleman caller. She pours out all her creative faculties to make Laura a pretty trap for the expected gentleman caller.

Laura’s world of glass menagerie also corresponds to associating art with a regressive, disturbed, depressed and psychologically ruined personality of Laura. Her glass collection of extinct animal in itself reflects plain artistic/aesthetic taste. But the contextual implications and the symbolic meanings attached to this collection presents a depressing account of human personality, its absolute regression and tendency to abandon reality for the sake of existence in mythical world/ world of unreality/fantasy, “immune from the onward rush of twentieth century” (Bigsby 1997: 38). Laura is terribly shy, complex ridden, emotionally as well as physically fragile, incapable of withstanding slight variation in climate and surroundings. She is introduced as a young lady in the worst temperamental/psychic conditions. She is crippled from childhood illness, shy and fragile like piece of her own glass collection. A little variation in situation, climate and environment make her terribly sick. She could not complete her education due to this temperamental and psychological flaw. Later on she drops her typing course for the same reasons. Her attitude as long-awaited gentleman caller visits them is another instance of her terrible worn out and fragile nature. Importantly it reveals her inability to face reality in the form of gentleman caller who exhibits greater level of confidence, power of speaking/communication and possible challenge to her alienated world of fantasy/unreality. This association with glass menagerie and existence in the world of fantasy incapacitates her further to face reality, establish any sort of meaningful relation within the family and outside the family and leaves her socially and emotionally paralyzed. The gentleman caller enters her world of menagerie, breaks her unicorn and makes it less freakish. She gives this piece of her art to him as a souvenir which shows that she has transcended the world of menageries.
3.5 Deconstruction in *Out Cry*

It has been argued in this section that creativity helps the suffering and the marginalized protagonists. Creativity becomes a force for them with which they face the downward pull of suffering and create a space for stability, coherence, meaningfulness in their lives. Thus creativity in this play serves as a deconstructive process to withstand the suffering, chaos and meaninglessness to generate positivity of strength and stability. Williams’ *Out Cry* deals with the artists creating art by using the raw material extracted from their own lives. The art of these artists serves as a therapy in the lowest moments of their existence. Their sisters are the source of inspiration for their art. Observing brother-sister attachment in the play R.B. Parker is apt to point out that “*Out Cry* deals with the two central and interlocked experiences of Williams’ life: his ambiguous, near-incestuous love for his schizophrenic sister; and his compulsive need for theater as personal escape and therapy” (Parker 1997: 71). *Out Cry* focuses on the life history of two artists, Felice and his mentally unstable sister, Clare. They grow up in a dysfunctional family where violence rules the roost. Their father is a violent alcoholic who tends to be chaotic and unpredictable and never lets them get close to him. Their mother is a passive parent who fails to confront the destructive behavior of their father. Later on the father kills their mother and commits suicide leaving them to fend for themselves. The pain of dysfunctional parents is so acute that they feel pretty alone. The tribulations rob them of their own childhood and they ignore their needs and feelings. They are a distortion of what they should have been because of fractured family relationships. They associate themselves with a theater company to heal their fears, confusions and unhappiness resulting from early family wounding. Presently they are deserted by their theater company because they have become a useless commodity for the theater. They are marginalized in such a way that they are on the verge of insanity. The situation is disheartening but they do not lose heart and try to console themselves by retreating into the art of self-dramatizing. Falice says that magic is habit of their existence and that if they are not artists, they are nothing. Negative patterns of paternal behavior, however, fail to dominate their lives. They try to transform their early life’s woes and present chaotic situation by performing a play within a play. Such an activity provides them temporary
pain relieving substance. Like Tom Wingfield they are lonely and deserted by everybody. They draw their play from their life history and try to enact it before the unfriendly audience. However, in spite of all their efforts, the audience does not appreciate their artistic performance. They are rather locked in the theater where they try to reenact their life history. The hostility of the audience is so shocking that they are completely lost. When the audience locks them, they find themselves as prisoners of theater. Francis Gillen tries to establish some similarity with Williams’ own state of affairs with those entrapped in *Out Cry* when he says: “As Felice and Clare are trapped within the theater…so the playwright, too, is trapped within himself, never knowing if the reality that he perceives is ever understood by anyone” (Gillen 1986: 229). The harshness of the spectators represents the adverse criticism of Williams’ critics and the locked artists represent Williams himself, for whom the theater is a refuge as well as a prison. Williams regards the play as “the most difficult he had ever written, the interior landscape of the most terrible period of my life” (Leverich 1995: xix). The struggling and alienated artists portray Williams’ inner struggle to renew the artistic motivation at a time when his personal and professional power was declining. If Williams was disheartened and frustrated from his declining creativity and the cruelties of life during the lowest moments of his life, he was also eager to put up a valiant struggle against the adversities of life. So the play reflects two diametrically opposite aspects of Williams’ psyche: a resolute and defeated self. It portrays his desire to fight against all odds of life in the person of Felice, and his defeated self which collapses under the strain of life in the person of Clare.

**3.6 Imaginative Energy of Blanche in *Streetcar***

Creativity in *A Streetcar Named Desire* deconstructs the prevalent gloom in the life of Blanche in particular. It will be argued with reference to Blanche’s performance that she creates meaning and carves out existence for herself creatively to face her marginalized and imperfect existence. “The bossy yet helpless, domineering yet shaky Blanche” (Murphy 1992: 35) fails to adjust herself to her imperfect existence and keeps on struggling for what “ought to be” (*Streetcar* 204). Throughout her life she tries to stick to
“such things as art – as poetry and music – such kinds of new light” (Streetcar 164). Blanche’s pride and youth are ruined so badly but she keeps up appearances by wearing various masks. She considers herself as the guardian of the arts by preserving the “poems a dead boy wrote” (Streetcar 139). She even portrays herself as an artist. Laurilyn Harris remarks that: “She pours out her creative energy on herself, attempting to recreate herself as an art object” (Herris 1993: 85). She is defeated so badly that she is verging on the borders of lunacy but she sustains herself with her will power and the power of imagination. She is broken from within when she comes to the Kowalki apartment on New Orleans, after being ostracized from the Belle Reve. But she sustains her imaginative power and portrays the Kowalski apartment with a poetic subtlety:

Oh, I’m not going to be hypocritical, I’m going to be honestly critical about it! Never, never, never in my worst dreams could I picture – Only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe! – could do it justice! Out there I suppose is the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir! (Streetcar 121)

She is broken from within but tries to create an aura of “Her Majesty” (Streetcar 185) and “visiting royalty” (Streetcar 188) with her imaginative faculty. She creates her grandeur by using artificial rhinestones, junk jewelry, rose colored paper lantern, pastel shades and imitation furs. She herself admits: “I know I fib a good deal. After all a woman’s charm is fifty percent illusion” (Streetcar 140). Her creativity is so effective that she succeeds in alluring Mitch towards her charms and leads him by the nose. She makes her love with Mitch possible by using her sense of creativity. Mitch is mesmerized by her in such a way that he starts dancing to her tunes. The magical power of her imagination is activated with the arrival of Mitch. So she tries to transform her guilt-ridden past into a romantic present.

In reality Blanche has been a promiscuous woman. Search for physical gratification has thrown her in the arms of different men. She becomes so notorious that the school administration is obliged to fire her from the job. The community compels her to quit the place. She is houseless and penniless but she believes in the richness of her spirit and considers it an asset for her. She has full faith in her inner abilities which can revolutionize the life of a man who sincerely attaches himself with her. She states:

A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man’s life – immeasurably! I have those things to offer, and this does not
take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart – and I have all of those things – aren’t taken away, but grow! Increase with the years! How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures locked in my heart! (Streetcar 211).

When Mitch tries to know about her real age and looks at her after tearing the paper lantern from the bulb, her reaction is poetic: “I don’t want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don’t tell them the truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!” (Streetcar 204) Bigsby aptly comments on this occasion: “In that respect she is clearly close kin to the writer whose strategy she mimics…. And when Blanche says, I want magic… she is in effect defending her own dramatic constructions and beyond that, those of Williams’ himself” (Bigsby 1984: 61). When no one is ready to lift her out of the quagmire, her creative power still works. She imagines that “some nice-looking ship’s doctor, a very young one with a small blond moustache and a big silver watch” (Streetcar 220) will soon come to her. In this way she tries to romanticize the last moments of her life by dying in the hands of that ship’s doctor. Her creative imagination turns into reality when a doctor of asylum appears at the same moment and offers her his hand with kindness.

### 3.7 Deconstructing Sexuality Creatively in *Orpheus Descending*

Val Xavier is the protagonist in *Orpheus Descending*. Socially and financially he is so marginalized that he gets ready to work in the most hostile circumstances. Deconstruction at work in this play can be seen in Val’s strategies to come out of the marginalization, creates meanings in otherwise meaningless life and regenerate life in impotent Lady Torrance through his regenerated sexuality. He also deconstructs the prevalent chaos in his life through is art, which is represented by his phallic-like guitar. Art is aligned with erotic attraction and sexual appeal in some of Williams’ plays. Some of his fictive figures represent believe that sexuality and art are the ways of expression for the soul. That is why his artists give vent to their pent up feelings through the medium of art or sex. The artist Val “is given the mythical attributes of Orpheus, archetypal embodiment of inspired poetic or musical expression” (Thompson 2002: 83). By demythicizing the version of the
Greek myth in his *Orpheus Descending*, Williams tries to reenact it in a modern existential version. He traces parallel between the life of Val and that of his counterpart mythical figure, Orpheus. Orpheus is the poet singer who fails to bring back his Eurydice from the kingdom of the dead to earth. According to the original myth, Eurydice dies of snake bite soon after her wedding to Orpheus. His love for the bride brings him to Hades where he charms the guardians of Hades with the power of his music. The guardians of Hades promise the return of his bride but impose the restriction that he should not look back at her during the time she goes behind him out of Hades. He almost succeeds in repossessing his wife but at the last moment he looks back to have glimpse of Eurydice. As a result of this disobedience, he loses Eurydice to the underworld for ever (Kirk 1982: 171). The singer Orpheus of the myth descends into Hades, the guitarist Orpheus of the play, Val, descends into a world of intrigue, violence and meanness of a southern town inhabited by bigots like Jabe. Val redeems and restores the fertility of Lady Torrance but continues to stay in the town for the sake of Lady and their baby. As a result of it he is defeated, like Orpheus of the myth, by the powerful forces beyond his control. Val is a dreamy poet and “symbolically, Val represents the spirit of nonconformity and freedom.” (Howard & Greta 2005: 41). He brings a new life in the sterile existence of the town with his sexual as well as imaginative power. His passionate nature attracts passionate responses from the women of the area. The men become envious of him and torture him to death. His passionate life and torturous death can be compared with life and death of St. Valentine. “Saint Valentine was the patron saint of young couples, and on his feast day the popular Valentine greetings are sent out…. He was severely beaten with clubs and beheaded by the people of Rome because the Romans did not endorse his facilitation for the young couples” (Mausolfe 1993: 64).

Val’s phallic-like guitar represents his sexual as well as his artistic energy. It is engraved with the autographs of black musicians and singers – Leadbelly, King Oliver, Bessie Smith and Fats Waller – the black artists whose names are written in the stars. Val’s association with these black musicians shows that he wants to achieve the ideal harmony by being steady, honest and hardworking. His guitar becomes analogous to the transcendent Orphic lyre when he claims that “it is my life’s companion! It washes me
clean like water when anything unclean has touched me....” 7 This is what makes Roger Boxill comment that Val is tarnished by corruption but uncorrupted, as his guitar and snakeskin jacket, badges of purity in art and nature (Boxill 1988: 123). He wants to get rid of his earthy life and his desire is revealed from the ballad of “Heavenly Grass”, which he continuously plays in the play. He is capable of redirecting his energy toward kind and compassionate objectives by helping those in distress. He tries to sublimate his sexual energy by involving himself in humanistic activities. He reacts to Carol Curtreere’s sexual advances with these words: “Heavy drinking and smoking the weed and shacking with strangers is okay for kids in their twenties but this is my thirtieth birthday and I’m all through with the route” (Five Plays 306). Similarly, the inscription of black artists of the jazz age shows that he wants to convert the discord, associated with the history of black people in America, with the concord of his music. In this way he tries to bring new life in the badly bigoted town. He yearns for incorruptible transcendent living represented by his guitar and the mythical legless birds of Paradise that “live their whole life on the wing and sleep on the wind and never light on this earth but one time when they die” (Five Plays 319). Like a true poet he creates a dream-like world by artistically presenting the aerial existence of birds and their complete fearless freedom. Such a fantasy world mesmerizes Lady who longs for terrestrial relationship, but the snakeskin jacket enveloping Val’s body represents that he is very much associated with the earthly life. His transcendent quest is in conflict with his earthiness resulting in a strange kind of loneliness. His Orphic attempts to rise above sexual appetite fail because “whatever is of the earth, is prey to corruption” (Nelson 1961: 238). Val tries to sublimate his sexuality by bringing peace and harmony with his music. He expresses his soul with the music of his guitar and succeeds in bringing light and delight in the bigoted town but the discordant forces of darkness are so powerful and don’t permit the harmonious forces to prevail.

7 Williams, Tennessee. (1976). Five Plays by Tennessee Williams. London: Secker & Warburg. P. 316. All the subsequent references of Orpheus Descending quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
3.8 Art as Some Light at the End of Tunnel: A Deconstructive Process in *The Night of Iguana*

*The Night of Iguana* beautifully dramatizes how art serves as a deconstructive tool to dismantle gloom in the life of spinster Hannah. A close look at the light color paintings of Hannah is revealing. Seemingly of slight importance to what happens in the play or what it may mean, the color paintings turn out to be surprisingly significant. It is through her paintings that Hannah exchanges her dreams with reality. The paintings, which have no sounds and not even language, displace isolation as a center of meaning and thereby change the direction of the play. Hannah is a quick sketch artist. She comes to Costa Verde hotel situated in a rain forest expecting wonderful view for her painting. She expresses her wonder at the sight: “They told me in town that this was the ideal place for a painter, and they weren’t – whew – exaggerating!” With the help of her art and poppy seed tea she tries to cope with the hardships of life. Commenting on poppy seed tea she tells Shannon, “It’s a mild, sedative drink that helps you get through nights that are hard for you to get through, and I’m making it for my grandfather and myself as well as for you, Mr. Shannon. Because, for all three of us, this won’t be easy night to get through” (*Iguana* 303-4). She is accompanied with her old and ailing grandfather who is also an artist. By addressing Maxine and Shannon, she states about her artistic endeavors and those of Nonno:

We’ve had a good many write ups. My grandfather is the oldest living and practicing poet. And he gives recitations. I…paint…watercolors and I’m a quick sketch artist. We travel together. We pay our way as we go by my grandfather’s recitations and the sale of my watercolors and quick sketches in charcoal or pastel…. I usually pass among the tables at lunch and dinner in a hotel. I wear an artist’s smock – picturesquely dabbled with paint – with Byronic collar and flowing silk tie. I don’t push myself on people. I just display my work and smile at them sweetly and if they invite me to do so, I sit down to make a quick character sketch in pastel or charcoal. If not? Smile sweetly and go on…. We pass among the tables together slowly. I introduce him as the world’s oldest living and practicing poet. If invited, he gives a recitation of a poem. (*Iguana* 253).

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8 Williams, Tennessee. (1975). *Tennessee Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire and Other Plays*. London: Penguin. P. 248. All the subsequent references of *Night of the Iguana* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
Her art makes her capable of facing the miserable moments of her life. The most beautiful quality of her art is that it has broadened her vision and taught her of looking out of herself, not in. She is a spinster who has never enjoyed the beauties of her youth. She has faced the adversities of her life but these adversities fail to embitter her. She considers herself lucky because her art has sustained her during the adverse circumstances of her life:

My work, this occupational therapy that I gave myself – painting and doing quick character sketches – made me look out of myself, not in, and gradually, at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see this faint, very faint grey light – the light of the world outside me – and I kept climbing towards it…. It stayed only white, but white is a very good light to see at the end of a long black tunnel (Iguana 310). Her art also teaches her how to live with dignity even after despair. The most outstanding characteristic of Hannah is that she, unlike some of her counterparts, lives in neither the lost past nor the elusive future but in the acceptance of her present. She battles her existential loneliness with her quality of endurance and acceptance. Like the iguana of the play, she is at the end of her tether. She, however, faces such a life with great courage because she has adapted herself to the life of “scraping and scuffling” (Iguana 312). She is artistically wearing a Japanese kabuki robe and holding a gold lacquered Japanese fan which gives her Oriental look of the Buddhists. Her association with the Buddha becomes quite relevant when we observe her all-encompassing love. She shows her compassion not only for the human beings but also for the trapped iguana. She sells her watercolors and charcoal sketches by flattering the strangers. Her tolerance is exceptional even when people refuse to talk to her. Shannon characterizes her as a “hustler…a fantastic cool hustler” (Iguana 288). She can draw the sketch of a person with words as well. She shows the true nature of Shannon by holding a mirror to him, “I’m just attempting to give you a character sketch of yourself, in words instead of pastel crayons or charcoal” (Iguana 302). Her art becomes the source of her self-awareness and inner peace with which she tries to cope with cheating and deception spreading all around her. She looks prudish and has her own tendency to hysteria but accepts her limitations and faces them with the strength of her character, her perseverance and resourcefulness. As an artist she has deep observation of the people and the situations. She tells Shannon, “I don’t judge
people, I draw them, that’s all I do, just I draw them, but in order to draw them I have to observe them” (Iguana 302). She has traveled, not only around the world but also “subterranean travels, the journeys that the spooked and bedeviled people are forced to take through the …unlighted sides of their natures” (Iguana 309). It is her art with which tries to translate her disadvantages into advantages. She knows how to cope with the dark, unlighted and shadowy side of her nature. She is neither “proud” nor “ashamed” (Iguana 259) of her present state of affairs but accepts it with the ecstasy of an artist.

Hannah has been traveling for years with her grandfather, Nonno, who earns money from his poetry reading. The disabled and weak Nonno is on the verge of death but his zest for life does not diminish. His desire to complete his last poem is irrepressible. He completes it before he is liberated from the pangs of poverty and old age. The poem reflects the philosophy of life propagated by a dying man. The most important quality of the poem is that the theme of birth and blossom dominates the theme of death and destruction. According to Marry Drake, Nonno is a “kind of Tiresias or Jungian wise old man who accepts life with ancient wisdom” (Drake 1970: 106). Philip M. Armato considers Nonno as “an effective example of modern man’s potential to accept death as gracefully as Socrates or St. Sebastian” (Armato 1977: 566). Hannah is concerned and worried about the old and ailing situation of her grandfather. Like Antigne of Oedipus Trilogy, she is the embodiment of self-sacrifice. She protects her grandfather till the last moments of his life without caring her own personal life. She stifles all her happiness, her physical passions, and her emotional freedom for the sake of the lonely old man. Moritz also compares her with Antigone: “The entrance of the nearly blind and deaf Nonno, at age ninety-seven, supported and guided by his granddaughter Hannah, recalls the prototype for this scene, the entrance of another blind and aging man who relies on the support of a young woman, that of Oedipus and Antigone in Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colonus (Moritz 1997: 163). She is protective like Cordelia because her selfless and humane qualities “suggest her analogy to a redeemed Cordelia fulfilling Lear’s dream of their imagined life together” (Thompson 2002: 165). So the artistic and compassionate nature of Hannah becomes saving grace for her lonely life.

It is the force of Hannah’s imaginative insight that makes a home of its own. Her concept of a home is not just a place of physical security meant for the purpose of mating
and propagating but a place in the heart of her dear ones. Her art teaches her to seek permanence in human relationship. Like a true romantic she never likes to have a home made up of bricks but tries to live in the heart of the people. She wants to live in her ideal world peopled with persons like her grandfather as she states:

We make a home for each other, my grandfather and I. Do you know what I mean by a home? I don’t mean a regular home. I mean I don’t mean what other people mean when they speak of a home, because I don’t regard a home as a…well, as a place, a building…a house…of wood, bricks, stone. I think of a home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can…well, nest - rest - live in, emotionally speaking (Iguana 312).

Her profession as an artist helps her maintain her contact with the people. This contact alleviates her sense of loneliness. Her art is a source of creating an intimate connection with the people as she states: “in my profession I’m obliged to make contacts with strangers who turn to friends quickly” (Iguana 313). It is this affability and gentleness of an artist with which she succeeds to pacify the raging and sobbing Shannon. He is transformed into a gentleman who helps the old Nonno come up the hill and then pleads with Maxine, who considers them as a pair of loonies, for their stay at the Costa Verde hotel for just one night. Later on he offers Hannah his own room when he comes to know that the roof of her room is leaky. He also tenders some financial help to Nonno because the old poet touches the inner chords of Shannon in an invisible way. Shannon is so deeply influenced by these artists that he decides to establish a home to nest and rest in the heart of Maxine. So, art in Iguana becomes a force that sustains in the most miserable moments of life.

3.9 Creating Art Out of the Dry Spells

Sweet Bird of Youth is concerned with the life of a failed Hollywood actress who, through sheer force of her creative impulse, breaks the spell of failure to create success and establish herself as a successful Hollywood actress. This process is a kind of deconstruction of failure to generate success. The Princess, an ageing artist, in Sweet Bird of Youth feels deeply agonized during the dry spells of her life. She is living in a society bereft of delicate and tender feelings. Once she was a great artist whose art throbbed with
The passion for life but presently all her efforts to create a masterpiece of art yield no fruit. She puts her heart and soul in her art but remains incapable of creating work better than the previous one. Under these circumstances she faces a lot of mental strain. She is a lonely figure on the verge of total collapse. She has been on the zenith of her popularity in the Hollywood. She has been enjoying popularity and happiness in the past but presently she is hopeless about her come back. Her decline does not break her down totally because she continues her search in Hollywood. “For the Princess, life is essentially a performance, a work of art, and she has the capacity to absorb many a setback and still go on… suggesting that the only hope of redemption comes from the transformative power of art” (Murphy 2005:186). The artificial performances in the movies have become the substance of her life but she states: “Out of the passion and torment of my existence I have created a thing that I can unveil, a sculpture, almost heroic, that I can unveil, which is true” (Sweet Bird 107). Her search for meaning in the act of creativity ends on a happy note and she emerges as a successful movie star after wading through the quagmire of failure. She is reborn into a new person and decides to lead a new hopeful life when her “picture has broken box-office record…. The greatest comeback in the history of the industry” (Sweet Bird 106). Her belief in her creative abilities is revived soon after she knows that the film that she thought was a failure has in reality proved a success. The Princess is ageing, which symbolizes castration but, unlike Chance, she does not accept this castration and gets ready to confront her audience once again. Her creative force seems to have lost but she possesses tenacity and resilience so she emerges with more dignity and with more forbearance after her creative force is regained.

The above discussion shows that Williams was an artist whose heart throbbed for creativity till the last moment of his life. He has been accused of having death wish because of his dependence on drugs and alcohol but he denies it through the person of the movie artist, the Princess: “I have been accused of having a death wish but I think it’s life that I wish for, terribly, shamelessly, on any terms whatsoever” (Sweet Bird 41). His plays provide him not only a pathway to vent the personal anxieties of his life but also serve him a safety valve to control the most turbulent excitation in the unconscious. He tries to resolve the most complicated problems of life by resorting to the transcending
power of art. He searches for the self and the soul in it because art is regarded as the chief instrument of human reconciliation. It helps him adapt himself to the social and personal necessities of life. The sense of insecurity in Williams’ early life proved a blessing in disguise as it enabled him to create a world of his own. By presenting the insecurity of his artistic figures and their dreams and desires to create an imaginative world, Williams in fact, tries to search for some security in life. Most of his protagonists are dreamers who invent a fictive world when they are confusedly entangled in the quagmire of life and try to sustain it with the power of their imagination. Blanche stands closer to him in this regard. She is never ready to bow down before the forces ready to crush her. She tries to transform her pathetic situation with the magical power of art and tries to resist those forces determined to push her into the darkness of asylum. She does not stop inventing even when the world starts slipping from her hand and love turns into a mirage. Similarly, Amanda, in The Glass Menagerie, creates a romantic world of Blue Mountain and seventeen gentleman callers when no gentle man caller is left. Lady Torrance, in Orpheus Descending, creates a love garden in miniature when the struggle for existence grows grim. Williams as well as his protagonists remain dissatisfied with their present and keep on pursuing what ought to be. It is because of such trait that they seek survival and redemption in the art of creativity.
CHAPTER 4

SEXUALITY AND DECONSTRUCTION

4.1 Introduction

Sexual behavior is linked to the very biology of human beings and sexuality pervades people’s lives, on all levels of society. Discussions about sexuality generally reflect the beliefs and attitudes of the time in which they take place, and what is, at the time, considered morally right or wrong. Human sexuality, though complex and enigmatic, has always been a subject in literature. Sexuality has at all times been used to attract the readers of literature by way of feelings of, among other things, love, lust, oppression and suppression. As sexuality is frequently linked to the behavioral codes of a culture, writing about sexual manners becomes part of the author’s ethical and philosophical inquiry. Williams’ use of sexual behavior to depict individuals and their social struggles and conflicts contributed to my genuine interest in his writing. My investigation therefore focuses on how Williams uses sexuality to show what is wrong with society. In almost all of Williams plays there is an undercurrent of sexuality that colors and gives power to his characters and their relationships. In most of Williams’ plays sexuality serves as an explicit theme and recurring motif. In my reading, I will predominantly look at his portrayal of sexuality and gender, sexuality and love, and sexuality and oppression, and discuss how his characters’ sexual behavior becomes an expression of power. He intriguingly writes about aspects of sexuality in a manner which breaks with the perception of sex as something filthy and immoral, and illuminates these aspects of human life without being swayed by the more conventional norms of human behavior. It is important to point out Williams outlook towards sexuality has a constructive and regenerative function. Williams’ plays inquire into the conditions of a people that have been subjected to different types of oppression. He deconstructs the stereotypical and tabooed sexuality to liberate the reader from the restraints and oppression of patriarchal and sexist societies.

This chapter explores how sexuality serves as a deconstruction tool in Williams’ art. The specific deconstructive mechanism taken up here is that of binary opposition as
stated previously (Section 1.3 of Chapter 1). The binaries explored in this chapter are grouped as homosexuality/heterosexuality, degeneration/regeneration, impotency/potency, sexual passiveness/sexual activeness, diseased sexuality/undiseased sexuality, life destroying sexuality/life affirming sexuality, repressed sexuality/expressed sexuality. So the idiom of sexuality becomes a battleground for binaries to struggle against each other and dismantle uniform, logocentric and monologic worldview to create plurality of meanings.

Erotic appeal has long been tabooed in American Drama but Tennessee Williams takes up the issue so candidly because he considers sexuality as a symbol of life and the possible salvation for the modern man. Some of his protagonists are homosexuals, gigolos or impotent but they succeed in getting compassionate human touch in a world replete with degeneration. It is human touch that vibrates life out of their emptiness. Williams challenges the puritanical order of society by delving deep into the sexual dynamics between men and women. The delineation of sexuality in his plays may look obscene in the USA of 1940s and 50s but such delineation neutralizes the prevalent death and destruction and leaves a redemptive effect. Lasting sexual relationship is a rarity in some of his plays but sexuality promises meanings in life in most of his plays. Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo*, Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Maxine in *The Night of Iguana*, Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Myrtle in *The Kingdom of Earth* and Dorothea in *Creve Coeur* generate meanings in their vulnerable and marginalized lives through their sexuality. They are marginalized because of their precarious living but it is the ecstasy of real human contact which makes them so valuable. Williams aptly comments that “Life achieves its highest value and significance in those rare moments…when two lives are confluent, when the walls of isolation momentarily collapse between two persons” (Williams 1978: 37). Chance Wayne’s remark in *Sweet Bird of Youth* is worth quoting when he says:

The great difference between people in this world is not between the rich and the poor or the good and the evil, the biggest of all differences in this world is between the ones that had or have pleasure in love and those that haven’t and hadn’t any pleasure in love, but just watched it with envy, sick envy. The spectators and the performers. I don’t mean just ordinary pleasure or the kind you can buy, I mean great pleasure” (*Sweet Bird*, 48).
Most of Williams’ protagonists are lonely figures and this loneliness intensifies with the indifferent attitude of their life partners. When Maggie, in *Cat*, fails to attract the attention of her homosexual husband she gives vent to her agonizing loneliness by saying: “Living with someone you love can be lonelier than living entirely alone!–if the one that y’ love doesn’t love you”9 The agony of loneliness is compensated with the act of sexuality even if this act may prove painful and perilous. Carol Cutrere, in *Orpheus Descending*, says: “The act of love-making is almost unbearably painful, and yet, of course, I do bear it, because to be not alone, even for a few moments, is worth the pain and danger” (*Five Plays*, 332).

Williams lets animal instincts express themselves because he measures human psyche by using the Freudian yardstick. “Williams, like Freud, establishes human personality in its animal origins. For both, sexuality is the symbol of being” (Jackson1987: 38, Sugarwala 2004: 126). The very title of some of his plays has sexual connotations, e.g. both heat and cat in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* represent the passion of sex. Similarly, menagerie in *The Glass Menagerie* represents animal drives, and desire in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, represents sexual desire. The burning and extinguishing of candles in *Menagerie* and *Streetcar* have sexual undertones. The loading and unloading of phallic-like bananas from the truck and the bleating black goat running wild again and again in *The Rose Tattoo* represent male virility and sexuality. The phallic-resembling guitar and snakeskin jacket of Val in *Orpheus Descending* represent his sexual potency. Sexuality in the world of Williams is not destructive but it is therapeutic and redeems in the most effective manner.

4.2 Potency/Impotency

The binary debated in this section is that of potency/impotency. Meaning is generated by deconstructing impotency. Impotency of Lady Torrance’s husband compels her to think creatively and materialize her own impregnation through alternative methods of Val’s borrowed potency. This factor amounts to generating potency creatively and

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9 Williams, Tennessee. (1976). *Five Plays by Tennessee Williams*. London: Secker & Warburg. P. 8. All the subsequent references of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
innovatively for filling the void. The rich in Williams’ plays are either impotent or exhausted. Brick, in *Cat*, an heir to twenty eight thousand acre land, is exhausted with life and his broken leg, his crutches and his refusal to bed with his wife reflect his impotence. Lot, in *The Kingdom of Earth*, is an elegant and opulent heir to a farm on the Mississippi Delta but he is impotent and pervert. Boss Finley, the powerful politician, in *Sweet Bird*, is “too old for a lover,” (*Sweet Bird* 60) and Jabe Torrance, in *Orpheus*, is obsessed with his passion for power and money but fails to satisfy Lady Torrance throughout her married life. Seen from Jungian point of view, the passion for power leaves both Boss and Jabe impotent. Jung observes in this regard that, “the power drive plays a much greater role than sex. For instance, there are many big businessmen who are impotent because their full energy is going into moneymaking or dictating the laws to everybody else. That is much more interesting to them than affairs with women” (Evans 1976: 46). The impotent Jabe is dying of cancer but he becomes wrathful when he comes to know about a love affair between Val and his wife. He kills his wife and blowtorches her lover. Both Jabe and Boss Finley express their sexual distress by torturing, lynching, castrating and killing the potent. The black people are the main victims of their sexual jealousy because the sexual potency of the black people hurts the psyche of the white man. Frantz Fanon comments: “The white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast; if it is not the length of the penis, then it is the sexual potency that impresses him. Face to face with this man who is ‘different from himself’, he needs to defend himself” (Fanon 1986: 170). Fanon further says that “for majority of white men the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions” (Fanon 1986: 177). Boss considers the black people as a “threat to the white women’s chastity” (*Sweet Bird* 65). He tries to protect the chastity of the white women and the purity of their white blood by emasculating the black people at random.

Boss Finley and Jabe Torrance represent the oppressor class and the black people and the sexually potent Chance and Val represent the oppressed class. Psychologically speaking, the impotence of the oppressors create disturbance for them and they feel sexually threatened by the potent oppressed. So they give vent to their repressed sexual anxiety by castrating and lynching the sexually potent oppressed. Both Boss and Jabe feel
threatened by the very physicality of the black man because of their own sexual vulnerability. Boss’s sexual envy is stirred when it is reported to him that a black man has been found roaming in the streets of the city during the midnight. He castrates the black man quite savagely. Jabe burns Lady’s father to death for selling wine to the black men. When Boss and Jab persecute the black men, they, in fact, show their sexual revenge and sexual hatred. Under these circumstances, the black men become their biological ‘other’ because “the real other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man” (Fanon 1986: 161). The “penis envy” (Klein 1975: 196) of Jabe and Boss is not restricted to the black only. They give vent to their anxiety by castrating the sexually superior people regardless of their race. Jabe’s sexual envy asserts itself when he burns Val alive, because the latter regenerates his wife. He feels disgusted with his impotence when faced with Val’s libido. He tries to compensate his sexual loss by killing the potent Val. Similarly, Boss emasculates Chance owing to his sex-envy. Chance aptly remarks about Boss’s emasculating desire: “Sex-envy is what that is, and the revenge for sex-envy which is a wide spread disease that I have run into personally too often for me to doubt its existence or any manifestation” (Sweet Bird 81).

4.3 Homosexuality/Heterosexuality

Conservative practices and ideologies have confined homosexuality and heterosexuality into two dichotomies competing for acceptance and rejection at each other’s cost. Williams deconstructs this conservative ideological position to manifest simultaneity of both homosexuality and heterosexuality, even combining in a singular personality to empower him with multiple possibilities of sexual expressions. Williams’ characters fail to come to terms with their homosexuality because they consider it sinful sexuality. These characters are either absent from the scene like Skipper in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Allan Gray in A Streetcar Named Desire or they are physically paralyzed like Brick in Cat and Lot in The Kingdom of Earth. They are emotionally shocked at the exposure of their homosexuality. An unreasonable fear grips them as they are never ready to confront the sexual taboos of their society. Being hypersensitive they are vulnerable to panic and thus fail to function normally. They fail because they are inherently incapable
of tackling a situation incompatible with social norms. They feel unnecessarily guilty and survival becomes valueless. Under such circumstances they need the support of somebody close to them. But their shock is further deepened when they come to know that their homosexuality is evaluated by those who should have come to their rescue. They feel a sense of worthlessness when they realize that they have failed to live up to the sexual standards of their society. When the guilty conscience pricks them, they suffer low self-esteem and seek atonement through self-punitive methods. Williams appropriately remarks in this regard: “I think society has imposed upon homosexuals a feeling of guilt that makes them neurotic, that makes all of us somewhat neurotic” (Devlin 1986: 322). Allan commits suicide when his wife, Blanche, shows abhorrence at his homosexuality. Homosexual Lot dies soon after losing his wife to his heterosexual half-brother. Skipper and Brick try to forget their homosexual relations in alcohol when Brick’s wife, Maggie, challenges their relationship. Excessive alcohol proves deadly for the two homosexual friends as both of them become addicts. The recent research shows that, when alcohol is digested, a byproduct is a chemical that actually increases your anxiety level. The risk is that you then reach for another drink, try to get your anxiety down again, and there you are with an alcohol-dependence problem (Montgomery & Morris 1994: 28). This addiction ends in the death of Skipper. Brick is also on the verge of total collapse but it is the balmy hand of his wife, Maggie, which saves him from total destruction. Williams himself talks indirectly about homosexuality by absenting the homosexuals. Skipper in Cat and Allan in Streetcar never appear on the scene while Lot’s presence in The Kingdom of Earth is minimal. David Savran minutely notes the absence of the homosexuals when he comments that “Absenting the homosexual subject (and drawing attention to his absence), Tennessee Williams, is allowed to…speak” (Savran 1992: 110). Williams watches over his homosexual undertones with the powerful heterosexual drives of characters like Maggie, Stanley, and Chicken etc.

Brick admits that he had some physical contact with Skipper: “once in a while he put his hand on my shoulder or I’d put mine on his,” and on tour in hotels “we’d reach across the space between the two beds and shake hands to say goodnight” (Five Plays 65) but he strongly objects his relations with Skipper to be compared with Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, the homosexual original owners of the Pollitt plantation. He demeans them
by calling them as “a couple of ducking sissies” (Five Plays 63), “ole pair of sisters” (Five Plays 66). By calling his friendship with Skipper as “true and clean thing” (Five Plays 65), Brick tries to stress upon Maggie and Big Daddy about the sacredness of his relations with Skipper. He tries to justify his friendship with Skipper by saying: “why can’t exceptional friendship, real, real, deep, deep friendship between two men be respected as something clean and decent without being thought of as fairies” (Five Plays 64). He calls such a relationship perfectly pure and proper. In this way he tries to idealize his relationship with Skipper as wholesome. He refuses to bed with his wife because he believes in “marriage of noble minds, the perfect embodiment of platonic love, which even the Athenians patronized” (Hamilton 1951: 12-13). He is so emphatic that even Maggie feels obliged to compare this relationship with the Greek legends: “one of those beautiful, ideal things they tell about in the Greek legends” (Five Plays 26). This analogy reminds us the Athenians of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. portrayed in Plato’s *The Symposium*, who believed in the purity of homosexual love and that it was capable of satisfying a man’s highest and noblest aspirations while heterosexual love for them was altogether inferior—a mere physical impulse whose sole object was the procreation of children (Hamilton 1951: 12). In *The Symposium* Aristophane states that, “the most sustaining love is that of male homosexuals for they are not only sexual associates, but also soul mates” (Hamilton 1951: 64). So Brick is tied to the idealized relations with Skipper and berates Maggie’s relations as inferior when he says: “One man has one great good true thing in his life. One great good thing which is true! I had friendship with Skipper….Not love with you, Maggie, but friendship with Skipper was that true thing…” (Five Plays 27). Such a love between men, however, is incompatible with the existential realities of the modern world of 1950s when the play appeared on the stage. That is why Maggie asserts: “that love could never be carried through to anything satisfying or even talked about plainly” (Five Plays 26). The Pollitts talk about homosexuality in an indirect manner which reflects how they are influenced by their social values. Brick may idealize his relation with Skipper but he feels disgusted when the same is named as homosexual relation because he knows that the world would not acknowledge this tendency. Williams states in the stage direction: “It is the inadmissible thing that Skipper and Brick would rather die than live with. The fact that if it existed it had to be disavowed to keep face in
the world they lived in, may be at the heart of the mendacity that Brick drinks to kill his
disgust with. It may be the root of his collapse” (Five Plays 61). It is because of this fact
that the more Brick tries to idealize his relationship with Skipper the more his confusion
depthens. Feeling distressed at Brick’s cold response to the telephonic admission to his
homosexuality, Skipper tries to cope with his homosexual anxiety by resorting to alcohol
and drugs. The excess of alcohol and drugs deepens his emotional stress and leaves him
impotent. “In most cases we find that the man initially suffers some difficulty with his
erection for quite understandable reasons, such as illness, fatigue, stress or drugs”
(Montgomery & Morris 1994: 83). Sexual failure of both Skipper and Brick reveals their
inner disaster. They lose interest in all human relations and find themselves on the brink
of death. Skipper, in fact, commits suicide and Brick secludes himself in an alcoholic
addiction.

Brick’s marriage is on the verge of collapse and he is not even on speaking terms
with his wife, Maggie, because she calls into question his homosexual tendencies.
Maggie doubts that the relationship between her husband and Skipper is not normal
therefore she provokes a sexual confrontation with Skipper. She endangers his
masculinity by talking about his tenderness toward her husband. She ostracizes him by
labeling him homosexual in a heterosexual social order. She tries to inculcate in his mind
that “homosexual men are not real men just as real men are supposedly not homosexual”
(McDonough 1997:7). This provocation results in Skipper’s erectile dysfunction and he
fails to prove his heterosexuality. This failure slights him in his own eyes and convinces
him of his failed masculinity. He does not have the psychic potency to accept such a
failure. It creates a feeling that he has nothing to live for and ends his existence. After his
failed sexual encounter with Maggie, Skipper is convinced that he is a gay and thus he
resorts to alcohol and then kills himself after that episode. Maggie confesses to Brick that
she has destroyed Skipper by stripping him of his homosexuality and forcing him to face
the truth:

I said, ‘SKIPPER! STOP LOVIN’ MY HUSBAND OR TELL HIM HE’S
GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT IT TO HIM!’ – one way or another! HE
SLAPPED ME HARD ON THE MOUTH! Then turned and ran without
stopping once, I’m sure, all the way back into his room…. When I came to
his room that night, with a little scratch like a shy little mouse at his door,
he made that pitiful, ineffectual little attempt to prove that what I had said
wasn’t true…. In this way, I destroyed him, by telling him the truth that he and his world which he was born and raised in, yours and his world, had told him could not be told?... (Five Plays 28)

Such an exposure of homosexuality not only damages Skipper and Brick but also pushes Maggie into hot waters. She is humiliated by Brick in the worst possible manner. But she remains adamant and at last wins the heterosexual love of her husband.

4.4 Sexual Passivity is deconstructed in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Maggie, in *A Cat on Hot Tin Roof*, is tied to psychologically disturbed and emotionally troubled family. Her homosexual and alcoholic husband is ready to terminate the marriage and other members of his family ignore her as an outsider. Her father-in-law is the only support for her but he is dying of cancer. The behavior of her husband is not only abusive but also unpredictable. She longs for love and belongingness but faces tension and misery. She is stressed by the dysfunctional family dynamics engendered by such a situation. But she has ability to think for herself and make her own decisions. She is resilient to stress, adaptive to change and empathetic for others which help her grow up in her dysfunctional family. Instead of being controlled by her traumatic life, she reflects upon it, redesigns it and plans to accomplish her goals. Her life affirming attitude helps her take charge of her thoughts, her beliefs, her actions and ultimately her life. Her conjugal life is at risk because of her sexual incompatibility with her husband. Psychologically speaking, her husband, Brick, is sexually passive and Maggie is sexually active. Brick believes in idealism while Maggie believes in pragmatism. Their conjugal relationship weakens day by day because of their different attitude towards their sexual life. Brick consciously negates his latent homosexuality while Maggie consciously makes him realize his homosexuality. Maggie articulates her disgust for homosexuality while Brick does not find a way to say about his homosexual relations with his friend.
The husband becomes neurotic in his negation and the wife becomes ruthless in her assertion. Seen from the Jungian perspective, their married life is bound to be troublesome. Maggie is an “extrovert wife” (Evans 1976: 108) who gives voice to what she feels and observes. She cannot grow blind to the reality of her present childlessness and the poverty of her past. Her existence is threatened and she feels worthless before her fertile and scheming brother-in-law and his wife. Such a fear is visible in her discourse. But she plans masterfully to outwit all those ready to destroy her marital bliss. She uses sex as a sword and shield to defeat and deceive the Goopers, who want to uproot her. On the other hand, Brick is an “introverted-intuitive husband” (Evans 1976: 108) who makes his life a miserable mess after the death of his friend, Skipper. He indulges in self-deception by idealizing and spiritualizing a worldly love. As a result of it, he fails to cultivate a true relationship with himself and yearns for truthfulness without realizing his own “mendacity” (Five Plays 57). He is never ready to accept homosexual tendencies in his life. This denial leads him to a severe sexual crisis. He withdraws his physical contact with his wife, but his wife continues to offer him a valuable emotional support. She has the potential to deal with such incompatibility and succeeds in saving her conjugal life.

The unrequited love of Maggie’s husband makes her a sex-starved woman. She makes love with Skipper to realize Brick’s closeness with this act. She admits to Brick: “Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a little bit closer to you…. we made love to each other to dream it was you, both of us” (Five Plays 26)! Maggie’s life is full of many lacks; her past is poverty-stricken and her present is a loveless marriage. She is deprived of sexual fulfillment andcompanionship and her childlessness further intensifies her insecurity. She is marginalized by the Pollit family in
the worst way. She, in fact, fights for some space in the family. Her husband is not ready to recognize her person. Gooper, the brother of her husband, is scheming all the time to deprive her of all the inheritance while his wife, Mae, keeps on accusing Maggie of being barren. The other members of the Pollit family remind her on every step that she is childless and that she never belongs in the first place. Even Dixie, the little girl of the Goopers, makes fun of Maggie by sticking out her tongue at Maggie and reminding her of her barrenness. Maggie is badly hurt when Dixie reminds her of the fact that she is jealous of them only because she fails to produce any child. Maggie is not made for swallowing such remarks. She is compelled to ignite Brick’s sexuality by saying him how his brother and his sister-in-law proudly make fun of Brick’s childlessness in front of their children. Maggie’s desire to have well brought up children and pour out all her caressing love upon them reaches its the climax when she expresses the same to Big Mamma. She desires to have a child by Brick because the child not only promises the power of inheritance but also rejuvenates her marital bliss. She is bent upon mothering a Pollitt child so that she can compete with Gooper and Mae for the best position in the family. She thinks and plans positively about whatever life throws at her. This gives her the chance to rise above circumstances and handle them successfully. Her husband is unwilling to have her in the bed and desires to terminate the marriage but she uses every tactic to make a lasting relationship with such a husband. Comparing Maggie’s predicament with that of Blanche, Marc Robinson considers Maggie’s position more precarious:

Blanche may seem more alone than Maggie, but Blanche at least has the ability to affix herself to another person and stay there a while. Maggie can’t even do that—she has neither sister nor a likely suitor. If Brick even so much as notices her flirting with him, he’s disgusted. Maggie always feels useless—never more so than when she’s reminded
that she’s bounded in a sexless marriage, and so is doomed to childlessness (Robinson 1997: 45).

Maggie is badly disintegrated in the Politt family because nobody is ready to reintegrate her. She is all alone in her struggle for survival but she does not lose heart even when nobody supports her. It is the irony of situation that puts her in the most vulnerable position but she faces it quite bravely. Instead of bogging down in the face of testing situation she remains upbeat and approaches the stress of uncertainty with self belief. Her determination to rejuvenate the dead passions of her husband is insatiable. She engages her strengths and resources in such a way that her limitations turn into her achievements. Her strength lies in the fact that she is capable of seeking possibilities in adversity. It is true that she tells a lie about her pregnancy but she leaves no stone unturned to turn the lie into a reality. She discloses to Brick that she has been to a gynecologist in Memphis who examined her completely. The report of the doctor shows that they can have a child whenever they desire. She emphatically addresses Brick to bed with her because “this is her time by the calendar to conceive” (Five Plays 30). Her problem is how to have a child by a man who cannot stand her. She engages all her faculties to “work out” (Five Plays 30) that problem. She remains adamant and nonplussed in the face of adversity. It is because of such qualities that she is considered as “one of the most determined female characters in modern drama” (Blackwell 1997: 247).

Maggie’s sexual drives may be potent but her love for her husband is equally powerful. This is what urges her to save Brick from the “once-perfect relationship with Skipper” (Five Plays 66). Nancy Tischler comments, “Brick, knowing how Maggie forced this intolerable self-realization on Skipper, sees her as his enemy, while Maggie
feels that this, like everything she does, was a testimony of her all embracing love for Brick” (Tischler, 1961: 201). Brick’s instincts are arrested because of his dysfunctional marriage. Such a situation leaves a crippling impact on his psyche and it is reflected by his crutch, which is a “Freudian phallic symbol, the objective correlative of his sexual, emotional and moral paralysis” (Thompson 2002: 63). His sexuality is further crippled when Big Daddy hunts out his homosexuality as he admits to Big Daddy that once Skipper made a long distance call to him and made a drunken confession to him and on which he hung up. Instead of wandering in the illusory world of wine, Big Daddy compels him to face reality with Skipper to avoid disgust with himself and with mendacity. His disgust with mendacity, Big Daddy tells Brick, is disgust with himself: “You – dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it – before you’d face the truth with him!” (Five Plays 51). Brick’s masculinity is totally broken when his father accuses him of homosexual inclinations. Under these conditions, Maggie becomes a vital life force to restore Brick’s divided self into wholeness. She becomes kind with Brick and tries to bring him out of the insecurity his masculinity is threatened with. If masculinity is viewed as a power discourse, then Maggie emerges with a lot of masculine traits. Purnendu Chatterjee does not confine masculinities to men only but believes that masculinities are relational and that “Discourses of masculinity are available to, used by and imposed upon both men and women” (Chatterjee 2012: 110). So Maggie succeeds in reviving her marital life with her aggressive discourse.

Maggie becomes a true symbol of life force when she asserts that “life has got to be allowed to continue even after the dream of life – is – all over” (Five Plays 57). She keeps on coaxing and cajoling Brick in spite of the fact that Brick spares no opportunity
to berate and belittle her. It is her unconditional love for Brick, “her fierce determination and impassioned sexuality” (Crandell 1998: 114) that enables her to actualize the dream of blissful conjugal life. So love is a force with which Maggie faces her predicament and emerges stronger, happier and better off than before. Viktore Frankl’s comments on the force of love are worth quoting here:

> Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true. (Frankl 2004: 116)

Like a playful sex kitten, as she admits, “I’m Maggie the Cat!” (Five Plays 20) she maintains her aggressive sexuality. She becomes bitchy on certain occasions but it is all because of the constant rejection she has been facing. Her desire to mother a child is so potent that everything else recedes in the background. She succeeds in luring her husband to the bed because she wants to fully realize the wonder and beauty of motherhood’s experience. She becomes wild like a feline for her rights because she knows that offence is the best defense:

> Maggie struggles to wrench life out of her alcoholic husband with the cunning, persistence, and sensuality of a feline. Maggie, who is the ‘cat’ of the title, has scratched and clawed her way out of poverty, and she is determined to hang on to her marriage, with the tenacity of an alley cat struggling to stay alive in the streets. Maggie can purr also when it becomes necessary. Her attempts to seduce her husband and flatter Big Daddy are catlike. When Maggie walks, her whole body is in motion with feline grace (McGaw & Clark 1987: 100).

She uses every fair and foul means to support “a broken, irresolute man” (Five Plays 112), arouse his deadened passions and keep the marriage afloat as Nancy Tischler says: “her lust for life takes brutal forms…” (Tischler 1977: 507). Foul becomes fair for her
whenever she tries to seduce the latent sexuality of her husband: “Whether Brick is gay or not, she will do whatever it takes to avoid poverty in her old age” (Krasner 2006: 55).

She is as aggressive in her sexuality as her husband is passive. She adopts aggressive male sexual role to revitalizes Brick’s latent physicality. Like a caring and compassionate companion, she talks to Brick with her caressing words. She believes that their sex life will revive as suddenly as it has stopped working, because it has not diminished in the natural and usual way. She leaves no stone unturned to maintain her prettiness so that her husband feels as attracted towards her as other men are. She knows that other men follow her in the most curious manner because her body, her hips and her breast still stay high on her. She prays earnestly that Brick may want her as anxiously as other men want her. She knows that she still turns heads on the streets but the admiration and attention she gets from the other men is totally valueless for her because she expects the same from her husband. Like an intelligent therapist, she knows about sexual jealousy among men and tries to arouse in Brick as well:

> Why, last week in Memphis, everywhere that I went men’s eyes burnt holes in my clothes, at the country club and in restaurants and department stores, there wasn’t a man I met or walked by that didn’t just eat me up with his eyes and turn around when I passed him and look back at me” (*Five Plays* 21).

She knows that her love making with her husband was blissful and heavenly and reminds Brick of the days when they were happy in each other’s arms. She romanticizes her past in such a way that leaves some impression on the heart and mind of her unromantic husband. By persuading Brick to become her accomplice in her lie she, in fact, releases him from the shackles of liquor and crutch. In the end she breaks his liquor bottles, locks his cabinet of liquor and throws his crutch. Instead of challenging the forged pregnancy of Maggie, Brick acquiesces by “keeping still” (*Five Plays* 90). Maggie is apt to observe
Brick’s gallantry which he observes to save the face of his wife. She admits loving gestures of Brick in the most ecstatic manner. Brick’s gallantry proves that he is ready to quit the illusory world of alcohol and accepts the relationship of flesh-and-blood. “In the revised Broadway version… Brick expresses his admiration for Maggie and her concluding speech is expanded, emphasizing her strength and thus the likelihood of reconciliation” (Bigsby 2005: 283). She puts up her fight so bravely and succeeds in bringing her husband to her body.

Maggie knows well that truth may not work in her situation. She tells a lie about her pregnancy because she knows that ‘mendacity’ is way of the Pollitt living. She knows that every member of the family is telling a lie in one way or the other. Maggie not only challenges Brick’s homosexuality but also his false and pretentious morality. She knows that people pretend goodness but she dislikes such pretensions. She challenges the conventional moral patterns of the rich who try to hide their dirtiness under the cloak of their moral blackmail. Instead of stressing on morality, she stresses upon honesty. She knows that she was born of a poor family and led a miserable life in the thick of poverty but she is never ready to die poor. That is why she tries her best to grab as much as she can from the property of her dying father-in-law. She convinces Brick that the living is more valuable than the dead. She tells him that Skipper is dead and his father is going to die of cancer so soon but she is still alive and worthy of his attention.

Maggie lives among the people who are either indifferent or unsympathetic towards her. Such a situation coupled with “poverty and economic security cause a stressful life” (Myles 2012: 93) for her but such a stress makes her mentally tough. It is her mental toughness with which she persuades her husband to compromise with her.
Similarly, she manages to tell a lie before everybody confidently and announces about her pregnancy ignoring all the repercussions of her lie because such a lie “feeds Big Daddy’s and Big Mama’s appetites for illusion (Cafagna 1997:129). Maggie’s lie may look irrational because her husband is never ready to bed with her. She still ventures because “the instinctual desire lies in the domain of the irrational” (Veyu 2012: 32).

By becoming accomplice to Maggie’s lie Brick, as Tennessee Williams suggests, will go back to Maggie for sheer animal comfort, (Williams 1978: 73). In this way, Brick not only secures his inheritance of twenty-eight thousand acres of the land but also tries to atone for the miseries he brought for Maggie as Robert Heilman suggests, Brick’s earlier refusal to sleep with Maggie is interpreted as his way of punishing her for causing Skipper’s death, then Brick’s resuming sexual relations with Maggie implies that he has stopped blaming her and makes possible his acknowledgment and understanding of his own role – in Skipper’s death and in his and Margaret’s subsequent misery (Heilman 1973: 125). He neither divorces her nor forgives her, but becomes an accomplice to her lie at the end of the play. Arthur Miller compares his condition to that of “Hamlet who takes up his sword and neither fights nor refuses to fight but marries an Ophelia who does not die.” (Miller 1978: 191). Brick’s compromise at the end of the play shows that he gets ready to buy an inheritance by endorsing Maggie’s lie and re-enters the world of normal relations.

Maggie is blunt in her love and hatred. She is a strange mixture of kindness and cruelty. She is gentle and generous with Brick but vengeful and venomous with the Goopers. By highlighting the hawkish intentions of Goopers she succeeds in winning the sympathies of Brick. So Brick agrees with her “to have an heir, because his loathing for a
shifty brother and sister-in-law is worse than that for his own unscrupulous wife” (Coleman 1997: 45). Maggie is frank and open about her love making with Brick in the past. She remembers the days when Brick was majestic in his love making. He never showed undue longing or excitement but used to remain calm and composed. His indifference and perfect confidence was natural which made him so lovable. His composure during the love making made him a wonderful lover. Her heart is badly pricked with the pain of loneliness when she misses all those blissful days.

She shatters Brick’s sexual illusion with her fearless sexual openness. Maggie is possessive about her husband, aggressive in sexuality, determined to defend her rights and malicious in hatred for her enemies. She tries her best to help Brick come out of the self-inflicted quagmire of guilt and doubt and prays for the day when their marriage will be rekindled. She, at last, rekindles the dead sensuality of her husband and seduces him to bed. Williams believes that “Seduction is too soft a word. Brick [is] literally forced back to bed by Maggie, when she [confiscates] his booze…” (Williams 1975: 169). It is the life force of Maggie with which she seduces the dead sexuality of her husband. She uses every possible weapon, including her body and her voice, to enliven that which is dead in her husband. She is as straightforward about Brick’s booze or his relation with Skipper as about the cancerous death of Big Daddy. “Maggie, like cancer, is the harsh reality the Pollitt family must learn to live with. In a family where reality itself is an illusion, she must win Brick back to her bed and secure Big Daddy’s rich lands despite her lack of offspring” (Cafagna 1997: 122). Maggie emerges victorious in the final moments of the play. She defeats the impending death of Big Daddy by bringing a new life with her pregnancy. Thus her ultimate triumph, in the words of Bernard Dukore, represents
Williams’ affirmation of life against death. (Dukore 1963: 98). Similarly, it is the life force with which Maggie’s healthy heterosexuality overpowers the sickly homosexual commitment of Brick to Skipper.

Animal instincts find prominent place in the plays of Williams because he measures human psyche by using the Freudian yardstick. The shadows of death and destruction are looming large on the Politts but it is the heated passion of Maggie which becomes their saving grace. The Big Daddy is dying of cancer and his son Brick embraces a living death in booze when he realizes that he has failed to live up to the sexual standards of the society. The dying Big Daddy wants to hand over his inheritance to his favorite son, Brick but Brick is childless. His marriage is on the verge of collapse and he is not even on speaking terms with his wife Maggie because she is a constant reminder of his youthful humiliation. Maggie’s lust for life is insatiable. By persuading Brick to become her accomplice she heals his broken spirits of Brick. She tries her best to help Brick come out of the self-inflicted quagmire of guilt and doubt. She succeeds in rekindling the dead sensuality of her husband. Maggie is direct and straightforward and therefore does not depend on the illusionary world of dreams. She is pragmatic and it is natural for such a person to use every possible weapon to achieve her aims. Maggie defeats Mae and Gooper and emerges victorious in the final moments of the play. She defeats the impending death of Big Daddy by bringing a new life with her pregnancy.

4.5 Regenerating Repressed Sexual Drives

Sexual drive in Williams’ plays agitates to be expressed or satisfied and its repression results in neurosis or promiscuity. Whenever Williams’ characters try to repress their sexuality, it proves dangerous and destructive because, “repressed sexuality is forced to find release in neurotic symptoms” (Olsen and Koppe 1988: 201). Laura, the marginalized spinster, in The Glass Menagerie, grows hypersensitive because of her sexual repression. She fails to attract any gentleman caller because of her personal and social deficiencies. Her shyness and sexual repression turn her into a Jungian
“introvert.” Instead of taking interest in human companionship, she resorts to cloistered life and nun-like existence. It is natural for such a person to suppress the biological aspects by associating with virginity. Her repressed animal drives find expression in her collection of the glass animals or her visiting “the bird-houses at the Zoo…the penguins” (Menagerie 244). Her mother, Amanda, persuades her to keep herself fresh and pretty: “I want you to stay fresh and pretty – for gentlemen callers…. Sometime they come when they are least expected!” (Menagerie 237). She tries to ignite Laura’s interest in men and stir her emotional desires by telling her about the romances of her youth. By talking about “a flood” and “a tornado” (Menagerie 239) of the gentlemen callers, she intensifies Laura’s sexual desires. She also teaches Laura how to trap gentlemen callers. She is conscious of the flat breasts of Laura. While decorating Laura for receiving Jim O’Connor, she brings two cotton wads, wraps them in handkerchiefs and stuffs them in Laura’s flat breasts. In this way she makes Laura a pretty trap for Jim. Amanda herself dresses and giggles in a girlish manner at the arrival of the gentle man caller. “She treats the Gentle Man as if he were calling on her; and, in a skillful production, her dealings with Jim should also have a faintly sensual undercurrent. (Robinson 1997: 36). She welcomes Jim with a bunch of jonquils, as if he were one of her seventeen gentlemen callers and the “legend of her youth is nearly revived,” when she tells him, “Tonight I’m rejuvenated… (spills lemonade) Oooo! I am baptizing myself!” (Menagerie 308)

Amanda herself is sexually frustrated after the desertion of her disloyal husband. Her sexual repression results in her neurotic reaction to life. Her obsession with gentlemen caller reflects the same suppressed sexuality. Amanda still lives in “the idyllic world of romance”11 because the courtship by numerous gentlemen callers still haunts her. When her own animal drives remain unattended, she feels sexually frustrated. “It is

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10 Jung on Elementary Psychology: A Discussion between C.G. Jung and Richard I. Evans, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, p 91. Jung divides people into two categories; those who are more influenced by their surroundings than by their own intentions and are interested in tangible objects, and others who are more influenced by the subjective factor, observe themselves within and see moving images generally known as fantasies. For Jung fantasy may not be tangible; but it is a fact nevertheless. Jung calls the former as extrovert and the later as introvert. Most of Williams’ protagonists fall in this category because of their subjective nature.

11 Northrop Frye (1978) in his The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. P. 53 calls ‘the idyllic world’ of romance: a world associated with happiness, security and peace: the emphasis is often thrown on childhood or on an innocent or pre-genital period of youth, and the images are those of spring and summer, flowers and sunshine.
Amanda who names Laura’s collection as glass menagerie, in which animal drives are frozen into aesthetic objects, and it is she who longs for gentlemen callers in an ungentle world” (Cohn 1987: 58). It is interesting that Amanda believes that instincts belong to animals and wants from her children superior things which could enrich their heart and spirit. She may yearn for superior things for her children but she herself opts for physical charm and marries a physically attractive commoner who worked for the telephone company. She tells her daughter about the plentiful charm of her father: “That innocent look of your father’s had everyone fooled! He smiled – the world was enchanted!” (Menagerie 270). She decorates her shabby living room with the sixteen years old portrait of her husband which is a massive reminder of the power of flesh. She wears the same girlish frock at the arrival of Jim which she had worn when she first met her husband and it portrays her repressed sexuality. Amanda denies the power of animal instincts but these instincts appear in various disguises making her life paranoiac.

The physically handicapped and emotionally frozen Laura is neglected by a fatherly touch which inhibits her normal growth. She experiences difficulties in her academic work, forming her relationship with others and in her very identity. Her growth in a dysfunctional family is characterized by shyness and solitariness. She seeks privacy by withdrawing herself in the fantasy world of menageries. She is ill equipped to deal with the demands of the larger world outside her menageries. She has difficulty in finding a marriage partner because she is confused about her sexual identity and functioning. She is unable to understand her animal nature and cope with the demands of flesh. She cannot face human relationship hence, instead of taking interest in human relationship, she confines herself in the company of inanimate animals of her menagerie. Laura’s favorite animal is the fabled, otherworldly unicorn which, according to Northrope Frye, is “the emblem of chastity and the lover of virgins” (Frye 1971: 152). Jim arrives like a romantic hero in the fragile and frozen world of Laura. Jim’s warmth and charm touches the finer chords of her soul. The appearance of Jim proves a breath of fresh air and sunlight for her because his youthful charm leaves an ennobling effect on Laura. He leaves a healthy and positive impact on the sexual and emotional development of Laura because “Jim’s warmth overcomes her paralyzing shyness” (Menagerie 291). He extends a little dandelion wine towards her with extravagant gallantry, vibrating the chords of her heart.
He downplays the physical deformity of Laura by emphasizing her special qualities. In this way he tries to activate the dull and drab life of Laura. Like an intelligent psychotherapist he is apt to note inferiority complex in her life. He tries to cure such a complex by highlighting her special qualities with a wonderful build-up talk. He motivates her drooping spirits by telling her that: “A little physical defect is what you have…think yourself as superior in some ways” (Menagerie 304)! He breaks the shackles of her fabled world and brings her to the real world of flesh and blood. During the encounter with Laura, Jim is also enchanted by her virgin gracefulness. He is unable control his emotions and “he suddenly turns her about and kisses her on the lips” (Menagerie 305). She passes through a vital human experience when Jim kisses her. She comes out of imaginary world of animals and takes interest in the real human relationships. Similarly, Laura’s impact on Jim is equally impressive as Judith Thompson states: “Just as Laura’s sexuality is awakened by Jim’s natural exuberance, so his finer sensibilities are aroused by Laura’s vulnerability and virginal beauty. Thus, for the brief moment of their kiss, the symbolic fusion of experience and innocence, flesh and spirit or reality and dream is achieved” (Thompson 2002: 22).

The tender moment of their kiss, gives Laura confidence, transforms her world, arouses her sexuality and urges her to forget her physical deficiency and dance with Jim. The dull and drab life of Laura is transformed into normalcy. She looks strange dancing the waltz clumsily, but she looks full of life. Jim dashes against the glass menagerie during this idyllic moment and breaks the horn of the unicorn. Laura looks puzzled and perplexed, yet she resolves the situation by saying: “It’s no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily... It doesn’t matter, maybe it’s a blessing in disguise – I’ll imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less freakish” (Menagerie 303)! Laura gives this less freakish unicorn to Jim as souvenir which shows that she has got rid of the world of inhibition, repressions and inferiority and accepted the world of reality.

Williams’ characters are torn between the demands of their body and soul but their search for tenderness and love does not end in smoke. Felicia Hardison Londre sees the conflict between spiritual and corporeal needs in human existence as the crux of a number of Williams’ plays (Londre 1979: 96). Laura lacks in sexual fulfillment and escapes in her illusory world of menageries but Jim’s kiss not only rejuvenates her but
also teaches her to accept life. *Summer and Smoke* focuses on the conflict between body and soul portrayed through the persons of John Buchanan and Alma Winemiller. Nancy M. Tischler remarks that the theme of *Summer and Smoke* is “Puritanism in battle with Lawrencian sex” (Tischler 1961: 152). John is a worldly man who stands for the uninhibited desire of the body while Alma is a religious girl who stands for the inhibition imposed by soul. Alma’s religiosity is teasing for John while John’s uninhibited sexuality is not acceptable for Alma. Freud considers religion as a source of oppression: “potently infantile, so foreign to reality” (Freud 1964: 261). The play, however, ends on a happy note when John succeeds in resolving his own dichotomy between body and soul by achieving healthy sexuality while Alma’s too long suppressed sexual desires are also awakened. She comes to realize, as Thomas P. Adler would say that “The spiritual can only be reached via, in union with, the physical” (Adler 1997: 116). She gathers courage to revolt against her puritanical existence, break the shackles of the social norms and taboos. She succeeds in liberating herself from her self-imposed chastity and finds shelter in the arms of a young sailor.

Alma Winemiller comes of a puritanical background which is the cause of her repressed sexuality. Such a repression leads her to neurotic disorder. She suffers from a frozen identity state because of oppressively strict moral values of her home. The overt and covert rules of the family close her off from the outside world. Her feelings are in conflict with her beliefs. She experiences great difficult in thinking and deciding for herself because parental authority overshadows her free choice and independent thinking. She stresses on the spiritual aspects which are equally essential for a human life but the physical urge overpowers her spiritual ideals and she fails to cage this urge in her spinsterish, puritanical exterior. In the stage direction of the play, Williams aptly comments that her true nature is still hidden even from herself. Her extraordinary prudishness and moralistic attitude in the beginning of the play is due to the suppressive conditions of her household. Excessive parental authority is the cause of her puritanical outlook towards life. Her father is a rigid, scholarly and self-righteous preacher and her mother is a selfish and spoiled woman. The impact of such parents upon the sensitive Alma is evident from the mirthless, nervous little laugh on her face. She goes deep in her search for spirituality which makes her oblivious of the importance of biological needs of
human nature so she rejects all the gestures of love from John Buchanan. Her spiritualism deprives her of the cozy comfort resulting from human relationships. She becomes neurotic because she lets her cultural norms block her instinctual needs and foregoes her individuality by imitating the morality of others. She ignores her sexuality and her parents show lack of concern about her private needs but the flesh asserts itself gradually but surely. A time comes when body betrays soul and provokes Alma to rebellion. She, at last, breaks the self-erected mansion of spirituality and seeks a healthy way of satisfying her repressed sexual desire. She offers her body to her lover John, whom she has been preaching spirituality in the past. When John refuses to accept her in this role due to the change of ideas about life, she seeks solace in the company of a young sailor. So, her sexual inhibition leads to rebellion against her puritan heritage. Walter Meserve points out: “Alma struggles more than Serafina to accept reality and acknowledges her determination to survive, whereas Maggie has no struggle with reality at all. Yet they are all dreamers and survivors in real world” (Meserve 1997: 256).

John Buchanan, a daring non conformist youth in a stagnant society, feels drawn towards Alma, whose first name stands for soul in Spanish, to satisfy his physical gratifications but Alma distances herself from him. Alma’s puritanical idealism becomes immaterial for John in his reckless sexual experimentation. He shows contempt for all those who blindly follow traditions and values. His father, a doctor by profession, wants him to take interest in the medical profession but John believes that a doctor’s life is stuck up in the quagmire of sickness, misery and death. Disturbed by his excessive wantonness, his father considers him a fallen man and warns him that drunkards and lechers like him have no place the medical profession. The accidental death of his father, however, proves a blessing in disguise for John. It leaves a profound effect on him and leads him to the way of spirituality which he had once urged Alma to abandon. He comes round to Alma’s way of thinking, despises his shameful transgressions and tries to rise from his fall. He quits his recklessness after marrying Nellie Ewell. The healthy sexuality of Ewell leaves an ennobling effect on him. He channelizes his libido in constructive work. The marriage brings him a healthy transformation and he involves himself in his father’s research work and helps the ailing humanity. It helps him harness his instincts from pleasure principles to higher goals. So he sublimes his sexual energy into more
productive realms and researches on the remedies of ailments because “sublimation is the only possible mechanism that provides valuable social end to undesirable desires” (Agarwal 2012: 160). Alma’s role in this transformation is equally important when she tells him: “To be a doctor is more religious than being a priest! There is so much suffering in the world it actually makes one sick to think about it and most of us are so helpless to relieve it” (Summer and Smoke 215). So he pledges to advance his father’s incomplete job at the fever clinic. Sugarwala states: “Ironically, it is Alma who succeeds in reforming the Promethean in the play. For, she inspires him to live life usefully and to relieve the sufferings of mankind. Like Prometheus, John turns into a selfless altruistic benefactor of mankind” (Sugarwala 2004: 71). After the death of his father and his marriage with Nellie Ewell, John understands the essence of life. His frivolity, egoistical attitude and immoderate aspiration for self appeasement are replaced with self-knowledge. He rises from the pit of debauchery and carnal desires and becomes a savior of mankind by rooting out the poisonous fever. He is reborn to a mature, dignified and sympathetic person worthy of the medical profession. Alma also comes out of the repressive conventional spirituality and accepts the importance of body.

4.6 Invigorating Sexuality in The Rose Tattoo

Death, disloyalty and adultery form the background of The Rose Tattoo but invigorating sexual impulse dominates the whole action of the play. Serafina, the protagonist of the play, is passionately in love with her husband and believes that “Each time is the first time with him” (Five Plays 138). Conception is the central image of the play as Serafina states:

I knew that I had conceived on the very night of conception!... That night I woke up with a burning pain on me, here, on my left breast! A pain like a needle, quick, quick, hot little stitches. I turned on the light, I uncovered my breast! On it I saw the rose tattoo of my husband! On me, on my breast, his tattoo! And when I saw it I knew that I had conceived… (Five Plays 137).

She compares the pain of rose appearing on her breast with the pain of quick stitches of a needle. Eric Neumann remarks that “tattooing and body painting’s purpose is to
transform and spiritualize the body” (Neumann 1974: 105). The rose here becomes the symbol of love, life and regeneration. The erotic love is suppressed in the first part of the play but it reemerges and regenerates in its final stages. Serafina is emotionally crippled and sexually repressed neurotic woman who confines herself in her home and ties herself to the ashes of a dead husband. She idolizes her husband who was, in fact, an adulterer. In the beginning of the play, the sacredness of soul and spirit is so central to her ideals that she does not permit her daughter, Rosa, to enjoy the company of her boyfriend. Serafina strives to suppress Rosa’s sexuality by locking her in the house so that she may not go out to school party where Rosa’s lover is expected to come. But the exuberance of her daughter is so powerful that Serafina has to surrender and lets her go with her boyfriend but the boyfriend has to take oath to safeguard her daughter’s body. Philip C Kolin is apt to comment that “Rosa’s passion and sexuality… sends back waves to begin the seismic shift that actually bring sexual love and desire back into Serafina’s life” (Kolin 1998: 92).

Serafina’s fertility and sprightliness turn into barrenness and bitterness after the death of her husband. She, in fact, denies her own sensual nature by disassociating from the regenerative process of life and associating herself with the urn containing the ashes of her dead husband. She represses her sexual desire by following the puritanical code of a chaste widow and does not allow any men-crazy talk in her house. She becomes ascetic with every passing moment of her life. She dislikes any dirty talking related to sexual affairs of men and women and becomes furious if any woman tries to talk of such thing in her presence. Such a repression leads her to irrational behavior. She over-idealizes her husband in her longing for a transcendent experience but it is the irony of situation that she idealizes a disloyal person. Similarly, her irrational attitude deprives her of “the forces of human continuity–sexual desire, love, human connection–and the result is a cataclysmic sexuality for her and her daughter” (Durham & Tedesco 1998: 96).

Serafina’s husband died three years ago but the glorious past spent in his company still haunts her. She keeps on talking about her once perfect love-making with her husband which signifies that she cannot wean herself away from him. She suppresses her sexual drives for sometime but her instinctual reaction towards sex is healthy. She considers sex as a life generating phenomenon; a vital function of her existence. She
idealizes her love making with her late husband because she knows that “he was the first best, the only best” (Five Plays 156). She believes that her husband was never touched by anybody except her. She has even exact account of those nights she spent with her husband and ritualizes her ecstatic love-making with him: “I count up the nights I held him all night in my arms, and I can tell you how many. Each night for twelve years. Four thousand-three hundred-and eighty nights. The number of nights I held him all nights in my arms. And I’m satisfied with it” (Five Plays 156). The big bed for Serafina was beautiful like a religion for her. Fatima T Sigarwala considers such sort of love making as the fusion of biological with the spiritual:

Williams has not only harped on a simple biological act, but has also delved into the emotional intensity of a woman. What binds Serafina to Rosario, is not just sex, but her heart, will and her entire being is dedicated to his love. She searches for an everlasting love. Thus it is not just biological fusion but a spiritual coalition (Sugarwala 2004:92).

Such ritualism, however, fails to solve her present predicament of loneliness. It rather enhances her alienation. The conflict between her body and soul asserts itself. She searches for a sign by burning the candlelight on the shrine of Madonna. This act reflects her conflict between sensuality, symbolized by the candlelight, and religiosity, symbolized by the shrine of Madonna. She attaches all her hopes with religion but religion fails to solve her problem. It is her sexual urge that asserts itself and seeks the desired sign in the person of Alvaro Mangiacavallo.

Serafina becomes violent at the disloyalty of her husband and gives vent to her resentment by throwing the urn of Rosario’s ashes across the room when Rosario’s mistress, Estelle, confirms that he had sexual relations with her. Rosario’s affair with Estelle proves a bomb shell for Serafina but it also liberates her from her obsession with the dead man. This revelation helps her return to normalcy after seeking Freudian release of inhibitive energy. She inhibits her sexual drive for such a long time. She remains unaware of her dreams and desires in her pursuit of deifying a disloyal husband. Her attachment with Madonna proves meaningless when adultery of her idolized husband is exposed. Serafina’s sexuality is reawakened by Alvaro, who possesses all the physical charms of her dead husband. She finds love, peace and contentment when Alvaro brings back roses in her life. She achieves sexual fulfillment and wholeness by severing her
relations with the dead and establishing attachment with the living. Alvaro is the true replica of her late husband as she tells her daughter: “He was a Sicilian; he had rose oil in his hair and the rose tattoo of your father. In the dark room I couldn’t see his clown face. I closed my eyes and dreamed that he was your father! I closed my eyes! I dreamed that he was your father…” (Five Plays 210). Alvaro is equally lonely who desperately needs the love of a fertile woman and finds it in the person of Serafina. After feeling the closeness of Serafina, he utters emphatically: “It’s been so long since I felt the soft touch of a woman” (Five Plays 195). Serafina is doubtful about the intentions of Alvaro in the beginning but a time comes when she accepts his love and finds solace in his arms. She accepts regeneration and rebirth by accepting Alvaro who speaks so rhapsodically “So soft is a lady! So, so, so, so, so soft – is a lady” (Five Plays 197). He wants to be very close to her and make her so happy. Serafina conceives soon after her love-making with Alvaro and this is once again symbolized by a rose tattoo on her breast. Serafina’s throwing away the urn containing the ashes of her dead husband and her conception by Alvaro proves that life overcomes death. Northrope Frye looks the rose in its spiritual aspect when he says that “the rose is the concrete universal of communion” (Frye 1971: 144). The process of concrete universal of communion completes as Serafina quits the ashes of her dead husband and accepts passionate love of living Alvaro.

Death is in conflict with life in The Rose Tattoo, but it is life which emerges at the end of the play. If the marble urn containing the ashes of the dead man symbolizes death and sterility, the black goat of Strega represents fertility and freedom. The goat keeps on attacking Serafina’s courtyard in the scorching summer heat. Rosa shouts “Mama, the black goat is lose!” (Five Plays 140). It bleats and keeps on appearing and reappearing in Serafina’s yard. The bleating goat represents Serafina’s animal instincts she unsuccessfully tries to bottle up. The constant intrusion of unleashed goat in Serafina’s courtyard shows that her sexual drives are too powerful to be leashed. The lustful and uninhibited goat also symbolizes Rosario, Alvaro and Rosa. Rosa wants to enjoy the life of flesh and blood and refuses to become freakish like her mother. She considers her mother’s abnormal spiritualism as sickening and protests against her in a very forceful manner when she talks to Miss Yorke:
Mama! – I’m so ashamed I could die. This is the way she goes around all the time. She hasn’t put on clothes since my father was killed. For three years she sits at the sewing machine and never puts a dress on or goes out of the house, and now she has locked my clothes up so I can’t go out. She wants me to be like her, a freak of neighborhood, the way she is! Next time, next time, I won’t cut my wrist but my throat! I don’t want to be locked up with a bottle of ashes (*Five Plays* 149).

Rosa is the true child of her father because she is as wild as he was. There is stubbornness in her eyes and blood which remind Serafina of her Rosario. Rosa’s boyfriend Jack, however, leaves a soothing impact on her wildness and stubbornness. He is such a well-mannered nice-looking gentleman worthy of a virgin girl. He promises to Serafina that he will respect the innocence of Rosa at any cost. Jack is virgin like Rosa and the virginity of both the lovers beautifies their affair as Rosa tells Jack: “For the first time in my life I was beautiful! You’d made me beautiful when you said that I was” (*Five Plays* 160)! She loves him with her heart and soul because it is Jack’s love that helps Rosa overcome the agitation of her soul. Jack is equally impressed by the sincere and passionate nature of Rosa when he says, “Give me that handkerchief. I want to show it to my shipmates. I’ll say, ‘this is the blood of a beautiful girl who cut her wrist with a knife because she loved me’” (*Five Plays* 160)! The warmth of Rosa’s love is so invigorating for him when he says, “In all of my life, I never felt nothing so sweet as the feel of your little warm body in my arms…” (*Five Plays* 206). Serafina tries to make her daughter freakish like herself by suppressing her physicality but Serafina has to surrender before the overpowering passion of the young daughter. She, at last, permits her daughter to see her boyfriend: “How beautiful – is my daughter! Go to the boy” (*Five Plays* 210)! Similarly, the goat is also captured and controlled by a boy just as Serafina’s sensuality is captured and controlled by Alvaro.

### 4.7 Deconstructing Relational Destability in *Lovely Sunday*

Dorothea Gallaway’ life in *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*, is replete with void and she seeks alternatives to counter such a void. All her past experiences in love affair enhance her loneliness. She loves Hathaway James but the latter suffers from premature ejaculation. She tries to make up for that frustration in her life through one-night
intimacies with Ralph but the latter turns out to be a cheat. Such a situation, however, fails to push her in utter despair and collapse of her romantic dreams. She knows that she is no longer youthful and wants lasting sexual relations with some reliable man. She desires to make her life meaningful by seeking the company of a trustworthy man. That is why she loses no time in accepting the proposal of Buddy, whom she rejected earlier.

Disloyalty is the main theme Dorothea is the victim of such disloyalty. She is a spinster like Laura, Alma and Blanche. Her idealism becomes the cause of her alienation. She has rejected two of her lovers in the past. She has her own romantic imagination when she utters: “Without romance in my life, I could no more live than I could without breath” (*Best American Plays* 115). Presently she aspires to marry Ralph Ellis, the principal of her school but Ralph turns out to be a flirt. He seduces her by promising to marry her and then deserts her for the sake of another woman. So her dream of enjoying an ideal married life is deferred. Earlier in her youth, she used to love a brilliant young artist, Hathaway James, but this remains an “unconsummated love” (*Best American Plays* 123). Her romantic relationship with him proves disastrous when she comes to know that Hathaway suffers from an incurable sexual disease. She feels deeply hurt when her lover fails to satisfy her sexually because of his premature ejaculation. She explains his affliction of premature ejaculation in these words:

> He’d grab me so tight it would take my breath away, and inevitably I’d feel plunging, plunging against me that – that – frantic part of him… then he’d release me at once and collapse on the porch swing, breathing hoarsely. With the corner gas lamp shining through the wisteria vines, it was impossible not to notice the wet stain spreading on his light flannel trousers (*Best American Plays* 123).

Dorothea wastes the best years of her youth in the company of James. She at last rejects James at the advice of the family doctor. She calls it an act of self-preservation for which she feels no guilt but this act further heightens her sexual frustration. She yields to Ralph and emphatically says: “[I] GAVE MYSELF TO [Ralph] NOT JUST FREELY BUT WITH ABANDON, WITH JOY” (*Best American Plays* 113)! Her hope for a lasting and reliable sexual relationship is once again lost in the mirage of her idealism.

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when Ralph lets her down. She is shocked and stunned when she passes through the pain of rejection and loneliness. Life seems to slip away from her little fingers and she finds no way out. Verna Foster’s comments can reflect her true state of mind: “More than a simple lack of companionship, the loneliness of Williams’ characters is a metaphysical as much as a social condition, an existential sense of isolation that borders on the absurd (Foster 2002: 158). It is true that her romantic dream of lasting sexuality with Ralph fails to materialize. She is stunned with the shock after reading the announcement that Ralph has been engaged with another girl. But the shock fails to break her from within. Like a courageous woman, she pulls herself together to face the reality of her life. Instead of running after a false man she opts for a sincere man and decides to marry Buddy who loves her from the core of his heart.

The choice seems unglamorous and her strategy of accepting the second best may look comic but it is stable and reliable at the same time. “Dorothea accepts her lover’s rejection with resolve. She has loved and lost, given herself too quickly, but she wastes little time on regret” (Howard & Greta 2005: 144). She knows that the solution to her spinsterish life lies in her marriage at any cost. So she follows Bodey to the Creve Coeur which is a romantic paradise: “nice and cool…through green country flowers…fireflies…the lake shore” (Best American Plays 173-74) where Buddy will ask her to marry him. Her sexual liaison with Ralph proves temporary but her relations with Buddy are bound to be lasting, because Buddy loves her so deeply. Her acceptance of Buddy as her husband under such a situation reflects her accommodation to actuality. It shows that she is able to rise from her fallen state and adjust herself to a life which may not be ideal but livable.

4.8 Deconstructing Impotency in *Orpheus Descending*

Potency is in conflict with impotency in *Orpheus Descending*. Lady Torrance, an ageing woman marries an impotent husband. She remains sexually starved and repressed throughout her life. She faces emotional upheaval in her girlhood and the strain is so deep that she still verges on hysteria. Presently she is tied to an impotent husband in a loveless marriage which, according to Ima Honaker Herron, is “a state of legal prostitution”
In her youth she was deeply in love with David Cutrere and got pregnant by him but David deserted her for the sake of a society girl. She feels highly dejected and disappointed at the betrayal of David and in a fit of desperation she undergoes an abortion. Her heart is so broken that she sells herself to old and impotent Jabe Torrance. She tells David, “I wanted death after that, but death don’t come when you want it, it comes when you don’t want it. I wanted death, then, but I took the next best thing. You sold yourself. I sold myself. You was bought. I was bought. You made both whores of us both” (Five Plays 334)! She becomes lifeless and barren after her abortion and compares herself with an accursed and barren fig tree.\(^{13}\) Her sexual life is further frozen and her emotional life is stifled when Jabe buys her so cheap, as if she were a leftover thing. Her exuberance for life is not over even after her traumatic experience with David. She expects a lasting companionship in the person of Jabe but Jabe turns out to be an impotent knave. She despises her invalid husband because she is forced to sleep “with a son of a bitch who bought her at a fire sale and not in fifteen years has she had a single good dream” (Five Plays 320). The invalidity of Jab results in her barrenness which is so tormenting for her especially when she avidly desires to have a child. Under these circumstances Val Xavier comes to her life and unlocks her sexual repression and gets her with child.

Lady is touched by the strangeness of Val and her repressed sexuality is aroused when he states: “My temperature’s always a couple degrees above normal, the same as dog’s, it’s normal for me the same as it is for a dog, that’s the truth…” (Five Plays, 315) and that “I can burn down a woman” (Five Plays, 318). The heated Val with dog’s temperature arouses any woman who comes in close proximity to him. The inherent sexuality of Val is so alluring for Lady that she at once buys his services and attempts to rejuvenate and revive her youthful days spent with David in the wine garden. She believes that the salvation of her psychic and metaphysical loneliness lies in the person of Val. Her happiness knows no bounds when Val impregnates her. She shouts with

\(^{13}\) Fatima T. Sugarwala compares the shape of the fig with the testicles and the womb in her *Myths and Symbols in the Plays of Tennessee Williams*. Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributers, 2004, p 141. She quotes one of the parables from the Bible and states that one morning Jesus woke up hungry. He went to a fig tree but found no fruit on it. He cursed it, “You will never bear fruit again!” (New Testament, Mathew 21:18). But Val, the counterpart of Christ does not curse Lady, who carries the stigma of a barren fig tree, but endows her with life.
happiness claiming that “I have life in my body, this dead tree, my body, has burst into flower!” (Five Plays, 371). So her repressed sexuality is stirred up with the redemptive power of love and her sterile body is infused with life.

Val Xavier’s sexual magnetism and his passionate nature is irresistible to the women who fall in love with him at first sight. “Val is a typical specimen of feminine man dear to Tennessee Williams” (Chiari 1965: 145). His circumstances bring him to a town, Two Rivers, where awful things like beating, lynching and tearing of the fugitive to pieces is order of the day. His physical attraction is so thrilling for the women but it arouses sexual jealousy among the men who want to kill him. He seeks some job and shelter in the confectionary store of Lady but here he is used as a stud. He is disgusted with it and decides to quit the place where people are bought and sold for utilitarian purposes but revokes the decision when Lady implores him earnestly: “NO, NO, DON’T GO…I NEED YOU!!! TO LIVE…TO GO ON LIVING!!!” (Five Plays 348)! He longs for an uncorrupted life therefore he feels disgusted for being used as a stud but soon he reconciles himself to the idea that he has given new life to a barren woman. Val harbors higher human values and lives with Lady on humanitarian grounds in spite of the fact that his own life is at risk. He sustains the hope of a hopeless woman at the cost of his life.

Val’a arrival in the town creates thrill and excitement among the women whose usual subjects of conversation are sex, death and disaster. His sexual appeal to the town’s lovelorn women is so fascinating that Carol Cutere offers herself to him wantonly. She asserts quite emphatically: “I’d love to hold something the way you hold your guitar, that’s how I’d love to hold something, with such – tender protection! I’d love to hold you that way, with that same – tender protection” (Five Plays 331)! He is also sympathetic and offers compassion to the demented and persecuted Vee Talbot and consoles her by applying ice pad to her burning eyes and restores her sight. Vee considers Val as “The vision I waited and prayed for all my life long” (Five Plays 355)! According to Bigsby: “Vee’s sexual repression leads her to confuse religious iconography with male sexuality to the extent that she transforms Val into Christ (Bigsby 1992: 62). Thomas P. Adler seconds this opinion when he comments that Vee’s lack of physical outlet and emotional fulfillment has resulted in a confusion of erotic fantasies and mystical experience. (Adler 1994: 135). All these women want to run away with him but it is only Lady who is
rejuvenated by him because he feels true love for her. He tells Lady, “I wanted to tell you something I never told no one before…. I feel a true love for you, Lady” (*Five Plays* 366)! Lady is also conscious of the fact when she reveals “I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I’m alive once more” (*Five Plays* 368)! It is true that both the lovers are killed by the bruits of the town but their sincere love never dies.

4.9 Atoning Degeneration with the Act of Penance

Sexual potency is destructive in *The Sweet Bird of Youth* but the protagonist tries to atone for such destruction with the act of penance. Chance Wayne is proud of the magic power of his phallus. He pompously talks about his sexual conquests: “I have been sleeping in the social register of New York! Millionaires’ widows and wives and debutante daughters of such famous names as Vanderbrook and Masters and Halloway and Connaught, names mentioned daily in columns, whose credit cards are their faces…” (*Sweet Bird* 45). Sex becomes a commodity for him and as a result of it, he degenerates from “the finest, nicest, sweetest boy in St. Cloud” (*Sweet Bird* 58) to a beach boy and gigolo trying to sustain his life by loveless reenactment with ageing, wealthy women. In fact, he gives these women more than he gets from them, “even odd things, they long for by rising to their level” (*Sweet Bird* 45). He gives the feeling of youth to the middle-aged women, understanding and appreciation to the lonely girls, absolutely convincing show of affection to the sad and lost women. Presently, he is hired by the Princess, a declining Hollywood movie star. The Princess is deeply depressed by her decline and tries to counterbalance her depression with the act of lovemaking. The most important quality of the Princess is that she makes her love making so meaningful. She tells Chance: “Now get a little sweet music on the radio and come here to me and make me almost believe that we’re a pair of young lovers without any shame” (*Sweet Bird* 42). She uses lovemaking as a drug to forget her fears, loneliness and her lost youth. Like other protagonists of Williams, she is also at the end of her tether and it is the act of lovemaking with which she tries to cope her agony. Both Chance and the Princess use their sex to realize their personal benefit. Chance knows that the Princess is in her
pathetic situation and cannot afford to remain companionless. So he uses her vulnerability to blackmail her and fleece her money. The Princess tries to forget her present dilemma in the act of love-making but the same act becomes an act of earning money and fame for Chance. Earlier, through his short romantic love making with his beloved, Heavenly, Chance spreads venereal disease in her which had to be operated upon. Heavenly states: “Scudder’s knife had cut the youth out of my body, made me an old childless woman. Dry, cold, empty, like an old woman. I feel as if I ought to rattle like a dead dried up vine when the Gulf Wind blows…” (Sweet Bird 65). By spreading venereal disease in Heavenly’s body, Chance, in fact, “has not killed her, as Othello did Desdemona, but reduced her to a kind of death-in-life” (Heilman 1987: 76).

Heavenly grows up in a dysfunctional family where relationship between her and her father are strained and unnatural. Boss Finley, her father, does not respect her personal freedom and she feels wronged by him. He discounts her feelings, independent thinking and decision making. He does not allow her to experience her impulses towards self actualization. She frequently feels resentful, inadequate, powerless, unworthy, inferior and inherently bad. Boss uses Heavenly as a sexual commodity when he arranges various matches for her, keeping in view the commercial aspects of the match. The wealthy but old Dr George Scudder is the latest man Boss chooses for Heavenly. Scudder tells Chance: “Heavenly and I are going to be married next month” (Sweet Bird 22). The doctor knows that Heavenly is sterile and unclean, because he himself has operated upon her venereal disease, but even then he is ready to marry her. He hopes to progress and prosper by attaching himself with a politically influential family. Heavenly is never ready to marry the old doctor and expresses her disgust on her father’s decision. When Boss uses his religious speech to convince Heavenly, her reaction becomes all the more resentful and she mocks at her father in the following manner:

Don’t give me your ‘Voice of God’ speech, Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him out of St. Cloud. And when he came back, you took me out of St. Cloud, and tried to force me to marry a fifty year-old money bag that you wanted something out of – and then another, another, all of them ones that you wanted something out of. I’d gone, so Chance went away. (Sweet Bird 63)?
She exposes her father’s piety and his sacred mission by talking about Miss Lucy, who has been his mistress long before his wife’s death. Earlier, Boss’s son talks about Miss Lucy whom Boss keeps in a fifty-dollar-a-day hotel suite at the Royal Palms: “She don’t even talk good of you. She says you are too old for a lover…. She wrote it with a lipstick on the ladies’ room mirror at Royal Palms…. I’ll quote it to you exactly, ‘Boss Finley,’ she wrote, ‘is too old to cut the mustard’” (Sweet Bird 60). Boss’s children keep on reminding him of his sexual aberration but he remains unaffected by such accusation. He poses himself as innocent as a man of God and forces Heavenly to quit Chance and marry Scudder.

Chance has been seeking success and salvation in material gains and sexual satiation but at the end of the play he acquires a new understanding of life. His guilt of pushing Heavenly to “a whore’s operation” (Sweet Bird 55) hangs heavy on his conscience and he decides to submit to the same pain. He seeks atonement through his redemptive act of castration as Tennessee Williams once defined “atonement as the surrender of self to violent treatment by others with the idea of thereby clearing one’s self of his guilt” (Williams, 1954: 85). Chance feels the prick of his guilty conscience and regrets on wasting his life on corrupt ways of living. That is why he refuses to accompany the Princess. He prefers to stay at St. Cloud and make amends for his wrong doings. He faces the castration as a gesture of sacrificial atonement for unconsciously wronging and defiling Heavenly. In this way “he emerges noble by surrendering to his castration…. He suffers from social, emotional and symbolic castration but his final act of courage exonerates his earlier cowardice and guilt” (Sugarwala 2004: 170-79). He has reached a level of psychological maturity through this act of penance. His life has been meaningless, as Scudder points out: “you have turned into a criminal degenerate” (Sweet Bird 22), but he tries to make his death meaningful. He seeks this meaning by showing courage in the face of castration. Peter Hays interprets this act as a gesture of sacrificial atonement for Heavenly’s defilement. Chance’s decision to stay elevates him to moral stature. His voluntary submission to castration equals the resurrection of his own moral integrity. He shows greater strength and determination than ever before. He ironically gains in manliness at the moment he faces the loss of his manhood.” (Hays 1966: 257-58).
Chance admits that he did the wrong to Heavenly quite unwittingly: “I know I have done many wrong things in my life, many more than I can name or number, but I swear I never hurt Heavenly in my life” (Sweet Bird 91). He understands his share in the miseries of Heavenly and the only way for him is to atone for them. That is why he faces his castration with stoic resignation and such a resignation reflects his desire for the salvation of his soul because “the salvation of the soul involves painful physical mortification” (Owen 1977: 613). The love of Heavenly is the home of his heart as he says: “Where I will take her is not a place anywhere except to her place in my heart” (Sweet Bird 82) and that is why he does not want to become homeless by leaving St. Cloud without her. So, he submits himself to suffering when he fails to achieve her. It shows his strength of character which elevates him morally. Chance tries to seek meaning by facing the unavoidable suffering bravely because suffering may not inspire envy but “man’s main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition, to be sure, that his suffering has a meaning…. Meaning is possible even in spite of suffering – provided, certainly that the suffering is unavoidable” (Frankl 2004: 117). Like Great Gatsby, Chance has been pursuing his happiness in material gains but this pursuit lands him in a meaningless life. By atoning for the sterility of Heavenly, he tries to add some meaning to his dying moments as he says: “Well, something’s still got to mean something” (Sweet Bird 86).

4.10 Sexuality as a Deconstructive Process in The Night of Iguana and The Kingdom of Earth

There is a clash of the physical and the spiritual in The Night of Iguana. The protagonist, a minister of God, is broken from within because of his sexual relations with under-age girls but, at last, he comes to terms with this clash by achieving fulfillment through a lasting sexual relationship. Shannon, the defrocked minister of God, comes to a mutual understanding with Maxine and both of them decide to accept each other even with their weaknesses. Shannon is torn between the contrary demands of flesh and spirit owing to certain childhood experiences. These experiences play a pivotal role in the formation of his psyche. The losses he suffered during his childhood magnify the later
disappointments and frustrations. He is broken from within and his neurotic attitude is because of the trauma of his childhood experiences as Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg state by quoting Freud that “a certain class of childhood trauma induces heightened vulnerability to the trauma of later disappointments” (Fisher & Greenberg 1996: 29). In his childhood Shannon was involved in sexual self indulgence. Once, his mother caught him masturbating in the bed. She was enraged at such immoderation and thrashed him for the same. She warned him that his amusing with himself “made God mad as much as it did Mama” (Iguana 90). J.C Flugel’s observation regarding the childhood experiences with our parents is worth quoting here: “In childhood we receive the love and approval of our parents in so far as we obey them and live up to the standards that they set us, punishment and disapproval when we fail to do so” (Flugel 1945: 52). Feeling ashamed of his mother’s reaction to his masturbation, Shannon “suppresses the child’s auto eroticism” (Freud 1909 rpt 1957: 26). The sexual suppression imposed on him, by his internalized Mama and God, which Freud names as “inhibition of the development of libido” (Freud 1912 rpt 1957: 66) results in his periodical crack ups. He becomes acrimonious towards both God and Mama and harbors a secret resentment against them because of such repression. The unnatural repression of his sexual desires results into his revolt against God and Mama. His “preaching of atheistical sermons” and “laying of young girls” (Iguana 290) is exhibition of such a revolt.

In the beginning of the play Shannon is ambivalent about his sexual and spiritual anxieties. He is desirous of searching for the higher ideals but at the same time he is attracted towards carnality. As a minister of God Shannon is expected to set the elevated examples of nobility but he fails to maintain his image and seduces the under-age girls. He desires to behave like a gentleman but his integrity is shattered when his suppressed animal drives become too powerful. Soon after indulging in sex with Charlotte, the youngest teacher in the touring party, Shannon compels her to seek forgiveness as Charlotte states: “I remember that after making love to me, you hit me, Larry, you struck me in the face, and you twisted my arm to make me kneel on the floor and pray with you for forgiveness” (Iguana 264). He does the same with a very young Sunday-school teacher as he states: “I struck her. Yes, I did, I struck her in the face and called her a
damn’d little tramp” (Iguana 268). In this way he tries to atone for the guilt he commits and prays for salvation which suggests that Shannon has not lost his goodness yet. The conflict between his guilt and goodness is so raging that it results in his crack ups. It is Hannah’s sympathetic counseling that liberates him from the internalized infantile sexual fixation. With her compassionate therapeutic insights she makes him confront his guilt complex. In this way he comes out of the sinful memory of his childhood and becomes a mature grown up man. Hannah holds up a mirror to him when he pretends to be unable to move in the hammock and identifies the true nature of Shannon’s masochistic crack ups by commenting: “There’s something almost voluptuous in the way that you twist and groan in that hammock – no nails, no blood, no death. Isn’t that a comparatively comfortable, almost voluptuous kind of crucifixion to suffer for the guilt of the world, Mr. Shannon” (Iguana 302)?

Shannon is the center of attraction for Maxine who feels lonely and needs a man who could step in her dead husband’s shoes. The very appearance of Shannon in the beginning of the play leaves a happy impression on Maxine. Her happiness vibrates on her whole body as soon as she looks Shannon striving up the hill to her Costa Verde hotel. She confesses to Shannon that her husband, Fred, never satisfied her sexually: “Fred was an old man, baby. Ten years older’n me. We hadn’t had sex together in…” (Iguana 230). She wants to put the mentally broken and financially penniless Shannon in Fred’s socks and his shoes and his old room next to hers. She yearns for Shannon’s company because she desperately needs human contact after the death of her husband. She tells him “You know I’ll help you, but why don’t you lay off the young ones and cultivate an interest in normal grown up women” (Iguana 237). She plays with Shannon’s sensuality by exposing her boobs but Shannon is not interested when he says, “I told you to button your shirt. Are you so proud of your boobs that you won’t button your shirt up” (Iguana 238)? She knows well that Black Tours will sack him soon because of his sexual relation with a seventeen year girl touring with him just as he has been sacked from the church because of his sexual transgression. She succeeds in making him realize his vulnerable situation and persuades him to quit the Black Tours party and stay with her in her hotel. Shannon’s decision to remain with Maxine proves he has become aware of his normal human self.
Maxine is authoritative and dominating and seems to be the “psychic projection of Shannon’s internalized Mama.” (Thompson 2002: 162). That is why Shannon calls Maxine “a sort of bright widow spider” (Iguana 280) who threatens to trap, ensnare and tie up his sexuality. He believes that “All women, whether they face it or not, want to see a man in a tied up situation. They work at it all their lives, to get a man in a tied up situation” (Iguana 302). Such a fear of woman as a castrator and murderer of the phallus reflects Shannon’s childhood sexual inhibition by his mother because “an underdeveloped and immature male, with unnatural childhood experiences looks upon a woman as restricting and hostile” (Neuman 1974:65). It is true that Maxine has tough exterior but she is a positive, kind-hearted and sympathetic woman. She helps Shannon during his nervous breakdowns and appeases the conflict of his flesh and spirit. She behaves with Hannah so cruelly by calling her “Mexican beggar” (Iguana 282) considering her a rival for Shannon but she offers Hannah lodging for unlimited period of time when she realizes that Hannah is not her rival. She tells Hannah:

I got the vibration between you – I’m very good at catching vibrations between people – and there sure was a vibration between you and Shannon the moment you got here. That, just that, believe me, nothing but that has made this…misunderstanding between us. So if you just don’t mess with Shannon, you and your Grandpa can stay here as long as you want to, honey (Iguana 283).

Maxine hopes a lasting relationship in the person of Shannon. She addresses Shannon: “I know the difference between loving someone and just sleeping with someone – even I know about that…. We’ve both reached a point where we’ve got to settle for something that works for us in our lives – even if it isn’t on the highest kind of level” (Iguana 290). Shannon is also tired of flimsy relations with the girls. His desire for a lasting human companionship is aroused when Hannah tells him: “We all wind up with something or someone, and if it’s someone instead of just something, we’re lucky, perhaps…unusually lucky” (Iguana 319). So Shannon decides to establish a relationship with Maxine and lives with her for the rest of his life. Shannon at last accepts the proposal of earthy Maxine. In this way he discovers himself by accepting the limitations of his inherently incomplete nature. He succeeds in liberating himself from his sexual anxieties and spiritual conflicts by accepting the lasting company of lusty Maxine. Such a reformation,
in the words of Northrop Frye, is called the ‘ascent theme’ of romance. The chief concept of which is “discovery of one’s real identity, growing freedom, and the breaking of enchantment in preparation for the ascent to an idyllic world of romance or the attainment of divine epiphany at the end of the spiritual quest” (Frye 1978: 129).

Shannon’s tortured soul is also attracted towards the refined nature of Hannah. Hannah believes in higher human values in human relations. Blackwell is right to say that: “Hannah Jelkes is a woman who has made the best of a relationship that is not as good as the true mating of a woman with a man (Blackwell 1997: 245). Like a Jungian psychotherapist, she inculcates the virtue of acceptance in the broken down Shannon. In this way Shannon achieves wholeness. On two occasions she gets an opportunity of love making: the first at the age of sixteen with “a young man who tries to push his knee against hers at the almost empty back of the theatre,” (Iguana 316) and the last in Singapore with an “agitated Australian salesman who ejaculates in a few seconds just by holding her clothes” (Iguana 316-17). Both times the experience ends in a fiasco but fails to make her neurotic. She calls these experiences as “love experiences” (Iguana 318) because “Nothing human disgusts [her] unless it’s unkind, violent” (Iguana 318). A Spiritual bond between the two wandering souls is visible when Hannah shows sympathy and releases Shannon from the hammock and persuades him to do the same with the entrapped iguana. Nacy Tischler remarks that Maxine and Hannah resemble the psychologized extensions of Shannon’s own nature: his flesh and spirit, bad and good angels, id and superego (Tischler 1977: 507). Hannah herself is emotionally paralyzed by the “the crippling power of repressed sexual desire…. She is the synthesis of Maxine’s uninhibited sexuality and Judith Fellowes’s puritanical prudishness” (Carpenter 1990 1145). She tries to idealize love and wants to nest in the heart of another being without realizing the demands of the real world. When Shannon reminds her that birds build nests in relatively permanent locations “for the purpose of mating and propagating the species” (Iguana 313), she responds that she is not a bird but a human being that needs to nest in the heart of another being. Physical love is her natural need but she suppresses it for high ideals. She seeks wholeness by accompanying her old, ailing, lonely and ageing grandfather on the road of life.
In *The Kingdom of Earth*, Williams portrays the conflict of life and death, which is represented by Chicken and Lot respectively. Chicken, a mulatto born out of wedlock to a “nigra,” symbolizes earthy sensuality of the kingdom of earth while his half brother Lot, born of a white woman, symbolizes elegance and delicacy. Lot, like Blanche, lives in the illusory world of bleached blond hair and pink parlors while Chicken, like Stanley, is brutish in attitude but best in sexuality. Chicken lives in the world of physical reality and believes that “life’s just plain and don’t care for the weak or the soft. I got to be hard. A man and his life both got to be made out of the same hard stuff or one or the other will break.” (*Theater of TW* 155). Chicken is a robust and vigorous heterosexual stud, and Lot is the impotent, ineffectual homosexual. Lot adores and transforms his body to look an attractive partner in male-male homosexual activities while Chicken looks “like a crouched animal” (*Theater of TW* 127) and such a blatant sexuality is the perfect contrast to “invalid” (*Theater of TW* 140) and effeminate Lot. Chicken throbs with life and exalts his masculinity with his supercilious masochistic inclinations which make him “Rousseauvean Noble Savage” (Chatterjee 2012: 105). It is natural for Myrtle to feel attracted towards the magnetic sexuality of Chicken. Her love-making with the healthy Chicken gives her a true vision of life, which contrasts with the death throes of the dying Lot.

The different dispositions of these half brothers symbolize two different classes. The sophisticated and sick Lot poses himself to be a man of culture. His ways of dressing and talking are replete with artificiality. His transvestite look reflects his stunted growth of masculinity. His acts are dictated by the norms of the upper class white society. He becomes the symbol of the cultural domination of the bourgeoisie over the rest of the society when he tries to beguile Chicken and snatch the farm from him. Lot tries to maintain his dominance with every fair or foul manner. The rough and rugged Chicken is a man of nature. Natural instinct is evident from the way he speaks or acts. His association with the farm makes him representative of the proletariat. Lot coerces him and then uses Myrtle as a bait to cheat him – a kind of “hard as well as soft material used by the bourgeoisie to dominate the proletariat” (Blommaert 2005: 166), but Chicken

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14 Williams, Tennessee. (1975). *The Theater of Tennessee Williams*. Vol. 5. New York: New Directions. P. 124. All the subsequent references of *The Kingdom of Earth* quoted in this study have been taken from this text.
defeats the maneuverings of Lot like a revolutionary proletariat. Chicken defeats the hegemonic appearance of Lot by airing his defying and dissident attitude.¹⁵ Moreover; culture represents artificiality while nature represents health. The contrast between these two half brothers, the one sick and the other sturdy, can aptly be understood in the light of Artaud’s remarks on culture and nature:

Nature is liberating, primitive and perhaps cruel, but inevitable and healthy. It is the repression of our ‘natural’ impulses, in the most basic, primitive, instinctual sense, through culture and the refusal to give the dark forces any respect or acknowledgment through even the ritual of theater that is at the root of a sick and destructive culture (Artaud 1958: 88).

There is a conflict between nature and culture in The Kingdom of Earth, and this conflict is resolved when Myrtle quits the cultured Lot to seek salvation in the lustful but vigorous company of Chicken.

The expediency of both Myrtle and Lot knots them in the marriage, for Lot wants to retrieve his property documents from Chicken using Myrtle as bait while Myrtle wants to put an end to a whore’s life of emotional wandering. She wants some shelter and security in her life by marrying the rich Lot. But her dream of marital bliss is dashed to ground when Lot turns out to be impotent. His apparent elegance is a façade to his inner sickness. Myrtle’s sexual frustration is natural and her turbulent emotional state is reflected in the turbulent water of flood. Her repressed passion is swayed by the pulsating and powerful sensuality of Chicken as soon as she comes close to him. “Chicken’s physical sexuality is beyond language, and this is what appeals to Myrtle” (Saddik 2002: 18). Myrtle’s aversion for Chicken in the beginning is the product of her “typical Southern lower-class dread and awe of negroes” (Theater of TW 204) but a time comes when she starts loving the mulatto because he “looks like a man who could hold back the flood of a river” (Theater of TW 208)! Her instinct for self-preservation also demands for such a man.

Both Myrtle and Chicken are repressed: Myrtle is sexually repressed because of her unconsummated marriage with Lot while Chicken is racially repressed because the union of his white father and black mother marginalize him and force him into the

¹⁵ Jan Blommaert uses Perry Anderson’s Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci (1977) for understanding the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and Gramsci’s ideas on hegemony.
position of a social outcast. It is because of his dark skin due to which Chicken looks savage and Myrtle hates him in the beginning because of his color. Chicken is socially inferior to Lot but it is his robust and wild nature that becomes a saving grace for him. He faces nature (flood) and man (Lot) in a vigorous way and overcomes the both. Myrtle also vibrates with sexuality as she describes herself as “a warm-natured woman’ whose doctor prescribed her some pills to keep down the heart of [her] nature, but alas, they had no effect” (Theater of TW 201). She descends to the sexual vitality of Chicken because for Chicken “There’s nothing in the world, in the 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” (Theater of TW 128). Here sexuality becomes restoring and regenerative because a more diverse and healthy society empowered by a colored race is expected to emerge after the sexual victory of Chicken.

It is true that sexual perversity is present in some plays of Williams but such perversity is overwhelmed by the desire for true love. Brick’s homosexual tendencies are defeated by Maggie’s heterosexual potency. Maggie is tied to sexually unwilling and incapacitated man but she believes in regenerating sexuality and succeeds in alluring her husband to the bed. Blanche uses every weapon to destroy the conjugal bliss of the Kawalskis but it is healthy sexuality of Stanley that rescues the destruction of his family. The newly born baby symbolizes the health of his conjugal relations. Shannon is torn between the conflict of body and soul but Hannah and Maxine help him come out of the pit and accept realities of his earthy living. Sex in Williams’ world is a mode of expression for love. When Serafina realizes that she has been worshipping the ashes of a disloyal husband, she breaks the urn containing the ashes and finds togetherness in the hearty embrace of her lover because “sex” in the words of Viktore Frankel “is justified, even sanctified, as soon as, but only as long as, it is a vehicle of love” (Frankl 2004: 116). The sexual anxiety in Williams’ plays and the desire to come out of it throws light on the universal human phenomenon. Man tries to break out the sexual restrictions imposed upon him by his society. But this thing leads to a conflict when the society asserts its will. The Rose Tattoo is an effort to break the shackles of the sex taboos of the age of Williams. Serafina, who is so puritanical, breaks all puritanical attachments and runs after the fulfillment of the physical passion. Dorothea’s healthy appetite for sexuality urges her
to accept the proposal of Bodey and succeeds in alleviating her loneliness. Similarly, Alma may eulogize her spirituality but ultimately her suppressed sexuality finds salvation in the company of her young lover. Myrtle marries Lot because she is fed up with her prostitution but Lot turns out to be impotent. Myrtle, however, succeeds in seeking sexual shelter in the person of Chicken. So the above discussion proves that regeneration in Williams’ plays overwhelms degeneration and the dream of togetherness ultimately comes true.
CHAPTER 5

SAVIORS AND THE DECONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS

Another dominating pessimistic discourse in Williams’ plays lies in death, destruction, castration, lynching, loneliness, insanity and chaos etc. Gutman in Camino Real kills with impunity. The black are lynched and castrated in Sweet Bird of Youth. Mrs. Goforth in The Milk Train Does Not Sop Here Anymore dies in the despair of loneliness. Catherine in Suddenly Last Summer faces insanity. The destructive forces prevalent in Williams’ plays portray the pitiable and sorry state of human affairs. Search for some salvation in such a world is the key to human existence. It is true that life destroying forces in this world are powerful but the presence of life saving forces is effective and represents the element of hope in the hopeless world of Williams. The protagonists are so dejected and uprooted that they always want somebody who could offer them a helping hand. They keep on waiting for someone who could save them from their predicament. Some messiah or savior is always longed for in this world. In spite of bleak situation presented in his plays, there are moments when the dream of redemption is achieved with the compassion and kindness of some savior. When the burden of life becomes unbearable and the mysteries of life become so enigmatic, the lonely figures of Williams yearn for the arrival of some messiah who could resolve the riddles of life. Most of the time these saviors come to their rescue but some of these saviors, however, do not turn up on certain occasions and the dream of redemption remains unrealized. The arrival of some others is ecstatic expectation of better things to come but their departure leaves black clouds of frustration and desperation.

Williams’ world, in fact, is devoid of redemptive God and man tries to become his own god in such a world. Heckler, in The Night of Iguana, becomes Williams’ mouthpiece when he says: “I believe the silence of God, the absolute speechlessness of

16 C. W. E. Bigsby (1984) in his thoroughly researched and well documented book, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama. Vol. 2. Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 106, states that there is a search for an alternative to God in the plays of Williams. If God is silent then other voices must sound in other rooms. The cruelties of life must be redeemed by other means than by reference to absolute values. And the artist thus assumes a primary function.
him is a long, long and awful thing that the whole world is lost because of” (	extit{Sweet Bird} 95). If God is present in this world, then “He is a senile delinquent” (Iguana 268) compelling people like Shannon to refuse “to conduct services in praise and worship of this …angry, petulant old man” (Iguana 268). This is what makes the gold cross round his neck a heavy burden for him. He gets rid of it by tearing it off in his effort to become his own savior. While freeing the entrapped iguana at the end of the play, he once again asserts his conviction that “God won’t do it and we are going to play God here” (Iguana 324). He is sure of the mercilessness of God who “blame[s] the world and brutally punish[es] all he created for his own fault in construction” (Iguana 268). Gene D. Phillips states that Shannon “expresses the author’s sentiments…in rejecting the Puritanical concept of God as a ferocious judge devoid of compassion” (Phillips 1980: 286). Shannon’s disbelief in God represents modern man’s desire to become his own savior under the circumstances when belief in God is badly shaken. Williams does not believe, as Friedrich Nietzsche asserts, that “God is dead” (Nietzsche 1954: 447). However, Williams seems ambivalent about the presence of God when he says, “I don’t know where He is, or what He’s doing” (Devlin 1986:150). He rejects the conventional belief about God when he says: “I don’t think of God as somebody listening to individual appeals” (Rasky 2000: 28). In one of his interviews he calls God as if He were “Godot” (Devlin 1986:140). In his Memoirs, he admits: “I had never known God – true or false” (Memoirs 1975: 33). Such a situation is sufficient to push a man in a state of meaninglessness and nothingness and his plays reflect this phenomenon. The beauty of Williams’ world, however, lies in the fact some messiah appears on the scene or man tries to become his own savior in the most adverse situation.

5.1 Jim and Amanda as Redeemers

The whole plot of 	extit{The Glass Menagerie} revolves around the waiting for a messiah in the form of a gentleman caller, Jim O’Conner. In one of his monologues Tom presents Jim as “a symbol of the long delayed but always expected something that we live for” (Menagerie 235). Fatima T Sugarwala compares him with Christ.
Jim symbolizes Christ, the savior, and his Annunciation signifies the coming of Christ. The arrival of Christ was heralded by the celestial body, the North Star, Jim’s arrival is closely associated with the silver slipper of the moon on which Amanda wishes for a messiah in the form of a gentleman caller (Sugarwala 2004: 46).

Comparing Jim with St. James, Roger B. Stein calls him as a Christ-like savior figure or, at the very least, as Moses about to lead the Wingfield family to the promised land of harmony and happiness (Stein 1964: 141-153). It is interesting that Jim is idolized as a Savior, St. James or a Christ-like figure and the Wingfields regard his arrival in their home as the advent of a messiah, while the fact of the matter is that he is an ordinary young man like Tom and both of them work in a shoe factory. The way the Wingfields wait for him shows that he would rescue them from their entrapment. His arrival appears as if he were a legendary figure, but at the end of the play it turns out that “Jim inspires an illusion of false hope” (Krasner 2006: 33). He dreams of commanding the world as was expected of him but ends up as an ordinary worker. Tom describes Jim:

In high school Jim was a hero. He had tremendous Irish good nature and vitality with the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware. He seemed to move in a continual spotlight. He was a star in basket-ball, captain of the debating club, president of the senior class and the glee club and he sang the male lead in the annual light operas. He was always running or bounding, never just walking. He seemed always at the point of defeating the law of gravity. He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty. But Jim apparently ran into more interference after his graduation from Soldan. His speed had definitely slowed. Six years after he left high school he was holding a job that wasn’t much better than mine (Menagerie 272).

Ruby Cohn associates Jim’s retrogression with the dehumanizing effects of the industrial life (Cohn, 1971: 100). Jim comes to the Wingfields and departs for ever but the dreams of deliverance remain unrealized. His arrival, his kiss and his dance with her “give Laura only a momentary glimpse of normal existence before she drifts back into the fantasy world of glass animals” (Ganz 1987: 101). He not only breaks Laura’s dreamland world of unicorns but also breaks her already broken family unit. Her brother, Tom Wingfield, quits the family for good after he quarrels with his mother on the issue of Jim. Moreover, Jim is already engaged to a girl and this revelation proves a bomb shell for the dream of
deliverance for Laura. Darkness prevails soon after his departure forcing Laura to grope into her shattered dreams. Jim fails to come up to the Wingfields expectations urging critics like Thomas P. Adler to call him “a false savior” (Adler 1998: 40), but such a criticism is lopsided and ignores many positive aspects of Jim’s personality.

Presently Jim is wallowing in the quagmire of the Great Depression. He is tied to a menial job at the warehouse and tries to escape from it by mastering the art of public speaking. He aspires to have an executive job and dreams of commanding the world someday but his present position reflects his underachievement. Keeping the “performance-view of language” (Blommaert 2005: 70) in mind, he wants to make up his deficiency with the art of public speaking. He looks the things through the prism of economy because he is as frustrated as the Wingfields. His frustration results due to “psychoeconomic disorder or the inner psychological disturbances that lead to economic symptoms” (Fine 1981: 253). The rational values of commerce become more valuable for such a person than the idealism of love. Economic motives are of fundamental importance – a ladder to power for Jim. He wants to be the master of his future by using this ladder. He is so enthusiastic about the ideals of material success. He measures happiness with the yardstick of worldly success but fails to come up to his dreams because he is pitted against the cut-throat world of material success resulting from confusion and disturbance of “the decade of a dissolving economy of the thirties” (Menagerie 234). He is as self-deluded as the Wingfields. Like every insecure person money and power are the two motives of his life. As a result of it, his innate innocence is smothered. He neglects essential human and spiritual needs for the sake of financial rewards. Instead of beautifying his life with love, he wants to become a money-making machine. He becomes a poor savior for the Wingfields, as he is guided by self-interest and wants to make his life meaningful and rewarding with the power of money rather than the power of love.

The objections of critics like Thomas P. Adler that Jim is a false and deceptive figure do not sound true. It is notable that Jim has neither tried to visit the Wingfield apartment of his own accord nor has he offered any promise of redemption to Laura. He is, in fact, confused why he has been invited to the dinner. Like the Wingfields, he is also the victim of oppressive and repressive forces of life omnipresent during the days of
Great Depression. He underachieves in his life but he is never crushed by the Depression and believes in the future. He defies the adverse circumstances with courage and determination. That is why he is taking a course in public speaking which equips him for the competitive world and promises him prosperity. He expects that public speaking will open up new vistas of life for him. He remains upbeat even after facing many failures in life as Krasner comments: “Jim exudes optimism despite hard times. He epitomizes the American spirit of defiance in the face of adversity” (Krasner 2006: 32).

Laura is a poor match for Jim because Laura and Jim belong to two different worlds. Jim is extroverted, dynamic and optimistic while Laura is introverted, lethargic and pessimistic. Jim lives in a real world of technological progress while Laura lives in the illusory world of inanimate menageries. There is deep incompatibility not only in the approaches of Jim and Laura but also in their names and what they denote. Jim sounds spiritual names like James, Christ or Moses but he harbors deep desire of material success and tries to adopt every strategy at his disposal to realize his desire, while “Laura, whose name is derived from the laurel shrub or tree the wreath of which was awarded to honor the concrete achievements of the people in ancient times, lives in the dreams of spiritual or artistic fulfillment” (Cardullo 2008: 98). This incompatibility of disposition is also a hindrance in their union. According to Judith Thompson:

Jim’s disability to light the candles in the life of Laura, signifies the fall of the American Adam, the failure of Christ to be Laura’s savior, the failure of Prince Charming to give a kiss of life, the failure of Superman to help a woman in distress and finally the failure of Dionysus the fertility God to complete the initiation rite (Thompson 2002: 22).

Jim fails to light candles in Laura’s life because he has never committed to such a task. On the contrary, he is committed to marry Betty, yet he tries his utmost to beautify Laura’s life by pinpointing her special strength as a human being. He tries to dispel her fear of her physical disability persuading her to take interest in life. He succeeds in his efforts because Laura forgets for the time being that she is a lame girl. He tries his best to teach Laura how to overcome her shyness and inferiority complex gradually but surely:

And everybody has problems, not just you, but practically everybody has got some problems. You think of yourself as having the only problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are. For instance I hoped
when I was going to high school that I would be further along at this time, six years later, than I am now – you remember that wonderful write-up I had in The Torch…. It said I was bound to succeed in anything I went into! (Menagerie 295)

Jim tries to revive Laura’s self-belief by using his linguistic repertoire. He succeeds in teaching her how to overcome her inferiority complex by pointing out the positive aspects of her personality. She shuns her shyness and takes interest in life when Jim gives her some hope and urges her to dance with him. She dances with her crippled leg to the tune of the music of the nearby Paradise Dance Hall. His kiss is so electrifying that it shows her way outside the world of her menageries. For a moment she forgets her limping steps and dances with Jim during this brief idyllic and delightful moment; “a moment that breaks the walls of isolation” (Williams 1978: 37). Jim revitalizes her hidden energies in such a way that she starts to participate in the enthusiastic activities of life. Jim can diagnose the anxieties of Laura and relieves her with the balmy touch of human compassion. His address to Laura shows that he is the good judge of people trapped in despair:

You don’t have the proper faith in yourself. I’m basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I’ve made. For instance that clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class. You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I now was practically non-existent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination! You know what my strong advice to you is? Think of yourself as superior in some way! … just look about you a little. What do you see? A world full of common people! All of ‘em born and all of ‘em going to die! Which of them has one-tenth of your good points! Or mine! Or anyone else’s, as far as that goes – gosh! Everybody excels in some one thing. Some in many (Menagerie 299)!

In this way Jim definitely shows her a way to light her own candles and dispel darkness. He appears like as a breath of fresh air and sunlight in the frozen life of Laura. His youthful exuberance and charm leave an ennobling effect on her. He generates life giving self-confidence in her and she starts looking beyond herself. He regenerates youthful passion for life in her cold and inanimate world of the menagerie. Jim has never been Laura’s lover and remains friendly and faithful to her without posing to be her lover. In
fact, Laura loved him secretly in her school days. Similarly, he finds Laura in a sexually and socially vulnerable position but never tries to exploit it. By showing her the bright side of her personality, he, in fact, revives her confidence like a psycho-therapist.

Jim believes in sincere human relationships. He had a love affair with Emily Meisenbach during his school days stardom but Emily was a showy and selfish girl. Her gaudy dresses reflected her shallowness. So the love affair failed to develop into well rooted relationship. Presently, he is engaged with Betty and remains true to her like a sincere fellow. He even informs Laura about Betty and the way he is getting along with her. Instead of involving himself in another love affair, he tries to sustain himself with the loving company of Betty. He admits to Laura that “Being in love has made a new man of me!...The power of love is really pretty tremendous! Love is something that – changes the whole world, Laura” (Menagerie 307)! It proves him to be a true person believing in the sanctity of human relationship. He also remains sincere with Laura by telling truth about his engagement. Like a therapist, he knows that such news may not be palatable for her. So he tries to enliven her drooping spirits by highlighting her hidden qualities. Jim pinpoints the hidden qualities of Laura and compares her with blue roses because she is pretty in the most unusual way. He tries to create hope in the hopeless world of Laura by highlighting the brighter aspects of her personality.

Jim is a loving and caring person. He comes in the lives of the Wingfields where profound and noble values are missing. He does everything to bring a smile on Laura’s grave and somber face. Sugarwala calls Jim as “the combination of the father and brother in Laura’s life who deserted her. He has the winning and charming smile of the father and an adventurous spirit of the brother” (Sugarwala 2004: 49). He remains high-spirited in a materialistic “modern world where the destruction of the human spirit seems a natural corollary” (Bigsby 1984: 43). In such societies, the bond of love and homeliness is broken rather than solidified. The personal relationships become fragile and love fails to become a liberating force or effective bond between human relations. By remaining faithful to his fiancé, Jim shows sympathy and kindness to Laura which her father and brother fail to show: they in fact, leave her at the mercy of her circumstances. They desert her at a time when she needs them the most. The vulnerable and marginalized position of Laura and her mother is badly exposed when their male members desert them. So a
lasting bond from a stranger, like Jim, cannot be expected in a life when father/brother
fails to cement such bonds.

It is the tenderness and finer sensibilities of Jim that transform Laura’s inanimate
world of menageries into her humanness. His kiss not only revives her back to life but
also makes her realize that she is made up of flesh and blood. By touching the sensitive
chord of her heart he brings her to normalcy, where both her mother and brother have
failed. Like a Good Samaritan, he breaks her shackles of inferiority complex and makes
her a new woman. Instead of living in the lonely world of menageries, she shifts her
attention from the non-living to the living. Dancing with Jim, Laura breaks the horn of
unicorn which shows that she is broken with her repressed personality. By giving the
unicorn to Jim, she, in fact, tries to get rid of such suppression. Fatima T. Sugarwala
believes that:

The breaking of the unicorn and Laura’s reaction is the turning point of
her life. It begins the demythicizing process, signifying hope and Laura’s
return to normalcy…. The shattering of the unicorn signifies the breaking
off that chord of inhibition, repressions and inferiority that Laura has
nurtured. But the giving away of the unicorn as a souvenir to Jim before
he leaves is a manifestation of hope and return to mundane reality, thereby
completing the demythicizing ritual (Sugarwala 2004: 47-48).

Laura is pitted against a world which promises survival only for the fittest. She is
a lovely and dreamy but fragile girl. She is sensitive and thus ill equipped for the world of
callous materialism. Only a committed man can guarantee the survival of such a girl.
“She seems physically unfit for an earthly life. She is too good for this world, The
Romantics might say, and for this reason she could be said to be sadly beautiful and
bluely roseate” (Cardullo 2008: 86). Her expectations from Jim to become her savior are
misplaced because Jim is committed to someone else. Moreover, it is the warmth of his
company that touches the broken spirits of Laura. His presence evokes the inner
sensibilities of Laura. Jim’s presence leaves a positive effect on her soul and she comes
out of the shell of her romantic illusion by positively responding to human contact.

Jim is, in fact, wronged by the Wingfields because he is invited to the dinner with
a lot of planning. He is a gentleman caller without knowing about it. When he meets
Laura without knowing these plans, his unintentional gallantry is misperceived by Laura.
He cannot be blamed for not proving himself a suitable match for Laura as he has been
kept in the darkness. He is unaware of the real intentions of the Winfields and does not know why he has been invited to dinner, and that he is already engaged to a girl of his choice. It is unfortunate that Laura fails to come out of the prison of self and cope with the realities of life, in spite of the fact that Jim tries his best in the single meeting to make her a happy girl. By blowing the candles, at the end of the play, Laura condemns herself to live everlasting darkness because she is unable to face human relationship.

The implication is that no gentleman caller will never enter her life again; none will ever be gentle enough among an American people so crassly materialistic to perceive her inner beauty, to appreciate her love for beauty, to understand her unnatural, if not supernatural, place in a world ruled by science and technology—instead of her heart and soul—science and technology that, in the contrary opinion of Amanda, only add to the mystery of the universe rather than clearing it up (Cardullo 2008: 97).

It is not Jim who proves an illusory savior for Laura but her father and brother. Jim says “I wish that you were my sister. I’d teach you to have some confidence in yourself…. Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy” (Menagerie 295). While leaving Laura, he once again reminds her: “And don’t you forget the good advice I gave you” (Menagerie 310). Laura, in fact, remains without a fatherly touch for years which makes her introvert. The little confidence she gains with the balmy company of Jim could have been sustained if her brother did not depart at such a critical juncture of her life. According to Fritcher, “the large portrait of the father symbolizes that God who is much needed, but absent and incommunicable. It is however the nature of this Prime causality that greatly disturbs Williams’ world” (Fritcher 1970: 204). Mr. Wingfield’s absence is a severe blow to the family. It turns them into insecure human beings. Amanda has all the reasons to invest her faith in her son who must take his father’s place. She tells him, “I’ve had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you’re my right-hand bowler! Don’t fall down, don’t fail!…. Try and you will succeed!…. You’re just full of natural endowments” (Menagerie). But instead of taking his father’s place Tom also follows the footsteps of his father and leaves his sister when he should have saved her.

Laura is completely broken down when all her hopes of a gentle man caller dash to the ground. Her expectation from Jim proves misplaced. Her brother, like her father, leaves her in the lurch. Under these circumstances, it is Amanda who becomes Laura’s
saving grace and saves her from complete annihilation. Amanda is defeated and destroyed like Laura but at no moment she yields to her defeat. She has the courage to pull herself together. She holds her daughter in her sheltering embrace with the same courage. She hugs Laura and relieves her of the anxiety of the situation with the tenderness of maternal comfort. In this way she creates some sensible reason for Laura to continue living in a less tender and comforting world. It is “tenderness in her slight person…endurance and a kind of heroism” (Menagerie 228) that makes Amanda an admirable character. She shows love and compassion for the ruined child of hers and brings some smile on her face. Both the mother and the daughter still hope for some meanings in life by embracing each other at the time of utter despondency. Amanda’s embracing Laura at the end of the play reminds us of Williams’ comment: “I think that the greatest happiness is felt in moments of great tenderness between two people” (Williams 1978: 28).

Amanda and Laura can hope to be saved by developing a close contact with each other because: “As long as you can communicate with someone who is inclined to sympathy, you retain a chance to be rescued.” (Williams 1975: 204). Amanda knows that “We have to do all that we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is – each other….” (Menagerie 258). She also knows that she has to make sacrifices to save her daughter. She faces the difficulties of life with “Spartan endurance” (Menagerie 259) and exhibits “dignity and tragic beauty” (Menagerie 312) when her plans fail to yield any fruit. She knows “when people have slight disadvantage…, they cultivate other things to make up for it – develop charm – and vivacity” (Menagerie 247). In spite of all her weaknesses Amanda knows how to face the calamities with heroism and courage. It is her affirmative attitude towards life that leaves bright spots on the bleak atmosphere portrayed in the play. Her determination to affirm life in the midst of heavy odds makes her a heroic figure. She is interested in the overall well-being of her daughter. She wants to see Laura well placed in life so she is deeply shocked to know about Laura’s playing truancy from the college. When Laura is left alone at the end of the play, Amanda gets ready to console her daughter in a motherly manner. It is Amanda’s positive outlook towards life and caring attitude towards her daughter that saves her from total collapse. Amanda is badly marginalized in an apathetic
and indifferent world. The negative effects of such a marginalization appear in the form of her neurosis but it is her commitment with the family and courage in the face of adverse circumstances which levitate her to the heroic stature. In spite of pessimistic atmosphere looming large on the play, it becomes life-affirming and life-sustaining because of its redeemers like Amanda.

5.2 Blanche in Search of Kindness

The widowed, raped and banished Blanche, in A Streetcar Named Desire, has to run for protection, “from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof – because it was storm – all storm, and [she] was caught in the centre” (Streetcar 169). She yearns for some savior in her life but no one offers her a lasting protection. When she comes to her sister, expecting some safe haven, she is frightened and her fear is obvious from the way walks into the Kowalski quarters. She wants the company of some compassionate person. She wants a sympathetic and caring hand that could pick her out of the anxieties of life. She wants to be rescued by strangers when her dear ones fail to save her. She is let down by all those who could have saved her. She is completely lost at the end of the play. Her condition reminds us of the remarks of The Doctor in The Rose Tattoo when he says: “People find God in each other. And when they lose each other, they lose God and they’re lost” (Five Plays, 144).

Blanche’s marriage with Allan Gray turns out to be disastrous. She was deeply impressed by the tenderness of Gray and loved and worshipped him as if he were an idol. She elevated him to godlike dimensions. Stella portrays Blanche’s relationship with Allan in these words: “He was extremely good-looking. I think Blanche didn’t just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human! But then she found out – this beautiful and talented young man was a degenerate” (Streetcar 190). Blanche believes that her husband needed her help but she failed to become his savior. This thing haunts her throughout her life as she utters: “I’d failed him in some mysterious way and wasn’t able to give the help he needed but couldn’t speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me – but I wasn’t holding him out, I was slipping in with him” (Streetcar 183). Instead of helping him, Blanche
exposes his degeneration thus leading this godlike figure to commit suicide. The extreme step taken by Gray leaves Blanche at the mercy of strangers. When Blanche visits the Kowalskis’ quarters she desperately seeks a strong and secure anchor in the person of Mitch. She knows that she is an unwelcome guest at the Kowalskis home as she reveals to Mitch: “I have to put with my sister’s husband. And he has to put up with me, apparently so much against his wishes…. Surely, he must have told you how much he hates me” (*Streetcar* 181)! Mitch belongs to the apish, poker-playing world of Stanley but he seems sensitive and refined which reminds Blanche of the behavior of her young husband, Allan Grey. She is quick to find some analogy with Gray when she observes Mitch’s sensitive nature. Thompson states: “From the beginning of their relationship, Blanche attempts to elevate Mitch to the romanticized status of the idealized Allan Grey (Thompson 2002: 35).

Blanche considers that her salvation lies in her marriage with Mitch. It promises her safety and protection. She tries to captivate Mitch with her extremely fastidious dressing like: “summer furs,” rhinestone tiara,” “costume jewelry,” “golden Bracelets,” “pearls,” “solid gold dress” (*Streetcar* 134), and “adorable little colored paper lantern” (*Streetcar* 150) to deceive him enough to make him want her. She tells Stella: “When people are soft – soft people have got to court the favors of hard ones, Stella. Have got to be seductive – put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and glow – make a little – temporary magic just in order to pay for – one night’s shelter” (*Streetcar* 169)! Blanche considers Mitch as her savior and wants to reinvent and rejuvenate her life with Mitch. She is tired of her guilt-ridden past and wants to get rid of it. She knows that both Mitch and she are middle-aged fellows but she behaves coyly when Mitch tries to take liberty with her. She reproves of his fumbling embrace gently by reminding him to behave like a gentleman. She has been promiscuous but she does not let him step out of bounds by saying:

Honey it wasn’t the kiss I objected to. I liked the kiss very much. It was the other little – formality – that I – felt obliged to – discourage…. I didn’t resent it! Not a bit in the world! In fact, I was flattered that you desired me! But, honey, you know as well as I do that a single girl, a girl alone in the world, has got to keep a firm hold on her emotions or she’ll be lost (*Streetcar* 176)!
She tries to hide her black past in her white dress and presents herself as a pure girl. She is well versed in the ways of love-making but tries to look innocent to Mitch. She evokes Mitch’s desire for her but artfully restrains him to a “good night kiss” (Streetcar 171) because she wants to win a respectable place in the heart of Mitch. So she maintains a desirable distance from him and never lets him take undue liberty with her. She plays with the pent up sexuality of Mitch in such a way that he becomes her easy prey. Mitch becomes so attached with her that he expresses his love for her. During the whole affair she maintains her airs of respectability as well as poses to be an innocent virgin. She does not want to lose Mitch at any cost so she leaves no stone unturned to create an image of a lily-white Southern belle in the heart and mind of Mitch.

Blanche believes that it is Mitch who can redeem her. She considers him a last straw for her drowning soul. She divulges to Stella: “I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes – I want Mitch…very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone’s problem” (Streetcar 171). She finds solace in the loving thoughts of Mitch and believes that she could possibly find happiness and rest in his company. She has found an Allen substitute in Mitch because the haunting polka music in her mind, painful memories of Allen’s death, stops whenever Mitch comes to see her. The clouds of despondency darken her life and it is Mitch who can lighten it with the shower of love on her. She invests great emotional value in Mitch, especially after he expresses his love for her. The fleeting moment of love with Mitch is the fulfillment of her dream of a savior as she says: “Sometime – there’s God – so quickly!” (Streetcar 184) but this dream becomes a nightmare when love changes into lust. Leonard Quirino observes: “The name ‘Mitch’ or ‘Mitchell,’ incidentally, is derived from ‘Michael’ and means ‘someone like God,’ but the godlike figure in this play is shown to be less powerful than – indeed in thrall to – the primal savage force represented by Stanley” (Quirino 1988: 73).

Blanche unveils all her sexual secrets before Mitch expecting some sympathy from him. It looks as if she had handed out her whole existence hoping him to be her savior:

Yes I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan – intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with… I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection – here and there, in the most – unlikely
places…. I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water spout, and – I met you. You said you needed somebody. Well, I needed somebody too. I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle – a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in! The poor man’s Paradise – a little peace…. But I guess I was asking, hoping – too much (Streetcar 205)!

Her condition can be compared with a patient with an open abdomen on the operating table, totally depending upon the attention of the surgeon. But the revelation of her intimacies with the strangers destroys her chances of marriage to Mitch. Instead of offering any sympathy, emotional relief or social security, Mitch wants to satisfy his sexual desire after hearing her tale of intimacies. Mitch, in fact, assaults her, compelling her to call fire. So the savior turns out to be an assailter. After knowing about Blanche’s intimacies with the strangers Mitch becomes “aggressive male guided by the principle that women are only either angels or whores” (McDonough 1997: 26). He mistreats her like a bruit and quite roughly demands physical intimacy. Instead of looking Blanche’s past sympathetically, Mitch tries to assault her but he lacks the power of Stanley and has to retreat at the end.

Blanche saves herself from the rape efforts of Mitch but she fails to counter such efforts of Stanley. After the rape by her brother-in-law, Blanche’s search for existence becomes frantic and it becomes natural for her to seek solace in the arms of anyone who shows some sympathy to her. She considers the Kowalskis’ quarters as a trap. She is keen to quit the place as soon as possible. A few moments earlier her rape, she waits for her imaginary lover, Texas millionaire Shep Huntleigh. She believes that it is Shep who can save her from her dangerous situation but he never appears on the scene till the last moment. When her plans of a better world fail, she attempts to escape into a different world by calling her old beau, “Western Union? Yes! I – want to – Take down this message! ‘In desperate, desperate circumstances! Help me! Caught in a trap. Caught in – Oh!’” (Streetcar 214) But her frantic appeal brings no response and the rape becomes inevitable. Blanche imagines Shep Huntleigh as “the Christ figure of the Good Shepherd…. [but] Shep Huntleigh represents the Judo-Christian God who remains incommunicado in the modern world of disbelief” (Thompson 2002: 46-47). Shep, however, is transformed into Blanche’s desire of a ship doctor: “I’m going to die on the
sea…I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out on the ocean. I will die – with my hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship’s doctor, a very young one with a small blond moustache…” (Streetcar 220). After the rape Stanley declares her deranged to disprove her accusation of the rape and arranges for her departure to the state asylum. Under such situation The Doctor of asylum becomes her savior and holds her hand so gently as soon as she extends it towards her. He becomes the symbol of human kindness when he quits his professional garb and addresses her so respectfully.

He takes off his hat and now becomes personalized. The un-human quality goes. His voice is gentle and reassuring as he crosses to Blanche and crouches in front of her. As he speaks her name, her terror subsides a little. The lurid reflections fade from the walls, the inhuman cries and noises die out and her own hoarse crying is calmed (Streetcar 225).

Her perturbed and deranged mind feels soothed when he addresses her as “Miss DuBois” (Streetcar 225). He asks the Matron, who has pinioned her, to release her. When he offers his hand to draw her up so gently and supports her with his arms and leads her through the portieres, she is prompt to say: “Whoever you are – I have always depended on the kindness of strangers” (Streetcar 225). She considers him a messiah or a lover accompanying her to a far-off romantic land. That is why “she allows him to lead her as if she were blind” (Streetcar 225). Blanche’s extended hand towards the Doctor reflects “a hopeless hope but still a hope” (Trilling 2005: 17). The Doctor becomes a human bulwark against the pain and confusion of her life. She, unlike her husband, does not yield to commit suicide in the face of unpalatable pressure of life but sticks to life. Her courageous affirmation of life in the face of individual defeat proves that she is still alive and prefers life over death.

Blanche is defeated and destroyed but her extended hand to the Doctor for some kindness shows that her belief in human kindness still prevails. She holds the hand of the Doctor of asylum believing that she might be reprieved at the very last minute. It looks that she has found a reliable companion or a sensitive savior. The relief she feels by holding that hand is powerful enough to help her forget the multiple disappointments she has been facing in life. All the doors of her rescue are closed for her but her yearning for the kindness of the Doctor proves that she still believes in some savior. Marc Robinson is apt to comment that “[Blanche] believes, because not to believe is too frightening; to live
her life without something overhead is too depressing. To have lost your god is worse than to believe in one that may not exist” (Robinson 1997: 41). The Doctor becomes a true savior of Blanche when compared with Dr. Cukrowicz of Suddenly Last Summer. As Dr Sugar succeeds in saving Catherine from the impending madness, one can expect the same from the Doctor in Streetcar. The conduct of the Doctor is so affectionate and sympathetic, he addresses her as if she were an honorable lady and gallantly offers his arm. All these attributes make him a protector and redeemer of Blanche. Holding the Doctor’s hand, Blanche believes that her longed for savior at last has emerged on the scene. The pathos of her present distress is greatly assuaged with her realization that she has been rescued.

5.3 Search for Safe Future in Lovely Sunday

Dorothea Gallaway in A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur is an emotionally fragile lonely middle-aged spinster. She is utterly dissatisfied with her present situation and wants to be rescued by Ralph Ellis. She is deeply attached with Ralph Ellis, the principal of the school where she teaches, and considers him a true savior. She waits for the call of Ralph which reminds us of Blanche’s waiting for the call of Shep Huntleigh. Like the Wingfields, she also expects the arrival of Ralph, her gentleman caller but Ralph proves himself as a poor savior and shatters all her dreams of a happy life. She keeps on waiting for “a phone call from Ralph Ellis” (Best American Plays, 109) the whole day long, advising her roommate again and again: “Don’t forget… call” (Best American Plays, 120). But Ralph, like Shep Huntleigh, never turns up and her dream of deliverance remains unfulfilled. Instead of her rescuer he, however, proves to be a deceitful seducer and shatters all her dreams of an idealized life.

The discovery that Ralph is a false lover destroys her dreams of being rescued but she never succumbs to the merciless circumstances. She is stunned for some moments at the collapse of her romantic dreams. But soon she overcomes her situation and embraces the reality rather than being destroyed by it and follows Buddy to Creve Coeur, “a romantic paradise: ‘nice and cool…through green country flowers…fireflies…the lake shore,’ where Buddy will ask Dotty to marry him” (Best American Plays 174). She tries
to make her life meaningful by accepting a viable compromise because such type of compromise is essential for achieving fulfillment and wholeness.\textsuperscript{17} It helps Dorothea acknowledge her past foolishness, leads her to accept Buddy as her savior and promises her a safe and secure future. In this way she succeeds in combating with her loneliness. Foster states:

In \textit{Menagerie}, Jim symbolizes ‘the long delayed but always expected something that we live for’ but is unavailable for Laura; Blanche’s millionaire, Shep Huntley, becomes the Doctor who takes her to an asylum. Buddy, however, seems more promising, if only because he does not appear in the play; and Dotty is not Laura, though she might be considered a workaday version of Blanche, without her brilliance and psychological complexity but with a much greater instinct for survival (Foster 2002: 163).

Like Stella of \textit{Streetcar} and Maggie of \textit{Cat}, Dorothea believes that life has got to go on even if the dream of life is collapsed. Instead of living in the illusory world of Laura and Blanche, Dorothea accepts her present situation and tries to adjust herself to the demands of such a world as she utters: “we must just go on, that’s all that life seems to offer – and demand” (\textit{Best American Plays} 81). Disloyalty of Ralph opens the door of loyalty for her. It helps her think about the real love of Buddy. Buddy has been deep in love with her but she has been rejecting him all the time. Her acceptance of Buddy’s loyalty becomes possible after the disloyalty of Ralph. She knows that Buddy is an ordinary, overweight fellow but he bears eminently reliable character. Life with such a reliable person ensures her security. Earlier she fails to acknowledge the sincerity of Buddy. She rejects Buddy’s proposal as if it were an entrapment. But Ralph’s disloyalty changes all her romanticism. She is dispirited for some time but soon overcomes her situation and seeks spiritual uplift with the balmy touch of Buddy. She succeeds in getting some savior because she is adaptable to the new situation and continues to go on.

\textsuperscript{17} The later plays of Tennessee Williams are devoid of tragic sense of mythic loss and talk about comic compromise. This acceptance of existential givens has been criticized by many critics. In his excellent study on the use of myths in Tennessee Williams’ plays: “Williams and European Drama: Infernalists and Forgers of Modern Myths,” in \textit{Tennessee Williams: A Tribute}, ed. Jack Tharpe, (Mississippi: Jackson University Press, 1977) Beate Hein Bennett comprehensively comments on the existential philosophy of acceptance and compromise projected in post-World War II existential literature. He concludes that the negative heroism of plain survival became an art not only in literature of the era but also a way of life but he believes that human dignity rests in resilience the individual could muster.
5.4 Alvaro as a Rescuer in *The Rose Tattoo*

Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo* tries to search some sign in the illusory world of religion. She isolates herself from the world of reality but all her effort to escape from the reality of her life end in smoke. She idolizes her dead husband and attaches her redemption with the ashes of her husband. After the death of her husband, she becomes as inert and motionless as the wrist watch gift of her daughter whose main spring has been removed. She tries to live with “the memory of her dead husband, a memory kept alive by an urn containing his ashes” (Bigsby 2005: 279) for about three years. She idealizes her love by deifying her husband. She exalts her husband to the level of Christ and her bedding with him to a religious ritual. “Serafina imbues her experience with miraculous import – elevating her husband to a Christ figure, herself to a devoted saint, and their sexual union to the level of religious ecstasy (Thompson 2002: 52). That is why she does not indulge in the stale company of common men or remarry after the death of her husband. Starnes states:

Serafina chose to continue in blind devotion to her dead husband and became a prisoner of her own self-deception. Instead of association with living beings, she chose the motionless dummies of the dressmaker; instead of love bestowed on the living, she chose adoration before the ashes of memory and nostalgia for the past (Starnes 1997: 104).

But she receives the shock of her life when her husband, whom she regards as the god of love, is exposed as an adulterer. The idealistic image of Rosario is suddenly broken and she comes to realize that she has tried to repress her normal desires of life for the sake of a false man. It dawns upon her that she has been tied with a false savior. She decides to liberate herself from self-imposed shackles of the false idol. She grows neurotic when love and religion fail to bring any salvation for her. She breaks all the social restrictions and religious taboos by breaking the urn containing the ashes of her dead husband. In this way she is capable of releasing herself from the memory of her husband and frees herself from emotional and moral bondage. After this act of rebellion, her spirit becomes as uninhibited as the black goat in her yard. Like Dorothea of *A Lovely Sunday*, Serafina also embraces the diminished reality of her existence. At this critical juncture of her life, Alvaro turns out to be a true savior as her meeting with him forces her to face the realities
of life. Serafina comes out of the world of illusion as soon as she locks herself in the
solacing arms of Alvaro. Her embrace with Alvaro is not just biological fusion but a
spiritual coalition because she offers her body and soul to Alvaro, who redeems her with
love and affection.

At the end of the play, Serafina no longer dedicates herself to a marriage that was
a fraud and succeeds in seeking her salvation in Alvaro. Alvaro is the resurrection of her
husband because he resembles Rosario’s body but Alvaro’s sincerity is beyond doubt. A
bond of sympathy is cemented when Serafina starts sobbing when she sees Alvaro
sobbing after a fight: “[All at once her face puckers up, and for the first time in the play
Serafina begins to weep, at first soundlessly, then audibly. Soon she is sobbing as loudly
as Alvaro. She speaks between sobs] – I always cry – when somebody else is crying…”
(Five Plays 178). She is mesmerized by the very person of Alvaro: “She inspects his
passing figure with an air of stupefaction” (Five Plays 180). Alvaro also likes a woman
who laughs and cries and does everything with her heart: “Their fumbling conversation
has a curious intimacy and sweetness, like the meeting of two lonely children for the first
time. It is oddly luxurious to them both, luxurious as the first cool wind of evening after a
scorching day” (Five Plays 183). This bond slowly solidifies when Serafina tells him
about a tattoo on her naked breast and offers him the rose silk shirt uttering: “Oh, this
shirt is too good for Mangiacavallo! Everything here is too good for Mangiacavallo”
(Five Plays 187)! She achieves fulfillment by severing idolatry and accepting true love of
Alvaro. Serafina repairs his torn jacket while Alvaro repairs her torn spirit. In this way
she not only resolves her inner conflict but also finds out her true savior. She achieves
wholeness by such type of acceptance. Some critics consider Serafina’s life with Alvaro
less than ideal because Alvaro is a clown. Roger Boxill comments: “Previously, she has
been tying herself with the ashes of an unfaithful man and presently; she has to live her
rest of life with a fool” (Boxill 1988: 115). Alvaro looks like a clown but he makes up
this deficiency with his simplicity, innocence, sincerity of his love and warmth of his
humanness. He not only shares his miseries with Serafina but also gives her a loving hand
to come out of her own miseries. These qualities make Alvaro the true embodiment of a
savior. Sirafina seeks sincerity out of insincerity. In the beginning she suspects the
sincere advances of Alvaro but she is deeply hurt at the insincerity of her husband. The
power of Alvaro’s sincerity overcomes the insincerity of her husband. It compels her to quit lifeless world of dummies and ashes of urn and accept the real world of flesh and blood.

5.5 Kilroy as a Symbol of Christ Figure in Camino Real

Tennessee Williams presents a pessimistic image of the world in his Camino Real, but the same world is “redeemed through the courage of Kilroy who, like Christ, becomes an eternal force” (Presley 1997: 279). There is a rule of death and destruction, represented by the Streetcleaners, and cruelty and exploitation, represented by Mr. Gutman. Gutman is not only the actor and announcer but also controls and stimulates action of the play. All the inhabitants are “being overheard by the Guards on the terrace” (Camino 42). It is a land epitomizing Foucauldian “panopticon in which all the prisoner could be observed by their guards from one central point” (Foucault 1975: 190). It is devoid of love and compassion and the dry fountain in the middle represents sterility and lifelessness. Here the people die as a pariah dog in a starving country. Here tyranny and subjugation is accepted with a stoic resignation and even the utterance of the word “brother” lands the people to misery of humiliation and death. Gutman asserts that “the most dangerous word in any human tongue is the word for brother. It’s inflammatory –” (Camino 21). Here a poor thirsty traveler is shot dead at the orders of Gutman for attempting to drink water at the fountain of Siete Mares. The inhabitants of the luxury hotel, Siete Mares and the “mendicants, prostitutes, thieves and petty vendors” (Camino 22) of the flophouse, Ritz Men Only, find themselves entrapped in a bleak situation of their life. The situation is so uncertain that they are unsure of everything, even of their existence. “They are confused and from extreme fatigue…all of them have a degree or two of fever” (Camino 15). Their lives have a meaningless and hollow existence. Keeping their situation in mind Bigsby calls them clown-like performers, like Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot, absurd products of their own hopes (Bigsby 2005: 280).

Kilroy, who has “always been looking for something…hopeful” (Camino 43-44) tries to defy Gutman because he wants to lead his life according to his ideals. He is a free
man whose spirit cannot be caged. He asserts with full force: “I’m free. I’m a free man with equal rights in this world” (*Camino* 51). He reminiscences his past glory: “I can remember the battles I fought to win them! I can remember that I used to be – CHAMP” (*Camino* 36). His freedom of spirit and defiance leads him to humiliation and death.\(^\text{18}\)

The Streetcleaner wipe out every trace of life and dignity from the inhabitants and the escape from their clutches is possible only through love or a “nonscheduled flight of the Fugitivo” (*Camino* 70). Love fails to bring their salvation because it is superficial, sensual, and full of deception. Marguerite’s lover, Casanova, for example, corners her documents and prevents her from leaving and fleeces off her riches, and does not give her the warmth of love. Love’s failure brings them to further vulnerability and the only defense against this vulnerability is “to distrust each other” (*Camino*, 96). Here physical love is compared with “a violet growing in a crevice in the mountain fertilized by the dropping of carrion birds” (*Camino*, 97). In these trying conditions, The Fugitivo appears to be their savior as Marguerite says that “it is the way to escape from this abominable place” (*Camino*, 84)! The Fugitivo, however, proves an illusive savior, as its very name suggests. Those who escape through The Fugitivo feel greatly excited for having saved themselves from a miserable situation but they meet a miserable death because The Fugitivo crashes “in Elizabeth, New Jersey” (*Camino*, 109).

Human sympathy, under these circumstances becomes a saving force. La Medrecita, the blind woman, becomes the embodiment of this selfless sympathy, compassion and tenderness. Her ability to sympathize is so powerful that makes the cruelties of Gutman ineffective. She defies Gutman’s orders and cradles Kilroy’s dead body and mourns him like his mother, resulting in the resurrection of Kilroy’s ghost. Sugarwala states:

> Like Demeter, the Earth goddess, she laments the loss of Kilroy’s past glory, evoking his heroism and establishing a kinship with him, ‘this was thy son America and now mine.’ La Madrecita symbolizes the selfless love of a mother, which the protagonist fervently needs. She is Kilroy’s

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\(^\text{18}\) Fatima T. Sugarwala (2004) in *Myths and Symbols in the Plays of Tennessee Williams*, Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributers. p 113 states that Kilroy’s murder by the streetcleaners is inevitable because of his defiance. He has been at the top of their list. In the beginning, Kilroy is made to work as a poor patsy at the behest of Gutman. But this insult fails to break his spirit. Kilroy possesses a genuine sense of sympathy rather than a reasoned compassion. This attribute of his transcends him from a patsy to a new heroism sustained by love.
Kilroy faces inhuman and hostile circumstances because his freedom of thought and action is not acceptable for Gutman. Kilroy’s name is on the Streetcleaner’s list because he has a spark of anarchy in his spirit and such a spirit is not acceptable in this world. He is turned into clown by Gutman and later on Gutman’s Streetcleaners kill him but La Madrecita revives him from his death by “keening for his ghost” (Camino 150). She offers him motherly love which he fervently needs and supports him morally in his search for freedom. In this way she becomes his savior but the real savior of the whole situation is Kilroy. Howard & Greta also consider Kilroy as a savior (Howard & Greta 2005: 44) because he revives courage in the dead lives of the inhabitants of Camino Real. By restoring life in Kilroy, La Madrecita brings about a revival of life in nature and in mankind. With this rebirth, Kilroy also succeeds in finding a companion in the person of Don Quixote. The rebirth of Kilroy proves that death is defeated, and this defeat is represented with the blossoming of the violets from the rocks. “The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks!’ Water then rushes into the once-dry fountain” (Camino 158).

Kilroy does not let any moment of meanings slip from his hands in this land of death and deception. He infuses hope among the disappointed and dejected inhabitants of Camino Real. Frustration of the inhabitants is natural because they are rootless and socially ostracized people. Their present is bleak and their future is uncertain. They resign stoically because they have lost the challenges of life. They are apprehensive and frightened of such a situation and some of them either stagnate or die for they have lost the hope of survival. Kilroy becomes their savior because he tries to redeem them from such a miserable state of affairs. He prefers death to a life of disgrace and degradation. He is symbolized by Phoenix who is resurrected after his death. His heart is as big as the baby’s head which symbolizes his innocent and noble nature. The heart is made of solid gold which shows that it is indestructible like gold. He retains his genuine sense of human compassion through out the play and tries his best to hold fast the higher and noble values of life. Such a positive attitude towards life transcends him from the humiliating state of a clown to a new heroism upheld by love. It is Kilroy’s compassion,
tenderness and honor with which the fountain of humanity once again starts flowing. The play ends on an optimistic note when Kilroy, in his pursuit of truth, quits the confining and stifling atmosphere of the Camino. He cannot live in subjugation as he holds up the ideals of freedom, courage and brotherhood. He has the courage to raise voice against tyranny and corruption. At the end of the play, the resurrected Kilroy affirms life by reclaiming his heart from the autopsy table. The dry fountain begins to flow and the impenetrable desert seems to have surrendered where life sprouts in the form of violets. The decadent world of Camino Real is redeemed by the possibilities of romanticism’s triumph over reality. Accompanied with Quixote, Kilroy confronts death and inhumanity and emerges victorious. Both of them leave the Camino Real and their journey towards another land reflects their zeal for living. Their spirits are broken but they are hopeful and overcome the nightmarish experiences of life. According to Harry Slochower the magical flight of the hero, is the escape from the kingdom of death, pursued by a terrifying figure, personifying Death itself. This experience leaves the hero with a profound sense of spirituality. Kilroy, enriched with new experiences of life, can now find a way out of the Terra Incognita and achieves his goal. (Slochower 1970: 103-105). James Fisher opines that Camino’s plea for romanticism, for compassion, for acceptance of life’s fellow sufferers, and for redemption from our failings and for salvation in a cruel and unfriendly world are messages for contemporary audiences… (Fisher 1998: 105). Jordan Miller remarks that Camino Real conveys Williams’ ultimately optimistic resolution of the human condition, no matter how sordidly self-destructive it may seem. For underneath, though always in the true classic sense, in all of his important plays Tennessee Williams is a writer of tragedy, and the ultimate tragic catastrophe must, by its very nature, end on the positive note of human dignity (Miller 1997: 210).

5.6 Chris Helps Goforth in Conquering Despair

The dying Flora Goforth, in The Milk Train Does Not Stop Here Anymore, tries to find some messiah in the person of Christopher Flanders whose appearance is rough and weathered but he “has the look of a powerful, battered but still undefeated fighter” (Milk Train 147). His name is indicative of a Christ figure but he bears a doubtful character as
Williams comments “one can never know if Christopher is really a good man who comforts dying women, if he is sincerely devoted to them, and if he really wants to help them endure their agony” (Devlin 1986: 211). Heilman’s views also reflect the same doubt on Chris: “The opulent world formally rejects him, crying fraud, but still clings to him, as if he were a man of indispensable vision-poet, artist, or prophet, false or true” (Heilman 1987: 82). It is a coincidence that Chris, a worn out poet, gets there when Mrs. Goforth is dictating some recollections of Alex, her sixth and last husband whom she married for love. Alex was a young poet with a spirit that was as beautiful as his body. Goforth compares him with a god when she recalls the beautiful part of her life with Alex:

Alex unclothed himself unconsciously gracefully, as if before no one in a room made of windows, and then unclothed — correction: clothed in a god’s perfection, his naked body! – He went from window to window, all the way round the bedroom, drawing the curtains together so that daybreak beginning wouldn’t wake us early from the sleep after love, which is a heavenly sleep that shouldn’t be broken early. Then came to rest in a god’s perfection beside me… (Milk Train 143).

Chris is wearing lederhosen like Alex was wearing the first time Goforth set eyes on Alex. Her desire for some male companionship is aroused when Chris appears on the scene because she has been “very lonely up here this summer” (Milk Train 200). She addresses Chris: “You’re attractive to me. You know that you are. You’ve deliberately set to be attractive to me and you are” (Milk Train 200). Alex is dead but she gives his robes to Chris expecting him to be the man who could appease her present predicament. Her pills and morphine injections fail to decrease her depression so she needs somebody who could save her from such a situation but the savior turns out to be a professional free loader. He knows that Mrs. Goforth hasn’t been well lately and his mission apparently is to prepare her for death. This mission originates from his own selfishness. “The savior or helper figure becomes most interesting in The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore, in which Williams employs much more indirection and ambiguity. The savior cannot save, in an ordinary sense, for here the patient is dying, and the only issue is the style of dying” (Heilman 1987: 80). Chris is a broken and penniless poet, so the messiah appears to be the victim of his own despair. He is a selfish and egocentric character who exploits the condition of the rich, dying ladies, becomes their house guest and “speeds along his own
psychological satisfaction” (Presley 1977: 578). Instead of becoming a Christ figure and rescuing the dying woman Chris, in fact, becomes the guardian of the deathwatch and guides the dying toward recognition of death’s unavoidability. He visits Mrs. Goforth just as he visited other dying aristocratic ladies. He tries to present himself as a Christ figure by asserting to the rich dying ladies that “You need somebody or something to mean God to you” (Milk Train 219). Mrs. Goforth also mocks at his moral blackmail by calling him a “young hood” (Milk Train 207).

In spite of all his deficiencies, Christopher, in fact, succeeds in making Goforth realize the inefficacy of superficial and material reality by teaching her: “How to live and die in a way that’s more dignified than most of us know how to do it” (Milk Train 221). He has a good bit of experience with the old dying legendary ladies scared of death and can offer them something closer to what they need than what they think they still want. That is why Sally of Nevada Lodge “called him my saint, my angel, till the day she died” (Milk Train 172). He becomes a real savior of Goforth when he succeeds in teaching her face death with as much courage as she did life. It is because of Chris that Goforth conquers despair and accepts death so gracefully. Chris has the gentleness of a lover but he refuses to have a sexual relation with the dying Goforth. Such a refusal releases Goforth of her sensual nature and persuades her to accept another reality of life. She accepts the reality of death with equal ease and gets ready to embrace it. Like Hannah Jelkes of Iguana, Chris arouses a sense of spiritual awakening in Goforth and provides a release from the coils of physical ecstasy (Paller 2002: 33). The dying woman needs the care of some tender heart which Chris provides her and makes her death a little less miserable, merely one moment among many.

Serving others gives Chris a sense of meaning in his life because this activity gives him the sense of being “sheltered” and “protected” from “unreality” and “lostness” (Milk Train 189-90). His speech on this issue is worth quoting:

Have you ever seen how little animals sleep together, a pair of kittens or puppies? All day they seem so secure in the house of their master, but at night, when they sleep, they don’t seem sure of their owner’s true care for them: then they draw close together: they curl up against each other, and now and then, if you watch them, you notice they nudge each other a little with their heads or their paws, exchange little signals between them. The signals mean: we’re not in danger…sleep: we’re close: - it’s safe here. –
Their owner’s house is never a sure protection, a reliable shelter…. We are left alone with each other: we have to creep close to each other and give those gentle little nudges with our paws and our muzzles before we can slip into – sleep and – rest for the next day’s – playtime… and the next day’s mysteries (Milk Train 190).

Chris’ credentials are doubtful but he comes close to Goforth and offers her human closeness in her dying moments. He gives her an “agreeable companionship” (Milk Train 203) thus inspiring her to say him, “you’re not the false Chris Flanders. I’m sure about that” (Milk Train 195). By establishing human contact with a soft touch of his hand, Chris makes Goforth realize that “Death is one moment and life is so many of them…. Yes, life is something, death is nothing…” (Milk Train 198). He does not leave her alone till her death and makes her death peaceful by staying close to her.

5.7 Chance Wayne Saves The Princess

Chance Wayne, in The Sweet Bird of the Youth, comes to save Heavenly but he proves himself to be a false savior. Similarly, he fails to rescue Heavenly because he is the cause of her defilement. His past is perfidious and his present life is deceitful. In fact, he measures his life by the degree of rottenness in him: “…the age of some people can only be calculated by the level of – level of – rot in them. And by that measure I’m ancient” (Sweet Bird 110). He is the main cause of barrenness in Heavenly’s life. Such a person cannot guarantee spiritual salvation of Heavenly after having defiled her. Even his self-sacrifice fails to rejuvenate Heavenly. “Although he has cast himself in the role of savior, vowing to rescue the defiled Heavenly and to ‘give her life back to her’ his redemptive efforts fail” (Thompson 2002: 135). Chance’s attempts to save Heavenly prove as futile as those of the Princess to persuade Chance to quit St. Cloud and leave with her. Chance Wayne wastes and wanes his own life and the lives of those close to him. That is why Judith Thompson compares him with Val Xavier of Orpheus Descending as an ironic savior (Thompson 2002: 135).

Boss Finley, like Chance, apparently looks innocent but he is rotten from within. Boss, with his self appointed sacred mission, believes himself to be the savior of the people. But he is a “perverted savior of the South” (Adler 1997: 149). Boss proclaims:
When I was fifteen I came down barefooted out of the red clay hills.... Why? Because the Voice of God called me to execute this mission.... And what is this mission? I have told you before but I will tell you again. To shield from pollution a blood that I think is not only sacred to me, but sacred to Him.... I can’t and I will not accept, tolerate condone this threat of a blood pollution” (Sweet Bird 95).

Boss is a Satan in the garb of the Messiah and the voice of God because he turns out to be a ruthless murderer. He kills and emasculates the people with impunity, under the garb of his sacred mission. “Finley presents himself as a new god of his society – violent, vengeful, anti-human, and apocalyptic. This is the god envisaged by Sebastian Venable in Suddenly Last Summer, a god whose consuming hatred for his creation leaves no space for life” (Bigsby 1984: 105). It is because of his ruthlessness that the Heckler shouts “I believe that the silence of God, the absolute speechlessness of Him is a long, long and awful thing that the whole world is lost because of. I think it’s yet to be broken to any man, living or yet lived on earth – no exceptions…” (Sweet Bird 94). Val Xavier appears as a love god in the loveless and soulless world of Orpheus Descending. He looks an innocent savior to Lady Torrance, who has been “waiting for something...to make things make more sense,” (Five Plays, 324) but he has been selling his body in the bars of New Orleans since his teen age and admits: “I was corrupted” (Five Plays, 325). The corrupting influence of these parties is what he wants to get rid of. But the more he feels guilty of that corruption the more he gets entangled in it. His illicit relations with Lady is disgusting for him and he tries to desert her but he remains attached to her till the last moment.

Val, as his name suggests, is both savior and Valentine, a male sex object to whom the women of the play turn for salvation. Vee Talbott, a painter and religious visionary, confuses him with Christ. Carol Cutrere, a disillusioned reformer of aristocratic family, wants him to run away with her. But he attaches himself to Lady Torrance, the storekeeper’s wife, an older woman who becomes pregnant by him (Boxill 1988: 122).

Val may have become a savior for Lady when she claims: “I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell,” (Five Plays, 368) but this guess proves futile as both of them meet a catastrophic end.

It is true that Chance of Sweet Bird of Youth proves a poor savior for Heavenly but he succeeds in awakening the dormant zest for life in the Princess. The Princess’s
love is aroused with his little act of grace. When the Princess feels short-winded and calls for her Oxygen Mask: “Hurry, I can’t breathe, I’m dying” (Sweet Bird 23), Chance’s human kindness is evoked. He places the oxygen inhalator over her nose and mouth and puts the pillow under her head and helps her quite kindly back to bed. He gives her a pill and vodka to soothe her when she gets panicky. Then “he pulls her into his arms. She rests in them, panting a little like a trapped rabbit” (Sweet Bird 29). She tries to forget her past when she finds herself in the arms of Chance. She admits: “I feel as if someone I loved had died lately, and I don’t want to remember who it could be” (Sweet Bird 29). When Chance demands some money from her, she at once offers him her travelers’ cheques. She coaxes and cajoles him not to get angry with her and requests him not to leave her alone.

I’ll have the cheques cashed for you as soon as I’ve put on my face, I just don’t want to be left alone in this place till I’ve put on the face that I face the world with, baby. Maybe after we get to know each other, we won’t fight over little points any more, the struggle will stop, maybe we won’t even fight over big points, baby (Sweet Bird 43).

The kindness of Chance in the miserable moments of the Princess’s life touches her heart. Chance’s life-giving and life-sustaining act helps restore her sense of self-worth. A delicate rapport is established between the two lonely souls. When Chance relates his life story, she listens to it with considerate sympathy: “I listened to you this morning, with understanding and pity, I did, I listened with pity to your story this morning. I felt something in my heart for you which I thought I couldn’t feel” (Sweet Bird 102). When Chance asks her to help him in winning back his former beloved, Heavenly, she replies: “I want to help you. Believe me, not everybody wants to hurt everybody. I don’t want to hurt you.... you’re a lost little boy that I really would like to help find himself” (Sweet Bird 49-50). Her sincerity is so powerful that Chance is apt to recognize her as a good human being: “As far as I know, you’re not a bad person” (Sweet Bird 51). Talking to Miss Lucy, he expresses his feelings for the Princess who is traveling incognito: “I respect her too much to speak her name at this table. I’m obliged to her because she has shown faith in me” (Sweet Bird 83). The kindness of Chance also transforms her egoism to tenderness and compassion and awakens her humane and compassionate feelings. She utters such feelings emphatically:
Chance, the most wonderful thing has happened to me…. I felt something in my heart for you…. I felt something for some one besides myself. That means that my heart is still alive, at least some part of it is, not all my heart is dead yet. Part’s alive still…. Chance, please listen to me. I’m ashamed of this morning. I will never degrade you again, I will never degrade myself, you and me, again by – I wasn’t always this monster. Once I wasn’t this monster. And what I felt in my heart when I saw you returning, defeated, to this palm garden, Chance gave me hope that I could stop being a monster. Chance you’ve got to help me stop being the monster that I was this morning, and you can do it, can help me. I won’t be ungrateful for it. I almost died this morning, suffocated in a panic, I saw your kindness. I saw a true kindness in you that you have almost destroyed, but that’s still there (Sweet Bird 87).

This act of kindness proves turning point in her spiritless life. She realizes the importance of true love in human life and admits to Chance: “I love you…. I’m your friend and I’m not a phony” (Sweet Bird 51). Chance’s attention to the Princess at her difficult moment is quite natural and spontaneous elevating him to the level of a god as Adler states: “the only god that Williams consistently admits, the one revealed through unselfish acts of human love” (Adler 1997: 150). As a result of it, the Princess becomes a new human being ready to take interest in life. She overcomes the devastating events of her life with the adventurous experiences. It is Chance’s compassion that saves the Princess from being the monster that she once was and elevates her to a heroic stature. The impact of Chance is so constructive that she emerges noble and dignified.

5.8 Brick is Saved from the Living Death

Maggie in Cat on A Hot Tin Roof succeeds in repairing the broken soul of her husband with the power of love. She elevates her husband, Brick, to a “superior creature, a “godlike being” (Five Plays 26) but that godlike thing has “that cool air of detachment that people have who have given up the struggle” (Five Plays 2). His broken ankle, his overly attachment with the memories of his male friend, his dismembered relations with his wife and his over-drinking reflect that he is not only passing through physical injury and emotional disturbance but also is faced with moral anarchy. His wife wants him to regenerate life by taking interest in her while his brother makes all the arrangements to
dismember him from the inheritance of their dying father because both Brick and Maggie are issueless. Maggie, his wife, is apt to portray their real situation:

Think of it, Brick, they’ve got five of them and number six is coming. They have brought the whole bunch down here like animals to display at a country fair…. It goes on all the time, along with constant little remarks and innuendos about the fact that you and I have not produced any children, are totally childless and therefore totally useless! – of course it’s comical but it’s also disgusting since it’s so obvious what they’re up to *(Five Plays 2)*!

Brick is broken from within and from without and it is Maggie who heals his wounds. Jeanne M. McGlain thinks Maggie as a “selfish, self-centered, manipulative and destructive woman, who acts out of the motivation to benefit herself.” (McGlain 1977: 517-518) but Maggie, in fact, is not selfish but realistic. She analyzes the situation in the most pragmatic way because idealism may not serve her purpose. She knows that her safety lies in the safety and normalcy of her husband, Brick. She becomes the savior of Brick by infusing a new spirit in the physically crippled and morally paralyzed life because “like the mythical dying gods, Brick needs to be restored to life, fertility and wholeness” (Thompson 2002: 64). She saves her husband because she knows the purpose of her existence. It is because of her strength of character that Maggie is rewarded and that the things between the husband and the wife return to a semblance of normality.

Brick, who has “that rare sort of charm that usually only happens in very old or hopelessly sick people, the charm of the defeated” *(Five Plays 9)*, is on the verge of a complete collapse. He is so absorbed in his drinking that life becomes meaningless for him. Big Daddy advises him: “Life is important. There’s nothing else to hold on to it. A man that drinks is throwing his life away. Don’t do it, hold on to your life. There’s nothing else to hold on to…” *(Five Plays 44)*. But it is Maggie who becomes a real protector and a life-restorer for her emotionally dead husband because she is determined to win him back to normal life. Big Mamma also knows that it is Maggie who can save Brick:

Brick is Big Daddy’s boy, but he drinks too much and it worries me and Big Daddy, and, Margaret, you’ve got to cooperate with us, you’ve got to cooperate with Big Daddy and me in getting Brick straightened out. Because it will break Big Daddy’s heart if Brick don’t pull himself together and take hold of things” *(Five Plays 81)*.
Maggie tries to revitalize the dead spirits of Brick when she says in the Broadway Version of the play: “Oh, you weak people, beautiful people who give up with such a grace. What you need is someone to take hold of you – gently, with love, and hand your life back to you, like something gold you let go of – and I can! I’m determined to do it – and nothing’s more determined than a cat on a tin roof (Five Plays 123). It is such determination that compels Brick to say: “I admire you Maggie” (Five Plays 122). Unlike Blanche of Streetcar, Maggie has no illusions about what life ought to be but knows what life is. She makes the most of an adverse situation with her gritty determination which becomes her saving grace. She knows how to compete and win under the most unfavorable situation as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi says:

The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times…. The best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is the something that we make happen (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 3).

She never lets others take hold of her affairs. She fights like a warrior and at last wins Brick back to life. She is badly marginalized but she never succumbs to the elite values. Like a magician, as her name “Maggie means manus or magician” (Graves 1976: 19) she uses all the tricks she knows to heal Brick’s moral, emotional physical and sexual anxieties. She makes Brick realize that his intemperate drinking and her childlessness can deprive them of their inheritance and leave them penniless. She considers Brick’s brother and his wife as a couple of cardsharps fleecing a sucker and awakens Brick from such oblivion.

Then Brother Man could get a-hold of the purse strings and dole out remittances to us, may be get power-of-attorney and sign cheques for us and cut off our credit wherever he wanted! How’d you like, Baby? – Well, you’ve been doing just about everything in your power to bring it about, you’ve just been doin’ everything in you can think of to aid and abet them in this scheme of theirs! Quittin’ work, devoting yourself to the occupation of drinking! – breakin’ ankle last night on the high school athletic field…(Five Plays 4).

She has the foresightedness of a clairvoyant and holds a mirror up to Brick to awaken him from his living death of booze:
It takes money to take care of a drinker and that’s the office that I’ve been elected lately…. Two people in the same boat have got to take care of each other. At least you want money to buy more Echo Spring when this supply is exhausted, or will you be satisfied with a ten-cent beer? Mae an’ Gooper are plannin’ to freeze us out of Big Daddy’s estate because you drink and I’m childless. But we can defeat that plan. We’re going to defeat that plan!... You can be young without money but you can’t be old without it. You’ve got to be one or the other, either young without money, but you can’t be old without it” (Five Plays 24).

She is capable of taking a hard look at her existing reality and makes the effective use of available possibilities. In this way she helps Brick come out of his self-delusion. It is because of her attitude of positive expectancy that Brick once again reenters his real life. “Despite Brick’s lack of interest in the inheritance or his wife, he decides to play the game with her. Maggie proves triumphant” (Howard & Greta 2005: 65). By achieving intimacy with her husband at the end of the play, she redeems him with the miracle of new birth.

Brick is not only physically or morally paralyzed but his masculinity is also fractured. He prefers not to perform traditional masculinity and thus denies his self determination. He allows Maggie to take a lover but she replies: “I can’t see a man but you! even with my eyes closed, I just see you” (Five Plays 15)! Maggie has the power to heal Brick’s fractured masculinity. Thomas Inge sees Maggie primarily as an ‘Agrarian spirit, devoted to fertility and regeneration’ (Inge 1991: 161). She is emotionally strong enough to deal with the situation threatening her existence. Instead of all her limitations she succeeds in arousing Brick’s desire for her. As the life force of the play, Maggie helps Brick in his quest for self determination. Instead of letting herself being manipulated she manipulates the situation. She infuses life into Brick’s prostrated spirit with her caressing talk. “She needs to be needed, and is eager to throw aside her own anxieties and rush to the aid of others, if only given the chance. That chance is what she is so hungry for, not any sort of glory of adoration” (Robinson 1997: 49). In this way she succeeds in bringing Brick out of the insecurity his masculinity is threatened with.

Maggie has also been a skilful archer during her school days as she tells Mae, “Why, Sister Woman that’s my Diana Trophy, won it at inter-collegiate archery contest on the Ole Miss Campus…. We’re goin’ deer-huntin’ on Moon Lake as soon as the
season starts. I love to run with dogs through chilly woods, run, run leap over obstructions —” *(Five Plays 13).* Her situation moves from bad to worse but she remains upbeat and handles it as skillfully as an archer would handle his aim. Her expertise in archery identifies her with “the archer goddess Diana and the Greek goddess Artemis. Both are the goddess of mountain and women and childbirth, generally identified with a bow and quiver.” *(Rose 1965: 121).* Skipper, Gooper and Mae become her victim. She wounds Skipper’s inner self in such a way that he succumbs to death. Her husband is also emotionally injured because of Skipper’s death but she succeeds in saving him. For Bernard F Dukore, Maggie’s ultimate triumph represents Williams’ affirmation of life against death. *(Dukore 1963: 98).* She is undoubtedly ruthless, like Diana and Artemis, towards her opponents but protective and caring towards her dear ones. These qualities make her the architect of her happiness. She skilfully defeats all the machinations of Gooper and Mae. She triumphs over her adversaries by hitting at their weaknesses. Thus Maggie becomes a hunter, symbolized by Diana Trophy, destroys all those ready to harm her marital life, saves her unwilling husband: “like a priestess of love, a hierodule she invites the god-like being to consummate with her, beget a child and save himself” *(Kataria 1982).*

### 5.9 Revival of Human Goodness in *Iguana*

If Maggie in *Cat* revives the spiritually dead and psychologically divided Brick with her optimistic aggression, Hannah in *Iguana* proves redemptive for Shannon’s psychic rebirth with her altruistic acts of humanism and her readiness to help him come out of the tumult raging in his psyche. The conflict between physical passions and moral values is raging so strong in Shannon that he is at the end of his rope. He comes to Maxine’s hotel to seek solace but his histrionics are so violent that she pinions him in a hammock. His reaction in the pinioned state reflects the inner turmoil under which he is struggling. He is looking for love and sympathy to escape the horrors of his neurotic disorder. The appearance of Hannah, who “suggests a Gothic cathedral image of a medieval saint” *(Iguana 238)*, on such a situation leaves a hypnotic impact on Shannon and pacifies him suddenly. “Shannon looks at Hannah and Nonno steadily, with a relief
of tension almost like that of someone going under hypnosis” (*Iguana* 248). Hannah symbolizes Shannon’s image of “essential… human… goodness” (*Iguana* 243). Ingrid Rogers likens her to Christ (Rogers 1976: 134) while Judith Thompson considers her as Shannon’s spiritual mentor (Thompson 2002: 167). Hannah leads an insecure and marginalized life. She has never tasted true love of a man. Her loveless life reaches its extreme after the death of her Nonno but it is because of Hannah’s all encompassing love and selflessness that Shannon’s gentleness and self confidence is restored. He feels spiritually elevated as well as he succeeds in accepting his human condition. “Shannon learns to accept his life as a defrocked minister, and with Hannah’s help, he finds answers to questions that have plagued his life” (Howard & Greta 2005: 177). She has had experience with someone in Shannon’s condition long time ago so she knows how to deal with such people. Instead of hating the howling Shannon, Hannah decides to offer him her helping hand because she respects “a person that has had to fight and howl for his decency and his…bit of goodness, much more than [she respects] the lucky ones that just had theirs handed over to them at birth and never afterwards snatched from them by…unbearable torments…” (*Iguana* 304).

Soon after meeting with Shannon, Hannah is apt to pinpoint his problem that “liquor isn’t your problem Mr. Shannon, but the oldest one in the world – the need to believe in something or in someone–almost anyone–almost anything… something” (*Iguana* 308). Her compassionate conversation with Shannon is replete with redemptive humanism. She not only understands him but also offers him a little help. It is true that she is needy and marginalized. She cannot pay even the rent of one night stay at Costa Verde hotel. Such a situation, however, does not desist her from offering help to others. It gives her the semblance of a savior when she inculcates in Shannon the real importance of “Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it’s just for one night only” (*Iguana* 308). Glen Embry objects that “an hour’s exposure to human compassion, a cup of poppy tea, and a bit of Oriental wisdom hardly seem sufficient to eradicate habits and attitudes hardened over the past ten years” (Embrey 1977: 334). The impact of Hannah’s conversation, however, is so overwhelming that Shannon confesses all about his sordid past and feels comforted when she regards him as a fallible human with passionate physical needs. The goodness of Hannah is so great and her love for
humanity is all encompassing. Before his meeting with Hannah he considers “God as a cruel, senile delinquent…angry petulant old man…old, old, sick, peevish man…blaming the world and brutally punishing all He created for His own fault in construction” (Iguana 269) but after the meeting his finer sentiments are awakened and he tries to Seek God in his own self. He tries to play God by releasing the iguana because he feels sympathy for the God’s creature. Before his meeting with Hannah, he pretends to be “an ordained minister of the Church…. Defrocked! But still trying to pass himself off as a minister” (Iguana 246) but he breaks all pretensions after the meeting. Before the meeting he was so furious and violent but after the meeting he becomes calm and composed. It is all because of the fact that Hannah succeeds in breaking his self deception by demythicizing his self elevated image as a man of God. Like the Jungian archetype of a Good Mother she shows sympathy for his weaknesses, revives his innate decency and guides him to accept the limitations of his inherently incomplete nature in the existential world. Eric Neuman refers to the Good Mother as the life giving kindly aspect of the unconscious whose functions are those of bearing and releasing growth and development. (Neuman 1974: 65). It is her human goodness that liberates Shannon from his sexual, spiritual, psychological and theological anxieties and makes him accept the reality of his fallen nature. Thus Shannon defrocks himself when he gives to Hannah his “gold cross” (Iguana 320). He also “rips the collar off, crumples it and hurls it off the verandah” (Iguana 266). By divesting himself of the cross, he stops imitating the self-righteous role of the Christ and decides to live his own life as C.G. Jung says, “It is not easy matter to live a life that is modeled on Christ’s, but it is unspeakably harder to live one’s own life as truly as Christ lived his” (Jung 1932 rpt 1958). Shannon also desires to save Hannah by giving her his “22-carat gold cross with a fine amethyst in it” (Iguana 320) so that she may hock them to meet the expenses of her travels.

Hannah, “like a guardian angel of Shannon” (Iguana 288) provides him a mode of transcendence by teaching him a way to live beyond despair and still live. She remains calm and composed, “like a medieval sculpture of a saint,” (Iguana 298) even in the face of adversities. Her life is propelled by her will power and her compassion for the other people. She seeks self transcendence by voluntarily sacrificing her life for the old Nonno. She helps Shannon quite selflessly which leaves a positive effect on Shannon. “Hannah is
Shannon’s saving grace…. She is a paragon of spiritual harmony, despite the difficulties she has faced during her life” (Howard & Greta 2005: 176). Hannah’s love and compassion is not restricted to human beings. She also shows the same kindness for the iguana at the end of its tether. She feels the pain and panic and strangulating loneliness and despair of the tied up iguana and persuades Shannon to cut lose its rope “because God won’t do it and we are going to play God here” (Iguana 324). Like “the feminine archetype of Sophia Sapientia or the wise woman,” (Ulanov 1978: 208) Hannah motivates the people all around her to bring peace and spread love and compassion. It is because of such motivation that Shannon cuts lose the iguana so that “one of God’s creatures could scramble home safe and free” (Iguana 326). Allan Lewis considers Hannah as the reverse of Shannon but complementary to each other when he states that: “He has lost God and found release in vice. She is the saint, timeless and feminine, but unfulfilled. These two ill-mated persons deeply affect one another; each needing what the other has to offer” (Lewis 1970: 58).

Hannah is penniless wanderer and Shannon is a broken figure but both of them try their best to save each other. Shannon is anxious in “reaching for something outside and beyond himself” (Iguana 287) and spreads his hands in the stormy rain to seek it. Hannah proves herself to be that something outside and beyond himself and grasps that hand and by clasping each other’s hands they assuage their mutual loneliness. Hannah liberates Shannon from the confinement of hammock and later on tries to save him from the conflict between his flesh and soul while Shannon helps her getting one night stay in Maxine’s hotel when Maxine declares there is, in effect, no room at the inn. Both of them share each other’s sufferings and make efforts to ease them. In this way they leave a redemptive message by saving each other.

5.10 Catharine is Saved from Lobotomy

Dr. Cukrowicz, chief surgeon of the state asylum in Suddenly Last Summer, becomes the true savior of Catharine’s fate. He saves her from the deadly and destructive designs of Mrs. Venable. Like the predatory birds of “Encantadas Galapagos Islands” (Five Plays 242), Mrs. Venable swoops to attack the living Catharine and devour her life,
just to repair the past glory of her dead son. Catharine looks as helpless as newly “hatched sea turtles” (Five Plays 243) whose soft undersides are torn and eaten up by the predatory birds. Catherine can easily be marginalized to oblivion if Dr. Cukrowicz gets ready to become Mrs. Venable’s accomplice. Doctor finds himself in the world of deception and fraud but he remains resolute in his search for truth and emerges as a noble human being. Instead of looking for the savage side of God, the doctors search for the kinder side of God so Dr. Cukrowicz considers the work of doctors as the search for God: “Mrs. Venable, doctors look for God, too…. I think they have to look harder for him than priests since they don’t have the help of such well-known guide-books and well-organized expeditions as the priests have with their scriptures and—churches” (Five Plays 243).

Like Maggie and Blanche, Catherine is an outsider and badly marginalized. She is the victim of the forces beyond her understanding. Catherine finds herself in the world of predatory animals where the weakest is the easiest prey. Like all outsiders, Catherine feels uncertain, insecure, inferior and therefore in a constant state of self-defense. She always yearns for some companion who could share the burden of her life. This togetherness is her way of existence but she miserably fails to achieve it. She searches for a companion but such a search, on the contrary, brings her on the verge of insanity. She, like Blanche and Laura, yearns for a happy companion in life. A ray of hope flickers when she gets an opportunity to accompany Sebastian. But this hope turns into a nightmare and a prologue to her miseries. Her poetic and urbane Cousin Sebastian turns out to be homosexual. She is shocked to observes how “the gang of kids” (Five Plays, 281) shout at Sebastian, tear him to pieces and “stuff them into those gorging fierce little empty black mouths of theirs” (Five Plays, 282). When she relates the truth about the sullied nature and the abhorrent death of Sebastian, his mother feels that Catherine has gone crazy. Now Catherine finds herself in the hot waters. She fails to adjust herself with the illusions of her rich relative who wants to hush up the truth about Sebastian. As a result of it she is sent to asylum where she is faced with her impending lobotomy. “Catherine’s predicament resembles that of Blanche in Streetcar; society ostracizes both women as insane because they compel others to reassess the truth discussing forbidden acts of sex and violence.” (O’Conner 1997: 66).
Mrs. Venable, Sebastian’s mother, considers Catharine’s story about Sebastian as vilification of her son and requests Doctor to keep her still there: “She babbles! They couldn’t shut her up in Cabeza de Lobo or at the clinic in Paris – she babbled, babbled! – smashing my son’s reputation” (Five Plays 249). Mrs. Venable believes her dead son “was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d” (Five Plays 247) so Catharine’s story is a hideous attack on her son’s moral character. She considers Catherine’s talk as her babbling but it is actually the truth. Instead of “[facing] the truth about her son’s homosexuality… and her own Oedipal feelings towards him” (Koprince 1994: 91), she is bent upon elevating her son as a charming but chaste priest, saint and Christ figure. The repute of the dead Sebastian can be saved only by cutting this hideous story out of Catherine’s brain through lobotomy because Mr. Venable knows that “After the operation, who would believe her, Doctor” (Five Plays 250)? She leaves no stone unturned to lure Dr. Cukrowicz and seek his consent to perform the lobotomy on Catharine and cut out her babble. She bribes and beguiles him by talking about “the Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation to subsidize the work of young people like you that are pushing out the frontiers of art and science, but have a financial problem” (Five Plays 249) but he remains unaffected by all her attempts. He faces financial constraints in continuing his research on medical profession. Financial bait of Mrs. Venable is so alluring under such circumstances but he remains adamant in maintaining professional ethics. He refuses to operate on Catharine because such an operation can prove risky. If Venable is darkness in human nature, Dr Cukrowicz is a light against such darkness. He desperately needs the “offer of subsidy” by Mrs. Venable as he relates: “Yes, we do have that problem. My work is such anew and radical thing that people in charge of state funds are naturally a little scared of it and keep us on a small budget, so small that – We need a separate ward for my patients, I need trained assistants, I’d like to marry a girl I can’t afford to marry” (Five Plays 249) but he desists from receiving it because his sense of justice does not allow him to do it. He overcomes his desire for material gains for the love of humanity. The moral force of Dr. Cukrowicz is so strong that all the tactics of Mrs. Venable fail so miserably. Catharine requests Dr. Cukrowicz “Please hold me! I’ve been so lonely. It’s lonelier than death, if I’ve gone mad, it’s lonelier than death” (Five Plays 271)! She is let down by everybody including her parents. Hoping against hope she tries to seek the help of a stranger like Dr.
Cukrowicz who does not let her down and holds her hand. So she finds a true savior in the person of Dr. Cukrowicz when the latter addresses her: “I’m holding my hand out. I want you to put yours in mine and give me all your resistance. Pass all of your resistance out of your hand to mine” (Five Plays 270).

Sebastian fails in his search for truth because he suffers from confused emotional subjectivity. He severs himself from his suffocating and possessive mother and seeks solace in the company of the Buddhist monks. “He went so far as to shave his head and eat just rice out of a wood bowl on a grass mat. He’d promised those sly Buddhist monks that he would give up the worldly possessions to their mendicant order” (Five Plays 245). But soon he becomes fed up with monastic life and tries to seek some relief in the company of young boys. His erotic passion for boys is so forceful that he does not desist from using his mother and Catharine as bait to attract the young boys for the sexual acts of sodomy but the same boys dismember Sebastian and devour him later on. Catherine exposes the inherently corrupt carnal passion of the so-called saintly Sebastian and its final retribution. Judith Thompson rightly comments: “Sebastian’s reputed sainthood is rendered spurious; the climax of his demythicization, or decanonization, from ‘chaste’ saint to ‘chased’ debaucher is depicted as a literal stripping away of his own corrupt flesh and blood” (Thompson 2002: 102). So, apparently chaste Sebastian turns out to be a chased debauch while apparently false Catherine turns out to be a really true person.

Mrs. Venable becomes a wolf in the guise civilized exterior when she tries to bribe Dr. Cukrowicz to perform the lobotomy on Catharine. Catharine’s mother is financially dependent on Mrs. Venable and the latter emphatically reminds the former “I did more than my duty to keep their heads above water” (Five Plays 264). So the mother feels compelled to satisfy the demands of her wealthy benefactor. Catharine’s story may be true but Catherine’s mother tells her another truth that “it’s TRUE WE DO HAVE TO GET WHAT SEBASTIAN HAS LEFT US IN WILL, DEREST! AND YOU WON’T LET US DOWN? PROMISE? YOU WON’T LET US DOWN” (Five Plays 259)? Catharine’s brother and mother get ready to surrender both Catharine and truth for the sake of their fifty grand in probate. Her brother even pronounces her a perverse bitch because her crazy story will lose them a hundred thousand. Catharine, however, thinks that she cannot change truth: “I’m not God! I’m not even sure that He could, I don’t think
God can change truth! How can I change the story of what happened to her son in Cabeza de Lobo” (*Five Plays* 245)? Betrayed by even those who express love for her, Catherine becomes a damsel-in-distress waiting to be rescued by some heroic figure and Dr. Cukrowicz becomes that figure. As the skilled surgeon of the state asylum he is expected to dismember his patients, but here he refrains from the savage act of lobotomy, which Williams himself calls “a tragically mistaken procedure” (*Memoirs* 1975: 251), without seeking the whole truth. Here he becomes the symbol of truth and goodness for Catherine. Catherine’s life and death depends on whether or not he decides “to bore a hole in [her] skull and turn a knife in [her] brain” (*Five Plays* 263). He possesses Jungian “attitude of unprejudiced objectivity” (Jung 1933: 234) and calmly observes the whole issue with detachment. That is why he does not succumb to the greedy offers of Mrs. Venable. His integrity is at stake but he succeeds in searching of self by showing compassion for those in distress. He saves Catherine from irremediable emotional and psychological loss when he refuses to become an accomplice in brutal savagery. He asserts with full force: “I think we ought at least to consider the possibility the girl’s story could be true” (*Five Plays* 282). Dr. Cukrowicz’s act of mercy and moral restraint proves redemptive for Catherine showing “that in the absence of any sign of the existence of an all-loving, all-merciful God, mere mortals must be ‘God’ to each other” (Thompson 2002: 129).

The saviors in the plays of Williams are more powerful than the destroyers. That is why life follows death and hope follows hopelessness in these plays. Laura finds the balmy hand of her mother when everybody quits them. Blanche finds the kindness of Doctor when nobody is ready to accept her. The birth of Stella’s child gives the whole atmosphere a hopeful touch. The cancerous death of Big Daddy is followed by the pregnancy of Maggie. Maggie saves her husband from the living death of booze and brings him to normal life. Chance saves the Princess from her complete break down. His act of kindness makes her a new human being who is ready to face a new life. In the beginning, she is on the verge of complete collapse but ends up in a successful movie star. Hannah saves Shannon from his physical and spiritual conflict and makes him accept his inherently incomplete nature. Serafina no longer ties herself to the ashes of her dead husband and is redeemed by Alvaro. Alvaro brings her to the real man’s love and
care. The dying Mrs. Goforth seeks the kindness of Chris who makes her death a little less painful with his balmy company. Catherine has no hope of redemption but Dr. Cukrowicz becomes her ultimate savior.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This study explored brighter aspects in the grim and grave world portrayed in the plays of Tennessee Williams by using Derridian deconstruction. By the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the plays of Williams the invisible was made visible and the marginal was given prominence in this study. Multiple possible interpretations and claims were made in this study to dismantle the earlier interpretations of the researchers and see Williams’ plays from new perspectives based on the new binary inversions. Pessimistic discourse of these plays was decoded and deconstructed to make optimistic sense of them. It had been argued there is sweetness in pathos by deconstructing the pathetic and bleak situation of human life presented in these plays. This study explored that Williams’ protagonists are entrapped in the web of frustration and hopelessness but the study proved that their hopeful affirmations about life’s potential help them overcome such an atmosphere. It is such attitude that turns the negative aspects of his life into something positive. His protagonists are marginalized by unequal circumstances of their existence but, with their imaginative force they offer heroic defiance to the arbitrary social values. In this way they are capable of turning such marginality in their peculiar strength. So, they create order in their chaotic existence with the power of art. Their tender feelings serve them as a source of inspiration in their moments of creativity. It is this imaginative power which proves therapeutic and helps them seek meaning in their lives and avoid their complete breakdown. These protagonists are entrapped in a world which is incompatible with their soul and spirit. They are nonconformists who try to reshape their world with the power of imagination. They believe that experience provides hope of individual reconciliation. Williams uses art as the vehicle by which his protagonists such as Blanche, Maggie, Kilroy, Val, the Princess etc. journey through the dark woods of life attaining salvation and reconciling with their reality. They try to combat the brutalities of life by the infinite possibilities promised by their creative imagination.
Most of Williams’ protagonists are dreamers who do not stick to a stable and conventional existence but are lured by the unknown. They invent a fictive world when they are confusedly entangled in the quagmire of life and try to sustain it with the power of their imagination. Blanche, for example, is never ready to bow down before the forces ready to crush her. She tries to transform her pathetic situation with the magical power of art and tries to resist those forces determined to push her into the darkness of death. Her creative imagination is so powerful that she, at last, succeeds in seeking the kindness of the Doctor. Tom, in *The Glass Menagerie*, stays away from his home just to pursue his dreams of the unknown. He prefers his personal freedom to social mores and quits the stifling atmosphere of his home and warehouse to find himself. He selects, combines and thus controls the real events of his life and turns them into a piece of art. Amanda is also an artist who creates her world peopled with seventeen gentlemen callers. She is entrapped in the agonizing loneliness but she believes in the healing power of pure love. It is her deep desire to see her daughter well placed in life but the daughter fails miserably. Amanda is affirmative, intelligent and purposive and saves her daughter from total collapse because of her compassion and understanding. It is her redemptive humanism with which she achieves individuation or psychic wholeness by giving her a compassionate hug. In this way she brings some smile for her defeated and destroyed daughter on a moment when nothing is left for her. So, both the mother and the daughter are lonely but they ameliorate their tragic despair through the expression of mutual compassion. One can hope that Laura will be able to accept the existential realities of her life because her world of menageries has already been demythesized.

Williams portrays an endless pursuit of freedom in stifling atmosphere of *Camino Real*. The play does not end in pessimism, but in a sense of optimism about the force of human creativity. Here the force of life overcomes the force of death. The inhabitants are trapped in the world of melancholy and hopelessness but Kilroy becomes a symbol of hope for such a world. Here Don Quixote, the eternal optimist and Kilroy, the symbol of independence, sincerity, and courage become partners on the real road and reach a place where the spring of humanity has gone dry. They redeem the Camino with their optimism and courage and consequently water rushes into the once-dry fountain and the violets in the mountains break the rocks.
Death, destruction, insanity and many other pessimistic aspects of human life are the dominant phenomena of Williams’ plays but most of these plays end on a ray of hope. Man in these plays feels entrapped by the dark forces but he has the potential to stem the tide of these forces. He remains optimistic even in the face of defeat. The beauty of Williams’ art lies in the fact that he portrays the possibilities of rebirth and rejuvenation in the thick of death and destruction. His plays end on the positive note of human determination to overcome the destructive forces. There is suffering and frustration in his plays but there is grace and dignity in suffering which gives optimistic touch to the dramatic world of Williams. Suffering becomes far more commendable because it tests the inner strength of his protagonists and leads them to meanings and creativity. The lives of Williams’ protagonists are surrounded with suffering but they do not live in existential vacuum. They do not let distress and boredom overcome their lives. They are self-determining and that is why there is always a quest for a paradise in their mundane and marginalized existence. Such a quest in itself is constructive and manifests the idea of positive approach towards the negative aspects of life.

There is a ceaseless effort in the world of Williams to create meaning in meaninglessness. His protagonists do not lose hope but face their existential realities with their courage, hoping that their struggle will lead them to certain dignity and meaning. There is a tragic optimism in the most miserable moments of their life because they say yes to life in these moments. Thus they remain hopeful even in the face of insanity and castration. Their lives retain their potential meaning in spite of their tragic aspect. They turn a personal tragedy into a triumph by rising above themselves and by growing beyond themselves. Similarly, they possess remarkable perseverance with which they try to turn their affliction into their accomplishment. They exhibit positive attitude even in the most trying moments which makes them so commendable. The marginalized Maggie, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, faces a hopeless situation but she uses her potential in such a way that her personal tragedy turns into her triumph. Her married life is frozen but she becomes a life force for her physically and sexually paralyzed husband and restores him to health and wholeness. Her existence is restricted by various external forces depriving her of any vestige of meaning but it is her attitude towards her existence that adds meanings even to her barrenness.
In his plays, Williams covers a wide ranging aspects of life, such as insanity, alienation, promiscuity, rape, greed, alcoholism, impotence, homosexuality, profligacy, frigidity, blowtorch killing, castration and dope addiction among several other eccentricities afflicting modern society; but he is all along conscious of the brighter and tender sides of human life. There is a spirit of affirmation hidden in bleak situation which gives a new look to the plays of Williams. Some of his protagonists succeed in giving meaning to their death even when their lives remain meaningless. Sometime their quest ends in a nightmare, which may be totally negative in nature but it is not a dream gone wrong. They engage our attention because of their unlimited perseverance to endure. Many critics have accused Williams of having death wish because he talks too much about it but he denies it through the person of the movie artist, the Princess: “I have been accused of having a death wish but I think it’s life that I wish for, terribly, shamelessly, on any terms whatsoever” (Sweet Bird 41).

Williams’ protagonists grow spiritually beyond themselves in the most difficult situation. Chance Wayne’s quest for a better world ends up in humiliation and castration in Sweet Bird of Youth, but it gives him an opportunity to grow spiritually. He is tired of the superficial and meaningless life of a gigolo. He feels the prick of his guilty conscience and regrets on wasting his life in corrupt ways of living. He accepts his redemptive act of castration as an atonement of his past misdeeds. That is why he faces his unavoidable castration with courage and dignity. In fact, he achieves his manliness by losing his manhood. He acquires a new understanding of life at the end of the play. When it dawns upon him that he has been wasting his life, he decides to add some grace and meanings to his death. He attains a level of psychological maturity through this act of penance. He rejects the offer the Princess to run away with her because he wants to face the adversity like a man. He faces his castration with infinite courage expecting some meaning out of his suffering.

There is mystery and grandeur with which Williams’ protagonists confront their marginalization, the indifferent world and the great nothingness that surrounds it. They survive by following the concept of acceptance. Stella, in A Streetcar Named Desire, is faced with the most unpalatable situation but reflects her pragmatic realization that life must go on against all odds. Lonely Hannah, in Iguana, achieves a measure of psychic
integration by enduring her loneliness. She survives because she believes in a life of acceptance. Similarly, Maxine accepts what is suitable, sensible, and feasible under the bleak circumstances. In *Milk Train*, Chris inculcates in Goforth how to live and die. She decides to go forth alone because she reaches a state of being where acceptance is wisdom.

It is true that sexual perversity is present in some plays of Williams but such perversity is overwhelmed by the desire for true love. Brick’s homosexual tendencies are defeated by Maggie’s heterosexual potency. The sexual anxiety in Williams’ plays and the desire to come out of it throws light on the universal human phenomenon. Man tries to break out the sexual restrictions imposed upon him by his society. But this thing leads to a conflict when the society asserts its will. *The Rose Tattoo* is an effort to break the shackles of the sex taboos of the age of Williams. Serafina, who is so puritanical that she is never ready to listen to “man-crazy business,” (*Five Plays*, 156) breaks all puritanical attachments at the end of the play and runs after the fulfillment of the physical passion. Dorothea’s healthy appetite for sexuality urges her to accept the proposal of Bodey and succeeds in alleviating her loneliness. Similarly, Alma may eulogize her spirituality but ultimately her suppressed sexuality finds salvation in the company of her young lover. Myrtle marries Lot because she is fed up with her prostitution but Lot turns out to be impotent. Myrtle, however, succeeds in seeking sexual shelter in the person of Chicken. Erotic appeal has long been tabooed in American Drama but Tennessee Williams takes up the issue so candidly because he considers sexuality as a symbol of life and the possible salvation for the modern man. His protagonists succeed in getting compassionate human touch in a world replete with degeneration. He challenges the puritanical order of society by delving deep into the sexual dynamics between men and women. Lasting sexual relationship is a rarity in some of his plays but sexuality promises meanings in life in most of his plays.

Williams’ plays portray the pitiable and sorry state of human affairs. Search for some salvation is the key to human existence. The protagonists are so dejected and uprooted that they always want somebody who could offer them helping hand. They keep on waiting for someone who could save them from their predicament. It is true that life destroying forces in this world are powerful but the presence of the life saving forces is
effective and represents the element of hope. Some messiah or savior is always longed for in this world. In spite of bleak situation presented in his plays, there are moments when the dream of redemption is achieved with the helping hands of the saviors. The saviors in the plays of Williams are more powerful than the destroyers. That is why life follows death and hope follows hopelessness in these plays. Laura finds the balmy hand of her mother when everybody quits them. Blanche finds the kindness of Doctor when nobody is ready to accept her. The birth of Stella’s child gives the whole atmosphere a hopeful touch. The cancerous death of Big Daddy is followed by the pregnancy of Maggie. Maggie saves her husband from the living death of booze and brings him to normal life. Chance saves the Princess from her complete break down. His act of kindness makes her a new human being who is ready to face a new life. In the beginning, she is on the verge of complete collapse but ends up in a successful movie star. Hannah saves Shannon from his physical and spiritual conflict and makes him accept his inherently incomplete nature. Serafina no longer ties herself to the ashes of her dead husband and is redeemed by Alvaro. Alvaro brings her to the real man’s love and care. The dying Mrs. Goforth seeks the kindness of Chris who makes her death a little less painful with his balmy company. Catherine has no hope of redemption but Dr. Cukrowicz becomes her ultimate savior. So, keeping the above discussion in view, we can safely state that Williams is an optimistic playwright.
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