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LOST INNOCENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR GRACE

IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE AND THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

A THESIS SUBMITTED

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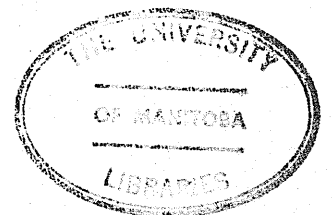
RELIGION

BY

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	.1
I. DRAMA AS IMITATION OF TRANS-ACTION. . . . .	21
Situation . . . . .	38
Time. . . . .	40
Space . . . . .	42
Transcendence . . . . .	45
Irony . . . . .	50
Attitude. . . . .	57
"Flight" as a Non-Transcending Motif. . . . .	58
Imitation . . . . .	61
Action. . . . .	64
Trans-Action. . . . .	69
II. DIALOGUE, INNOCENCE, AND GRACE. . . . .	72
III. <u>A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE</u> OR "TWO SISTERS" . . . . .	103
IV. THE MODE OF INCOMPLETION IN <u>THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA</u> . . . . .	134
V. CONCLUDING UNDRAMATIC POSTSCRIPT. . . . .	173
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	178

## INTRODUCTION

My theme is the loss of innocence and the search for grace in the plays of a modern dramatist, Tennessee Williams. The question of the "modern" is not an easy one to approach. The philosopher Martin Heidegger has spoken in disillusioning terms of "the spiritual decline of the earth. . .the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods. . .the transformation of men into a mass . . ." and still warned against the use of "such childish categories as pessimism and optimism."<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich opens his Systematic Theology with the statement that "today man experiences his present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life."<sup>2</sup> He does not stop with disillusionment but proceeds to formulate a question out of this description. "The question arising out of this experience . . .is the question of a reality in which the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome, a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning and hope."<sup>3</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that the question, so outlined, points to a crisis in man's self-understanding.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale, 1959; reprint ed., New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), I:49.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



The predominant spirit of the "modern" age is positivistic. It is an age of "scientific" inquiry. Distance and space have ceased to weigh heavily in man's view of his world. The world has been demythologized - that is to say that the gods have been identified as what they are: natural powers. Thus, man finds himself in a time when the gods that were have fled and the gods that are coming have not yet arrived.<sup>4</sup> He experiences his time as "between" times. It is the time of expectant waiting: for what, few among the wise are willing or able to say. Heidegger describes this time as proceeding under a double "Not." No longer possessing a "beyond" in which to invest hope, man is called to explore his own restricted place, to turn to the things themselves, and to make that his task.

The crisis has been advanced by the failure of thinking man to clarify what he understands himself to be. As Heidegger, and others, have argued, since Descartes a major movement in philosophy has assumed that the being of man is the same as that of the things which he finds around him in his environment. The split between subject and object has been assumed.

As the false assumptions are uncovered in the modern period, man begins to ask the question of his own reality and being. But, as Tom Driver remarks in his history of the modern theater, the questioning ends on a sour note: "The search for turns into the question whether. Could we know the real even if we came to it? And

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<sup>4</sup>Martin Heidegger, Existence and Being, with an Introduction by Werner Brock (London: Vision, 1949), p. 313.

is there anything, after all, that deserves the name 'reality'?"<sup>5</sup>  
 A radical scepticism attends any and every attempt at self-understanding.

The question of the form which the power that will transform this broken world of man will take is the immediate one - in the center of my analysis of Tennessee Williams. If the "modern" has lost his innocent trust in the world and realizes that to flee from his crisis, or boundary, situation into a Romantic past is out of the question, if he realizes that the quest or search for a gracious reality is of ultimate significance to his life and cannot be sacrificed for a blithe unconsciousness, then the question of "how" this new and transformed reality will appear must be his question. The boundary or crisis situation is inescapable for the "modern." The whole of his life enters this crisis and is submitted to its judgment. The boundary situation, as the "modern" situation, is one of life and death: to be or not to be. In former times men may have felt the question of meaning impinging upon the center of life. But the "modern" is driven from a broken and fragmented center to the boundary and limit of his possibilities.

"The answers to the questions implied in man's predicament are religious, whether open or hidden,"<sup>6</sup> according to Paul Tillich. Only by taking the question of man with ultimate seriousness can the answer be anticipated - emerging from the question. No ready-made

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<sup>5</sup>Tom Driver, Romantic Quest and Modern Query (New York: Delacorte, 1970), p. 348.

<sup>6</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:26.

answer will serve to satisfy this radical questioning. It will only frustrate it. The greatest danger is that the question will not be addressed with ultimate seriousness - that "positivistic" man does not know how to go about asking ultimate questions.

One place where the question of the power to transform a broken world continues to be asked is the "modern" theater. In the theater we are confronted with a direct sense of the life of the times. We are called upon to question, and to wonder, and to make the questions of a play explicitly our own questions.

In the following pages I will be concerned with the question of man as it emerges from a particular form, which is called "drama." One of my concerns will be to understand how criticism can be fully aware of this "form." I see my task as a reaction against the positivistic temper of the times which is reflected in the critical emphasis upon consciousness - "drama" is reductively treated in terms of an "aesthetic moment" or a "lyrical moment." This kind of criticism, it seems to me, treats drama as though it were making a statement, and not as though it were putting a question to us. This reflects the passive stance of onlooker which has even invaded our vocabularies, the words comprising which are "objects" of a special sort. The drama which questions reality and demands of us a similar self-involved questioning, also demands a vocabulary which is active and verbal. This shift back to the verb is at the center of my attempt to discover what "dramatic action" is.

The positivist-oriented approach to drama treats it as an aesthetic act or event. In engaging this perspective, as it seems

to me to be reflected in Esther Jackson's book, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams, I hope to establish that drama is not merely "aesthetic," but that the aesthetic is grounded in what Tillich calls the "religious" or depth dimension of life. To say that a play is a quest for meaning leaves unanswered the question how it is a quest for meaning, and what the quest itself means. Thus, the question of dramatic form requires specific attention.

My approach is "religious." I intend to argue that dramatic action is "religious." What does religion mean in the present context? It might mean the study of explicitly religious contents in the plays, the way in which Tennessee Williams handles "innocence" and "grace" thematically.

There is, I think, a more fundamental approach to the relationship between religion and drama. It begins with a recognition of the fact that images are much closer to the living situation than the concepts that are abstracted from it. An image, in the sense in which I am employing the word, expresses a direct sense of life or a life-attitude. To speak of religion as a basic or primary attitude toward life is not to reduce it to a subjective state. The life-attitude expressed through a play arises as a response to an encounter or encounters with the whole of reality, not only as it is perceived, but as it confronts a person with choices and decisions. An attitude is never neutral. It expresses a way of being with that which is over against oneself. Even as I receive glimpses of a world I am responding to it as a whole.

Thus, religion is not to be confused with a particular set of

values which claim authority in a given period, although a set of values will partly reflect a life-attitude. I say "partly" because a life-attitude is dynamic and unfinished, and never fully conscious. Paul Tillich defines religion as "ultimate concern,"<sup>7</sup> uniting in his definition both subjective and objective elements - "ultimacy" which we do not ourselves invent, and which throws our life into question, searching us up and down; and "concern" which is a full response directed toward the ultimate as the power of final salvation or condemnation. It is obvious that the "ultimate" of being and meaning must manifest itself somehow and somewhere. The fact of "ultimacy" means that it cannot be restricted to a particular form, time or space. However, it does appear through the particular; and the particular points beyond itself, toward the ultimate, symbolically. "Lost innocence and the search for grace" is not a particular content in the plays of Tennessee Williams. If that is the case, what do I mean by the expression?

When I speak of grace in relation to Williams' plays, I have in mind Paul Tillich's phrase "gestalt of grace,"<sup>8</sup> in which "grace" is the reality of reconciliation and reunion which heals the broken world. Grace appears through a particular form although it is not bound by that form. The form remains what it is. It does not gain a new and special content, because grace is not a something or a substance. It does, however, gain a new significance, in so far as it

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Idem, The Protestant Era, trans. with a concluding essay by James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 207.

is symbolically open to the new reality. "Form" is hardly an adequate rendering of the German word "gestalt" because "form" is a noun denoting a fixed reality, a structure. We do not see a play, from beginning to end, in an instant, and when we do reflect back upon it as an experience which we have had, we are aware of its formation - the dynamic process of its taking shape before us through different media. Our appreciation of the parts of a play is based upon our experience of the whole. Tillich writes that "the Gestalt embraces itself and the protest against itself; it comprises form and negation of form."<sup>9</sup> If the whole determines its parts, then it is possible to understand the underlying, whole, action as forming in diverse and conflicting ways throughout the play. Thus, the reality of grace would determine every facet of the life of a play. The loss of innocence, in this context, is the discovery of the brokenness of the world. The quest for grace is the positive direction toward overcoming this brokenness. It is not the only direction, since it is possible to retreat from the reality of brokenness back into a self-inverted world of "innocence." Where the gestalt of grace is determinative, the situation of drama is finished and completed. Where the gestalt of lost innocence is determinative, the situation of drama remains unfinished and ambiguous, because innocence is already "lost." The formation of the gestalt is thwarted because the question of man is frustrated, and not pursued.

A valuable introduction to these concerns is Williams' first successful play, The Glass Menagerie (1945), which suggests the range

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

and limitations of his dramatic imagination.

"The play is memory" (145)<sup>10</sup> the narrator, Tom Wingfield, tells the audience. Memory is employed to transform reality in the most obvious way: it selects the crises in the life of Tom, his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura. Something else is disclosed in the use of narrative which links the scenes together: memory is inescapable.

Just as Tom, the character in his own memory play, seeks to get out of his two-by-four situation (167), so Tom as narrator is attempting to free himself from memory. For Tom as character the central motif is Malvolio the Magician who is able to extricate himself from a coffin without removing a single nail. Tom as narrator in his opening words characterizes himself as the opposite of a stage magician. Malvolio escapes a situation which has all the appearances of reality and finality, and his deception is clever. Tom as character is not aware of the decisive difference between "illusion" and "truth." He thinks that the Wingfield apartment, with its deathlike constraint, ought to be as easy to leave. Tom as narrator is older, and painfully wiser with his offer of "truth in the pleasant guise of illusion" (144).

The play unfolds why it is not easy to leave - what in memory renders the past inescapable. The play is "truth" in its disclosure. Tom is in the play, and outside and beyond it, often at one and the

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<sup>10</sup>Tennessee Williams, The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, 5 vols. (New York: New Directions, 1971-76). All citations to the plays of Tennessee Williams (pagination in parentheses) are taken from this edition, unless otherwise specified: The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire from vol 1; Cat on a Hot Tin Roof from vol 3; and The Night of the Iguana from vol 4.

same time, so that, in the disclosure of "truth" the dialectic of nearness and distance sustains the tension of memory. It is not merely reflection upon some "finished business" but involvement in the unfolding of a confession in which Tom's obsessive guilt is revealed.

For Tom as character the poetic truth of the fire escape which leads out of the world of the apartment is valid. Ironically, he does not recognize the intensity of home life because his eyes are set on the conflict in Europe. He is a victim of the same blindness of which he accuses the entire middle class of America in the thirties. Tom sees "only shouting and confusion" (145) at home, which means in America and in the family apartment, sublimated violence the power of which has not yet reached him, the roots of which he is unaware. Resolution and commitment are reflected in the fighting in Europe, but purpose has not yet solidified in St. Louis. The situation is sharpened by the knowledge that he has not chosen it, in contrast to Amanda, who insists that of her many beaux, "I picked your father" (149). This same father is represented only by his photograph which points Tom, as character, to an option that Amanda repeatedly throws at him: to walk out on his mother and sister, and thus, to prove himself as faithless as his father.

Jim is introduced as an expedient, as a substitute, but it is plain that he does not offer an alternative to Tom. He turns out to be committed already. Yet he is "the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for" (145). To Amanda he represents the last hope for security in a feckless world. Deceived by her husband, by



Laura, and by Tom, she is challenged by the potential which Jim represents. Laura's little deception in the fiasco at Rubicam's Business College effectively closes the world of the two women. The "idea of getting a gentleman caller" (159) opens it again.

Amanda schemes. She has a grip on life and is afraid of losing it; hence the recollection of her various beaux, the jonquils, the dress and the forced gaiety. Amanda lives by instinctive calculation and possessiveness. "In these trying times we live in," she tells Tom (171), "all that we have to cling to is - each other." Tom as narrator allows us to draw out the ironic reduction of Amanda's "devotion" to her children to its lowest common denominator - possessiveness. If she finds it difficult to maintain her dignity and feels life slipping away from her, Jim represents a reversal. Amanda "resurrects" (193) an old and faded dress from the trunk. "Tonight I'm rejuvenated" (232) she tells Jim, and spilling some lemonade she shrieks: "I'm baptising myself!" (Ibid.). The newness of life which Amanda senses is short-lived, and the irony of it points to the central perception of the previous scenes: things are not what they seem to be. However, when she awakens to the final "deception," that Jim is not eligible, the ground has been prepared to show Amanda's ironic role in this fiasco. She has schemed to "feather the nest" (159) and this is noticed by the otherwise withdrawn Laura when her mother tries to make her more appealing with "gay deceivers" (192). To both Tom and Laura it "appears" that Amanda is setting a trap for the gentleman caller. She makes every preparation possible that he might not slip out of her grasp and yet, ironically, Jim

does. To hold him is beyond Amanda's control.

What about Jim? Does he betray Laura's trust in his psychological analysis of her? The answers which he has ready-to-hand precede any awareness of Laura's situation. His apparent ease does not alleviate the dis-ease of the situation; it merely covers it up. He fills up the silence between them, the troublesome and even threatening silence. In spite of himself he draws her out of herself. "Let yourself go now, Laura, just let yourself go" (225). And Laura responds, entrusting Jim with her favorite piece of glass - a unicorn (223). To Jim, emissary from the real world, a unicorn is a "little glass horse with a horn" (226). It is a special case of a type - a horse, but not a unicorn. When the horn is broken off the unicorn becomes, as Laura recognizes, "just like all the other horses" (226). Laura is just a special case to Jim, one who needs a little bit of attention - a kiss (228); but it can go no further, as Jim, hesitating over the hurt which he knows he will inflict, explains to Laura: "I've - got strings on me" (229). Jim does betray Laura, but only as the agent of Amanda's betrayal of her daughter. The power of love which Jim says "is really tremendous. . . something that - changes the whole world, Laura" (230) is displayed by Laura throughout the play. She approaches Tom, and begs him to be reconciled to Amanda; she forgives Jim for breaking the unicorn and makes a gift of it to him. It would not be going too far to suggest that in this action she makes a gift of herself.

With the departure of Jim the smouldering crises erupt and Tom leaves. Another approach to the same insight is that the world of

the apartment and the world from which the Wingfields are set apart converge in Jim's visit. Apocalyptic images abound, from the opening scene onward. Scene One, Amanda: "Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true. There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!" (150). Scene Four, Amanda: "I can see the handwriting on the wall. . . ." (175). Scene Six, Amanda: "We're going to burn up when summer really gets started" (203). In the narrative which introduces the fifth scene, the words "imminent," "suspended," "caught," and "waiting," point to the tense air of expectation. The illicit loves of the alley behind the Paradise Dance Hall, the "hot swing music" (179), suggest the same craving for adventure as Tom's spiteful characterization of himself as "killer Wingfield" (164). It should be noticed how the words "brief, deceptive rainbows" and "bombardments" are linked. Tom stands within the play, a participant in the world "waiting for the sunrise" (179). But he also stands outside the play, ironically viewing this promise as brief and deceptive, finally "shattered" (237). The bombardments will not, in retrospect, free the world for adventure; they will destroy its promise.

Amanda preaches "Spartan endurance" (172) but Tom lacks the requisite patience; he cannot wait (201) and rushes headlong into the dilemma that characterizes him as narrator. He runs away from a commitment he has not chosen into a future that he cannot choose because it is severed from his past. This is the paradox of his suffering: in choosing a groundless future he is delivered over to the tyranny of the past in memory. Ironically, it is not Amanda who

holds him back, as he had expected, but Laura. "All at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes. Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" (237). Tom makes a discovery in these words that the play has led up to and, indeed, been shaped by. It is the truth of direct address. It says that truth is confessional - that it is directed always toward the other. It points to Tom's ironic "faithfulness" - that no matter how far nor for what length of time he might run he must inevitably turn and face Laura in spite of himself. He must turn and face her faithfully, as she is. That this is the case can be seen from the fact that though Tom as narrator employs irony in relation to Amanda, to distance himself from her, Laura is portrayed gently and lovingly, without a trace of irony. The memory play is the turning toward Laura. At the same time it is Tom's plea for freedom: "Blow out your candles, Laura" (237).

At this point, in the play's last narrative link, the play's true subject, Laura, emerges from behind the mother-son conflict, from behind Amanda's scheming over a gentleman caller, to which she is an unwilling accomplice, from the scene with Jim in which he overshadows her. If the photograph of the father creates presence-in-absence, Laura in the little that she does say exerts a presence that more than balances it. Would it be too much to say that the audience, as well as Tom, are deceived into ignoring her?

The world of Tom as narrator is lighted by lightning and Laura's candles, her softness and innocence, have no place in it.

It is in answering the question "Is Tom now free, having made his confession?", that the ambivalence of The Glass Menagerie becomes evident. "And so goodbye. . ." Tom says, as Laura blows out the candles. If the direct address is taken seriously, as seriously as it ought, then it becomes clear that at this point Tom is not controlling or manipulating the scene any longer. The play is delivered over to its true subject, Laura, and her act of grace, the extinguishing of the candles, which sets Tom free.

Tom has potentially tragic stature as an over-reacher. He eschews the values and goals of society which determine Jim's expectations. He breaks out of his two-by-four situation, only to be trapped at last. But something else happens in this play. An understanding of life is vouchsafed which denies the closure and finality of tragedy. This denial of tragedy is introduced as a gracious act which enables Tom to say good-bye in a way that closes the play but opens the future. It would not be saying too much to speak of the play as "structurally" open.

In saying that confession is meaningful when it is directed toward the other as genuinely involved, and from that concluding that Laura is the true subject of The Glass Menagerie, the motif of "confession" is itself important to grasp. Confession linked with memory, the power of memory, the quest for freedom from self-bondage to this power, which is the search for grace viewed from "within," are recurring motifs in the plays of Tennessee Williams. The irony which pervades every scene - for example, the crippled Laura frees the "crippled" Tom - shows the peculiarity of the "modern" quest for

meaning: that it is restless and not content with half-meanings.

Religion and drama converge in The Glass Menagerie in the confessional mode of address. I must emphasize again that "confession" is not a content of the play. The play is memory, but memory does not free Tom from entrapment in the past. Laura does. Memory reflects entrapment and implicitly bears the direction which must be taken to overcome it. The direction is away from the ambivalent, ironic innocence of the character-narrator toward the gracious release which comes from Laura. Laura calls Tom out of himself.

There is a tendency, very well expressed by Michael Novak in his book The Experience of Nothingness, to think of our lives as stories which are being lived out, more or less consciously. Every person lives within a cultural context which imposes meaning on the flood of experience. Every culture invents a self-myth or identity. Every time that a person acts, he acts out the story which his culture provides for him, or some variation on it, or a story which subverts that story. It is even possible that a single person may be acting out two stories tending in opposite directions. This is the situation of Blanche DuBois in A Streetcar Named Desire. At no time, and at no level of life are we not acting out a story or stories. In the history of cultures there are certain "preferred" stories, or patterns of stories, which recur frequently. But always, and everywhere, this mythic self-structuring of reality takes place. "The experience of nothingness," Novak says, "arises when we consciously become aware of - and appropriate - our own actual horizons."<sup>11</sup> The experience of nothing-

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Novak, The Experience of Nothingness (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 83.

ness or the shock of possible nonbeing, as Tillich calls it,<sup>12</sup> assumes a pivotal role in our apprehension of ourselves. The experience of nothingness takes place when a clash occurs between self and world - when "I" am at cross-purposes with "It."

As I reflect back upon The Glass Menagerie, and ahead to A Streetcar Named Desire and The Night of the Iguana, I am not completely satisfied that "experience of nothingness" conveys Tom's dilemma. The more accurate expression is "experience of otherness." Tom comments, near the end of the play, on the fact that his life is totally uprooted. This is before he turns to Laura. We shall see that Blanche Dubois experiences the loss of herself and of her grip on reality because there is no "other" person. Larry Shannon, in The Night of the Iguana will be seen to be "at the end of his rope" until Hannah calls him forth from himself and frees him to accept Maxine, the woman who repels him, as she is, and himself as he is. Real "otherness" meets a person where he or she is utterly vulnerable. At some point their story has a fatal weakness.

I propose to cut through the "self-world" concept which supports the vision of drama as social reality, and this initiative is supported by Williams' own handling of the social context of The Glass Menagerie. It is not the primary interest of the play but serves more to amplify the crisis in Tom's life. Of the other plays to be considered, only The Night of the Iguana has a "social" context which transcends the stage on which the passions of the characters are acted out.

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<sup>12</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, I:163.

In Williams' plays we see the shattering of "social" roles, and through the mode of confession, for example, we catch a glimpse of a deeper dramatic form. Confession is a mode of direct address, finding its fulfilment in the hearer and his response. What happens when man tries to understand himself from the deep solitude of his individuality? Confession becomes a role played as before a mirror. It no longer needs the other person. A reflection of itself is sufficient. It is sufficient in itself because it gratifies the self to expose itself in the only way that it knows: by a reflex action. This reflexiveness is the stumbling-block in The Night of the Iguana where Hannah Jelkes attempts to draw Larry Shannon to a confrontation with the truth about himself. The distorted mode of confession is "distorted" and has not ceased to be confession altogether because it still presupposes that there is someone else. But it is not yet determined by otherness.

It is important to know the function of confession, and the distortion of that function, as we approach The Glass Menagerie where it is the form of the play. In order to understand the play we must know what to make of confession. To whom is Tom addressing himself? My own answer is that it - his confession - is directed toward Laura, from beginning to end, although it is only at the end that the true meaning of confession becomes clear, because only then does Laura emerge fully.

Since I view the play as determined by Tom's turning to Laura, and by Laura's simple but gracious act, I would also say that the play embodies a quest for grace. I view it as "structurally open"



since Tom is not "finally" trapped but "finally" released. This "openness" of the play means that it is a "gestalt of grace." Grace appears as the direction of the play. Tom's restlessness is, in this context, the first motion of grace. But grace is not a content which can be handled. I can explore the situation of the play as a "gestalt of grace" but I cannot pinpoint grace and say "there it is!".

My perception of A Streetcar Named Desire is more clouded. Blanche seems to be in the center of the play, telling us what the situation is. Her antagonist seems to be Stanley. The "hiddenness" of Laura in The Glass Menagerie is a clue to the authority that Stella, Blanche's sister, exerts in similar fashion in Streetcar. Blanche does not see the real "other" - Stella. She is too busy psychoanalysing Stanley in order to remove his threat to her. In the end she seems to be enveloped in darkness, in the experience of nothingness. She departs, in bafflement, but still playing out her broken story. The break through the "social" to the dimension of direct address never happens. Blanche, in her quest to recover a shattered and false innocence, leaves her impress so completely that the signature of grace is barely audible in the reunion of Stella, Stanley, and the baby.

As I proceed to explore the insights of a tradition of drama criticism, I will attempt to reconceive the idea of dramatic action in keeping with the "experience of otherness," the appeal of the unconditional and ultimate through the other person. In The Night of the Iguana "courage" becomes for the play a kind of pivotal term.

It is not just "the courage to be,"<sup>13</sup> but "the courage to respond" to the otherness of the other person. Thus, Williams' drama is grounded in a basic act: response, although response bodes change.

This is the direction in which my reflections tend. But along the way I intend to consider a paradigm of dramatic action which radiates from the idea of being situated. To illustrate briefly, consider the basic significance of place in these plays. Tom in Menagerie lacks a place to stand. This is part of his rootlessness. Blanche in Streetcar arrives at Elysian Fields, but it does not meet expectations: it is not what its name says it is. The incongruity of place and name is spelled out in diverse ways throughout the play. Finally, in Iguana Larry Shannon has returned to the Costa Verde. This coming back again is a central movement in the play as a whole.

However, it should be remarked that situation, or being-situated, encompasses also time, transcendence, and action. Beginning with a definition of situation as being-in-the-world, which lends itself to the dichotomy of self and world, I have proceeded, finally, to being-in-the-word. That this is no mere play on words is borne out by the extended treatment of Buber's dialogic philosophy. The centrality of "confession" as a dramatic mode in Williams' work confirms, for the purposes of this study, the "modern" need for a form of communication of the reality of reconciliation and reunion which is called "grace."

The reflections on dramatic form are finally inseparable from the plays which I have chosen to consider. An intuition of what drama

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<sup>13</sup>Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale, 1952), p. 3.

means in these plays is the starting-point for more intensive reflection. But as the order of my chapters indicates, the reflections are only valid as they illuminate the basic attitude and intention of each particular play, which appears through its "action."

## I. DRAMA AS IMITATION OF TRANS-ACTION

"Since the destruction of the great 'mirror' of the Elizabethan theater, it has been necessary to restore or invent the theater; and modern drama has been a succession of more limited genres, based upon more limited postulates about human life. . . ." <sup>1</sup> What has been lost to the contemporary theater is a stable world-picture. Shakespeare wrote for a theater which looked to an unsettled but relatively stable order, and he wrote in a language which reflected that balance and communicated it to the audience. The modern playwright has seen the collapse of order in the historical process, and the collapse of the vision which sustained it. He experiences a hiatus between himself and his audience. He is a prodigal who knows that a welcome cannot be expected. He is an exile seeking for a homeland where a common language is spoken and common understanding is to be had. The modern world is based upon more limited postulates than the Elizabethan, as Francis Fergusson says in his book, The Idea of a Theater. It is founded on "partial perspectives." <sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that a contemporary dramatist should be considered an "architect of form" <sup>3</sup> seeking to rediscover a purpose for

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater (Princeton University Press, 1949; reprint ed., New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Esther Merle Jackson, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. vii.

the theater, searching for "a representative form"<sup>4</sup> - a form which presents a living image of contemporary man - and involved in "the quest for meaning."<sup>5</sup> This is the approach that Esther Jackson has adopted in her book, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. "Form in his drama is the imitation of the individual search for a way of redeeming a shattered universe."<sup>6</sup> This is a statement which deserves much consideration. Form is clearly related to the quest for meaning since, as has already been pointed out, "depth" and the way to it are inseparable. "Imitation" directs attention to the way in which Aristotle understands tragedy in his Poetics. The individual search is inseparable from the idea of that which is being sought almost frantically in Williams' plays: a way through the world to make the world whole. Individual purpose is inseparable from cosmic and human malady. In broadest terms, the malady is the "brokenness" of the world, a world flooded, in the words of Tom Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie, "with brief, deceptive rainbows." It is a world held in suspension, a world waiting for that the name of which is still unknown to it. In the lives of Amanda and Laura Wingfield it takes the form of a gentleman caller who calls forth trust but is unable to fulfil the promise of it. It is a world in which communication takes place between men but is barely able to keep them together because it is so tentative.

A broken world is a world at cross-purposes with itself. Val Xavier in Orpheus Descending captures the tragic fact of existence - the separation of one human being from another - when he says that

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. xii.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 128.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

"nobody ever gets to know nobody! We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life!" (271). Paradoxically, he expects the woman to whom he addresses these words to understand them. But in the end, the power to heal the rifts and wounds of man is to be found, if anywhere, within this world. When Jackson says that "Form in his (Williams') drama is the imitation of the individual search for a way of redeeming a shattered universe,"<sup>7</sup> her emphasis is upon individual vision, defining form "as the imitation of critical insight."<sup>8</sup> It is the critical insight of the isolated character that provides the meaning in Williams' plays. "The basic construct. . . is that of vision: poetic revelation."<sup>9</sup> This "poetic revelation" and "critical insight" are one and the same thing. It is with this basic precept of Jackson's approach that I take exception - that the drama is reducible to a single moment, and that merely a perception.

A further cause for argument is the following citation, which though it deals directly with The Glass Menagerie can easily be extended to cover the body of Williams' work: "There is little if any action in the Aristotelian sense: that is, there is in this vision no strict pattern of causal development, from beginning to end. For in the lyric moment, action is aesthetic; it is the growth of understanding."<sup>10</sup> In order to deal with this statement some initiative will have to be taken with respect to the understanding of action which Aristotle possesses, as this understanding has been elaborated by Kenneth Burke and Francis Fergusson in terms of the three sequential modes of purpose, passion, and perception. For the moment, it is

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.   <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 34.   <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 113.   <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

obvious that "growth of understanding" approximates the final mode of "perception," and that in elevating perception the two prior modes sink out of view. As a result, the Aristotelian pattern is seen not to undergo a modification but to be stood on its head. It should also be noted that the lyric moment is precisely what other critics - e.g. Northrop Frye - have dubbed the epiphanic mode; and lyric is not, strictly speaking, dramatic. To place Tennessee Williams in a visionary company of poets - e.g. Hart Crane - may be adequate to introduce plays like The Glass Menagerie which concludes with the perception that "I tried to leave you behind, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" and Sweet Bird of Youth, at the end of which the hero (or anti-hero), advancing toward the audience, appeals for their recognition of "the enemy, time, in us all" (237). In both of these plays the lightning vision of the lyric moment spells the end of drama. The moment is a culmination, towards which all acts and insights apparently have risen or fallen. The moment is the formal dissolution of the tension, in as much as the play can go no further. The moment which is the prelude to action is quite another matter.

If the theater is attempting to restore or invent itself and an image of man to meet the times, this certainly does not mean that the critic is required to invent for himself partial critical perspectives, particularly when there are available to him the resources for exploring the theater holistically. Francis Fergusson writes that "drama can only flourish in a human-sized scene, generally accepted as the focus of the life or awareness of its time; and such a focus no longer exists."<sup>11</sup> The lyric moment is not the human-sized scene which the

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<sup>11</sup>Fergusson, Idea of a Theater, p. 237.

critic needs, although it is the scene which characters in the drama he analyses must settle for, as John Buchanan tells Alma in The Eccentricities of a Nightingale: "Generations of some creatures can be fitted into an hour. . . But you're not one of those creatures. You're a complex being. . . An hour isn't a lifetime for you, Miss Alma" (99). That Alma is willing to settle for a single hour of intimacy is the tragedy of the broken world.

Francis Fergusson has developed his own idea of the theater, following Aristotle's lead and expanding upon it. A play, he argues, is comprised of units, of scenes and acts, each of which can be broken into parts of a natural rhythm which he calls purpose-passion-perception.<sup>12</sup> Jackson has caught a sense of the third moment in the rhythm, but not a full sense, since she has dissociated it from the other two. It is on the basis of the three moments interpenetrating, and on that basis alone, that Fergusson is able to conceive of a human-sized scene.

Drama does not begin or end with a state; it is action through and through. The "perception" of the triad is not a static contemplation or even a thing that is learned - knowledge which comes into a character's possession - but a movement which is a prelude to future purpose. Jackson is certainly correct in establishing that there is a quest for meaning in Williams' plays and that the quest for meaning and the search for form are one and the same thing. But an important and puzzling question persists: what does the quest for meaning as such mean? What does it signify? I propose to argue that Jackson has abandoned this question.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 31.



The quest cannot be reduced to a single perception by a single individual which arises out of the quest, especially where this perception is conceived as a state, and not a happening or action. I am concerned here with the seeking action of the play as some ongoing, in-process, unfinished action. It can be called, as Fergusson calls it, "the mysterious quest for life,"<sup>13</sup> but it is important to recognize that creation is ambiguously thrown together with destruction, light with shadow, and order with anarchy. The quest for life is not simple but complex.

A play is not taken up with the conflict of disembodied values, but with the conflict of fiercely-drawn characters. A living image always precedes the discursive conceptualization of the human. Ontological understanding of the human reflects upon the pre-ontological imaging of legend, myth, and story. Symbol is prior to concept in so far as concept represents a higher degree of abstraction and objectification of the real situation. The living image is only possible where the scene of human action is human-sized. The need for a vocabulary which is able to do justice to the dimensions of the scene, and the action which it encompasses, forces itself upon the critic. A vocabulary which figures "action" as its key term must be essentially verbal, whereas one which figures "scene" - the lyric state - is likely to be nounal, with the emphasis falling upon description. Where the goal of the quest is not immediately clear, and will not be so until the end of the play, attention must be turned to the questing action itself, in its many forms, for each of these forms symbolizes

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

the goal in a slightly different way.

A second fundamental criticism of Jackson is her correlation of the dramatic form with the conscious design of the playwright. Jackson views form as "play structure" and "the pattern of organization."<sup>14</sup> No doubt this is a workable definition, though not a very imaginative one. Form is not just an imaginative reconstruction of reality. In fact, where drama is the "imitation of total consciousness, the reconstruction of the intricate process of knowing,"<sup>15</sup> the notion of imitation ceases to mean anything like what Aristotle intended by the word "mimesis." Knowing, with its idealistic implications, is situated in a knower, an agent. The critic who fixates on the process of knowing shifts the onus of criticism away from action proper. Form is not, finally, the "technique" which the playwright employs. What is here under examination is not the effectiveness of an exposition - the play as an illustration of an "idea" which the playwright wishes to get across - but the questing action of a play. Where form is defined as the playwright's conscious construction form becomes self-sufficient and self-enclosed. There is nothing to be sought beyond what the playwright intended. The play is a comprehensive symbol in the sense that it turns back upon itself and reflects itself from many angles. "Design, word, gesture, mime, music, dance, and light. . .are components of a sensuous symbol."<sup>16</sup> The intention of the playwright is the internal consistency or unity of plot, character, and meaning as a conditioned whole.

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<sup>14</sup>Jackson, The Broken World, p. xii, xv.    <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

Esther Jackson's idea of the play as symbol is sound, though it needs some expansion. In his book Dynamics of Faith Paul Tillich has undertaken a profound analysis of the word "symbol." He begins by recognizing that the attitude in which a symbol is approached does not stop with the symbol itself, but reaches out to embrace that which is symbolized. The symbol bears a necessary and not an accidental relation to what is symbolized. It has an inner relationship with it, as as Tillich puts it, the symbol "participates in that to which it points."<sup>17</sup> Having made a basic and simple distinction between the symbol and what it symbolizes, the question must be asked why it is necessary to symbolize at all? Why does one thing need to stand for another? What is the nature of this special relation?

The function of the symbol is to express a direction - toward that which cannot be directly stated or perceived. The outstanding characteristic of the symbol is what Jackson calls sensuousness - its immediacy or readiness-to-hand, and its perceptibility. The symbol is not opaque but transparent and open - open to the depth of meaning and reality. As Tillich continues: "A great play gives us not only a new vision of the human scene, but it opens up hidden depths of our own being. Thus we are able to receive what the play reveals to us in reality."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the symbol has a revelatory function: it is the figurative removal of the veil and the disclosure of that which in the everyday conceals itself in the coming to be and passing

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 42-43.

away of conditioned beings. The symbol allows man to stammer intelligibly, for "stammering is the native eloquence of us fog people," as Edmund tells his father in O'Neill's play Long Day's Journey into Night.<sup>19</sup> Man's ultimate concern can only be intuited through symbols, and never directly perceived. Symbolic expression is that in which literal meaning is negated by the "inexpressible" to which it points. However, this literal meaning is reaffirmed in its transcendent significance.

Symbols enable man to reach beyond the immediacy of the endearing and particular and to penetrate the transcendent dimension of reality. Jackson speaks of the dramatic act as "aesthetic." Tillich expounds upon the limitations of this attitude in an early paper entitled "The Philosophy of Religion:" "Directedness toward particular significances and their interconnections in the universal work of art is the cultural-aesthetic act."<sup>20</sup> The "belief-ful" attitude out of which Tillich speaks has as its goal "the intuition of the inner dynamic in the structure of the meaning-reality."<sup>21</sup> The aesthetic act is, intentionally, unbelief-ful - that is, without regard to its transcendent reference. Even when it employs religious symbols, it subordinates them to the intended unity of the whole. It interprets them for the sake of its own internal coherence and is not interpreted by them. The unconditional, or depth dimension, which breaks through

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<sup>19</sup>Eugene O'Neill, Long Day's Journey into Night (New Haven: Yale, 1956), p. 154.

<sup>20</sup>Paul Tillich, What Is Religion?, trans. with an introduction by James Luther Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 67.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 51.

every symbol is not consciously intended, although it is never absent. Without it, no new vision of the human scene would be possible, and "the hidden depths" would remain hidden.

Jackson suggests the idea of the play as a comprehensive symbol. I want to expand this idea and say that a play is a comprehensive symbol because it intends more than it expresses. The playwright employs symbols to bear meaning; and I am saying that the play itself is a symbol, a comprehensive symbol - or, to avoid all confusion surrounding symbol as lyrical statement, the play is a symbolic quest.

The Tillichian appreciation of symbols is rooted in an acute awareness of the "rhythm" of life. By "rhythm" is meant the three sequential modes of purpose-passion-perception. This rhythm is both ambiguous and restless. Tillich perceives ontological polarities which in each living form are questing for that from which they came, the "ground" of being in them, the power which is able to overcome the turmoil of existence. This pretence of going back and recovering primal wholeness, which is, in simplest terms, the quest for the recovery of lost innocence, disguises the real movement, which is a going forth and a discovery of higher integration, which is the search for grace. An illustration may be useful here: the character in a play who goes off in search of himself will not find himself in the remote past but only in the future. This is not to overlook the possibility, always present, that he will look backward longingly at the innocence which is forfeit for life-giving experience. However, the paradox of the dramatic movement beyond the loss of innocence toward a grace which will, in some form, restore wholeness, is that the

"ground" of the search, from which it departs, also prepares the "homecoming" for the prodigal. The "ground" is his "goal." However, what intervenes between the leave-taking and the home-coming is the "heart" of the play, bearing the mystery of how the one springs from the other.

Esther Jackson objects to the idea of form in the drama which features a linear progression of events, a chronological development with beginning, middle, and end. This is the narrative structure of the play, the telling of a story. In an article entitled "A Metaphor for Dramatic Form," Martin Rosenberg describes an idea of form which is less emphatic about the horizontal direction because "the easy hypnotic power of the neat linear form has seemed insufficient to convey the raggedness of existence."<sup>22</sup>

This quality of "raggedness" might also be described as "openness." Life has not got the qualities of smoothness and periodicity which make the "well-made play" (a la Scribe) so successful. The pattern of tension-release is a too simple model of motivation to do justice to a discontinuous human universe. The spoken word may be the horizon of drama, but in the service of a plot rolling inexorably onward to a conclusion it sacrifices the depth of human being. All life, and not only "modern" life, is basically untidy. Man passes through the gate of birth and travels the narrow road to death. Death is little more than a cessation, without fanfare. In fact, in the "process" view of the universe, there is no real interruption to speak

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<sup>22</sup> Marvin Rosenberg, "A Metaphor for Dramatic Form," in Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, ed. John Gassner (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956, 1967), p. 345.

of. The way between birth and death is a zone of shock.

Particularly in the theater which Martin Esslin calls "absurd" the spoken word is relinquishing its primacy, for "what happens on the stage transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters."<sup>23</sup> Such is the case in those plays of Eugene Ionesco in which words are placed in the service of language games taken to the limits of reasonable discourse.

In the drama of which Rosenberg speaks horizontal direction has given place to vertical depth and the richness of a "felt" context. The single immobile world in which a single movement was recorded has been replaced by many fugitive perspectives which, like passing clouds throw shadows on the "ground." Plot is pushed into the background. What is encountered, in the words of Martin Esslin, is the playwright's "intuition of the human condition by a method that is essentially polyphonic."<sup>24</sup> "Polyphony," "analogy" - a term which Francis Fergusson, following the example of Aquinas, employs - and "symbol" are closely related terms. The drama of felt context translates "the restless intensity of inner life into busy, loaded symbolic action."<sup>25</sup>

The first stirrings of the theater of felt context come about in the plays of Anton Chekhov, as Tom Driver shows in his history of the modern theater. Drama as the imitation of an action which is serious and complete gives way to drama as the imitation of quality -

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<sup>23</sup> Martin Esslin, The Theater of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday, 1961, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Rosenberg, "A Metaphor for Dramatic Form," p. 351.

of the texture of a lived situation.<sup>26</sup> Tennessee Williams, in his Memoirs, characterizes Chekhov as holding too much in reserve to suit his own theatrical tastes, but he declares that "Chekhov takes precedence as an influence"<sup>27</sup> on his work over D. H. Lawrence whose themes have been the basis of many, often moralizing (e.g. Norman Fedder) treatments of Williams' own themes. Driver also remarks the "Chekhovian focus upon the quality of experience"<sup>28</sup> in A Streetcar Named Desire.

In any case, with Chekhov a shift in the understanding of the meaning of drama takes place, and Williams falls within the line of continued development of this shift. It is a "shift" and not a "break" with which we are concerned since it can best be studied from what it attempts to transform. What it succeeds in transforming is the paradigm of dramatic form in three sequential modes so that the mode of "passion," or the suffering of experience, is given priority. With this singular emphasis it becomes difficult to focus "purpose," and "perception" is minimal. "Act" gives place to "being" as the key, underlying, ontological term for this drama. This insight obviously goes a long way in explaining the development in criticism which Esther Jackson represents here.

The shift discloses a "hidden" historical movement from the hero to the anti-hero, a movement which Jackson has admirably chronicled. It discloses the movement from the act of revolt as individual

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<sup>26</sup> Driver, Romantic Quest, pp. 217-225.

<sup>27</sup> Tennessee Williams, Memoirs (New York: Bantam, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> Driver, Romantic Quest, p. 309.



pride or hubris, the isolated act which brings down suffering and guilt upon the agent, toward the state of being of suffering without the act, because the "hero" is simply overpowered by the massiveness and weight of life, and suffers from nothing in particular. He cuts out for himself an existence which has so much recoiled from the traditional shape of "humanity" that it has become less than human. The quality of this suffering is mediated through the loneliness of characters who cannot share what they have in common: meaningless suffering. With the shift from hero to anti-hero the dimensions of reality change. From larger and fuller than life, the character now becomes weak and pathetic, ironically related to his scene or situation, and not realistically related. Irony is the medium of drama as the imitation of quality.

Guided by "action," drama predicates life. It makes a complete statement (e.g. "Life is nasty, brutish, and short."). Guided by "quality" or "context" drama is pre-predicative ("Life is. . ."). It tends to be open-ended and incomplete, attempting to allow the play to be interpreted by the unspoken threshold of speech. As Driver remarks, "the nuances of the relationships between the characters and between each of them and the environment take precedence over the 'story.'"<sup>29</sup>

The shift discloses a further modification. Imitation of the action "of the cosmos" becomes "of the psyche" and finally "of consciousness." To the ancient Greeks, Kosmos signified the harmony and order of the universe that was comprehensible to the reason of man.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-223.

This suggests that the structure of reality and the structures of the mind interpenetrate. When this assumption is challenged and rendered questionable, man turns inward to the drama of psychic life. This is the drama of individuation, which is the differentiation of man's life toward the realization of the Self, or personality. This comes about by the raising to consciousness of the contents of the dark and "unconscious" side of the psyche, symbolic contents in which are activated the basic archetypes of man's being. These archetypes never appear as-such but actualize themselves as the dynamic core of the images of dreams, myths, and folktales. Newness, in the life of the psyche, comes about in the endlessly varied recombinations of age-old archetypes, and in the "realization" of this "combination" is constituted the uniqueness of an individual, or of an art work.

If the goal of individuation, and psychic life in general, is to redeem, by conscious realization, the transpersonal center of the psyche, of which the personal ego is but a pale imitation, then it presents a parallel to the paradigm of dramatic form. Individuation is the bringing to light of the original life-form, which is "given" from birth, by way of the synthesis of the dynamic oppositions of conscious and unconscious. In the words of Carl Jung, who has pioneered "depth" psychology: "it is only separation, detachment, and agonizing confrontation through opposition that produce consciousness and insight."<sup>30</sup> Having broken away from the original, undifferentiated and "innocent" wholeness of being, man struggles toward differentiated

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<sup>30</sup>Carl G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. Violet S. de Laszlo (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 136.

wholeness and the gracious completion of himself - the healing of his inner cleavage in life-giving knowledge.

The epiphany of "consciousness" appears at the end of this process or quest. The emphasis on consciousness comes at the end of a kind of thinking which adapts meaning and reality to the mind. Drama as the imitation of the psyche is a compelling modern recovery of the idea of "cosmos." However, it has a fatal shortcoming. Positing an "objective" unconscious, which is dialectically related to the "subjective" consciousness, it argues that man lives in two "real" worlds. But since the definition of "psyche" encompasses not only mind, but also bodily life, experience of the "outside" world is filtered through the psyche and mediated to consciousness by it. Without the reflective psyche a world would not exist. Hence, all reality is through the perceiver. This split between outer and inner event and world confirms the split between subject and object which is the bane of modern Western philosophy.

It should also be noted that the collective or objective unconscious is historical only within a mythological context. It really presents man as a-historical. Moreover, it raises the question whether this psychic model is really able to account for the bringing to consciousness of archetypal material without the aid or partnership of the other person who must himself work out his projections in dialogue.

Since imitation of the life of the psyche proves to be an inadequate formulation of the context of dramatic "action," the attempt must be made to recover the meaning of Kosmos. Martin Heidegger has taken a definite step in this direction, as the following citations

show:

A 'commercium' of the subject with a world does not get created for the first time by knowing, nor does it arise from some way in which the world acts upon a subject. Knowing is a mode of Dasein (the particular being of man) founded upon Being-in-the-world.<sup>31</sup>

Ontologically, 'world' is not a way of characterizing those entities which Dasein is not; it is rather a characteristic of Dasein itself.<sup>32</sup>

"World" is predicated neither on cognition nor on perception. It is "there" primordially. Being-in-the-world is one of man's basic states; world is one of the constituent items of this state. Thus, world precedes the subject-object split in consciousness. It is not an entity within the world, nor is it a "realm," a totality of beings, but "the concept of world first assumes the meaning of the How of being in its totality."<sup>33</sup> World, or Kosmos, signifies the way in which man is situated, how he finds himself "in the midst of," how he comports himself in his relationship to other beings, human and other-than-human.

In order to appreciate fully the idea of Kosmos as "be-ing situated," intentionality as it is expressed in "situation" must be clarified in terms of the categories of time and space. Kosmos is historical and not cosmo-logical. Time and space are its essential determinants.

In her book Feeling and Form, Susanne Langer has characterized

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<sup>31</sup>Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>33</sup>Idem, The Essence of Reasons, trans. Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 83.

drama as giving a virtual history. "Its basic abstraction is the act, which springs from the past, but is directed toward the future, and is always great with things to come."<sup>34</sup> She envisions a whole world coming into being and moving toward its future. What constitutes a world as this world and not another is its self-identity from moment to moment. The present is always pregnant with the future and bearing the past that has formed it. In the drama the accent falls upon the impending act. Drama is filled with movement, but not with sheer motion. It is the destinate movement propelled by its futuring toward a resolution. "It is only a present filled with its own future that is really dramatic. . . .the dramatic is the mode of destiny."<sup>35</sup>

### Situation

In order to make sense of the term "action" in the study of drama, it is necessary first to recognize that this action proceeds from a context which shapes and influences it. Drama presents a situation as it comes into being. Thus, "situation" is never standing still. It is not an immobile world. Langer's key metaphor is "process" or "organism." The "situation" of the drama has an organic character. Its form changes as new relationships are opened and as new meanings are discovered.

Situation cannot be objectified by those standing within it. The idea of a situation is one which is met everyday. Man is always

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<sup>34</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1953), p. 306.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

"in a situation." He begins with it and proceeds from it, always speaking its concerns. He springs away from it only to return to it. The gravity of the situation makes it utterly inescapable. Flight from it is still flight from it.

Man is in a situation and the situation is in him. In Heidegger's terminology, he is being-in-the-world - not secondarily, but primarily, and essentially. He discovers himself in an environment of entities ready-to-hand, but the discovery already predicates worldhood. The noun "situation" is thus deceiving. It promotes the thought of a static "thinginess." But man grows into an awareness of "situation" or world in his everyday being, the awareness itself already being grounded and founded on his essential relatedness or participation. To speak of "a situation" is to make conscious and act upon the knowledge of "be-ing situated."

The be-ing situated to which man awakens in his everyday being presents itself to him as a radical demand. As Werner Brock interprets Heidegger, in his introduction to Existence and Being: "A concrete given 'situation' is the 'There' (of Being-there) disclosed in its nature by 'resolve.'"<sup>36</sup> Resolve, or resolution, taken by man in a situation discovers the potentialities of man's being called "to be situated" and deals with them purposively. The radical demand is man's being called in "situation" to risk his whole person. The risk entailed is the making actual of what is only potential. But the moment in which the person is called is not a vacuum without past or future.

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<sup>36</sup>Werner Brock, Introduction to Existence and Being, by Martin Heidegger (London: Vision, 1949), p. 86.

Time

The "present moment" in which drama takes place enfolds both past and future into itself and renders them meaningful by bearing up their essential relation to the present. "Time" is the making present which precedes and makes possible the measurement of time. Making present is not the "present" understood chronologically. Chronological time evinces the same deception of the nounizing of experience: bits or morcels or chunks of time. The moment, as it is understood in view of "be-ing situated" is presence. However, the noun "presence" seems to be immediately self-defeating. The dynamic character of time as making present or presencing is intended. Time is lived time. It is not predicated. The moment, as such, demands from man a decision bearing upon the meaning of his life. The decision is his life. It reflects his intentionality and resolve. Susanne Langer writes that "a dramatic act is a commitment. It creates a situation in which the agent or agents must necessarily make a further move. . . .The situation, which is the completion of a given act, is already the impetus to another."<sup>37</sup> The influence of situation on action, and of action on situation, is reciprocal.

The dramatic image of man is being-toward-the-end. It means that man has an aim at or toward some goal. Since this goal is not "known" from the beginning, he is himself the "aim toward" it.

Drama is in-formed by the drive toward the new and the novel. The form is not fully realized until the events culminate in a resolu-

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<sup>37</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 355.

tion. But to ask about the form from the end of the play, on the assumption that it is now there, is to miss the meaning of dramatic form completely. The form is in the realizing or, to use another metaphor, in the unfolding. What surfaces throughout is the tension between the self-identity of the situation and the thrust or drive to transcend it. The demand of the present is conditioned by the expectation of the future.

In Langer's approach every moment and every act leaps ahead of itself and embraces a host of future possibilities. For Heidegger, a true beginning will always be a leap into the future in which a resolution is anticipated, and awaited. The end is latent in the beginning, though not actual. There is a leap, even in the beginning, a withheld leap, toward the outcome which is potential in it.

What I want to focus at this point is an understanding of temporality which accounts for the individual quest and the quest of the play in which the individual is but one among others. Thus, within the play there may be several quests and the character of each and every one of them symbolizes an implicit, underlying, dramatic Quest.

Time is one of two primary determinants of situationality. As Calvin Schrag points out, in his book Existence and Freedom:

The time of human concern has an ecstatic character. Man experiences the time of his existence not as a flow of instants but rather as directions of his being, held in memory and anticipated in hope. Temporality as the ground determinant of our being makes possible the remembrance of our past and the anticipation of our future in the existential present.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Calvin O. Schrag, Existence and Freedom (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961), p. 129.



The "existential" present, which bears the dialectic of pro-tension and re-tention could not be if man did not have a place to stand. Temporality and spatiality are equiprimordial in man's being.

### Space

What is the meaning of space in drama? As we sit in the theater, one of the most striking features of the stage is its limitation. It "imposes restraints," as Tom Driver says. He goes on to argue that "the aesthetic of theater is in large part built upon the imaginative overcoming of fixed space. . . .When the theater is at its height it binds infinite space into a nutshell, as Hamlet said."<sup>39</sup> With the advance of technology all space is levelled into a sameness. The meaning of space for human existence is obscured and apparently neutralized. We often observe that the world seems to be shrinking - a sad reflection of our loss of a true sense of distance. The modern theater often mounts huge productions in which the play simply disappears in the virtuosity of the set. "To fill space" seems to mean cluttering it with objects. Inevitably the play cannot "breathe." What is called for is a turn to a theater which "fills" space with event-fullness. In an essay written in 1913, Martin Buber reflects a concern that the theater is not satisfied "with two-and-three dimensional details. It wants to convert its space into a 'real' one and so rob the experience of the scenic occurrence of its

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<sup>39</sup>Driver, Romantic Quest, p. 463.



necessary polarity."<sup>40</sup> This is where Driver's "imaginative over-coming" comes into play. Theater space is virtual space. That is to say that it creates the illusion of a space into which the audience can easily step, which is their own. Yet there is a polarity: "the genuine sense of distance as well as the genuine relation that is only possible through activity."<sup>41</sup> The activity referred to is that of the spectator, and not just the actor. Where a scenic technique has been perfected, the spectator turns passive in his appreciation. He is no longer challenged to imagine.

Buber acknowledges that attempts are made to restore the stage of earlier times. However, a copy without the living principle which animated the original cannot endure:

Only that space can endure uniformly in the midst of transmutations which is self-enclosed, which is different from ours in its nature, which announces its nature to us clearly and cogently that, throughout all the streams of relation, we experience it as inaccessibly over against us.<sup>42</sup>

The problem of space in the theater is now beginning to shed some light on the meaning of space in drama. Space is never indifferent. When space which is familiar to us is rendered "over against" us and unfamiliar it is freed to be, as finite space, a bearer of meaning. The objects in a space define it only secondarily, but their presence may disclose how man relates to space.

The essence of space lies in the penumbral field surrounding speech. That is, man's speech-acts indirectly show his bearing toward

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<sup>40</sup>Martin Buber, Martin Buber and the Theater, trans. and ed. with an introduction by Maurice Friedman (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 79.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.    <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

space. "The Greeks had no word for space. This is no accident; for they experienced the spatial on the basis not of extension but of place."<sup>43</sup> Space is primarily taking place. A place is associated with the action or actions which take place there. Space is secondarily the staying in a place. "To be a human being," says Heidegger, "means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell."<sup>44</sup> This dwell-ing of man is a gathering together, an assembling, of earth and sky, divinities and mortals. The linking of "mortal" and "dwell-ing" is revealing when it is considered that mortal is a distinction bestowed upon man alone: he who knows that he must die. "Finitude means having no definite place; it means having to lose every place finally and, with it, to lose being itself."<sup>45</sup> Man's dwelling is an abode; his abiding rests on a hidden foundation. Man experiences his relation to the world space as "thrown" when he is cut off from the foundation, when he can no longer discover the infinite in his finitude.

To sum up the meaning of space for drama, I shall again borrow from Calvin Schrag's exposition:

. . .the primordial space of the world is not a dimension at all; it is a direction. It is a direction of human care in which distance is not that of metrical measurement but that of distance experienced as existential remoteness and nearness. The spatiality of being-in-the-world is first a lived space. The geometrically derived space with its dimensional loci and metric measurements is a later abstraction<sub>46</sub> from a primordial lived space of immediate experience.

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Idem, Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:195.

<sup>46</sup> Schrag, Existence and Freedom, p. 35.

### Transcendence

Space and time interpenetrate in the dramatic situating of man. But the character of being situated in the midst of other beings belongs to transcendence. Man ex-sists. He not only stands in the environing of other beings but he stands out of it as well; sets it at a distance, and thus makes it over into something else. Life transcends itself in all of its dimensions, but only in man does self-awareness transform it into conscious intention and purpose. "The terms 'act,' 'action,' 'actual,' denote a centrally intended movement ahead, a going-out from a center of action."<sup>47</sup> Man stands within nature and its cycle of birth, decay, and death. The transitoriness of life is natural, but there is transcendence of the natural in the reflection upon it. The universal event of the passage of beings leaves its impression on man in the repressed (melancholy) awareness of his own death. The problem of transcendence is the problem of finitude. The dynamic of life resists the threat of a final form in which vitality will be lost. The threat of extinction is only overcome, as threat, when man acts in the knowledge that it is inescapable.

Man is anxious that his potentialities will be extinguished before he is able to actualize them. He is anxious about the meaning of life. The tension within anxiety draws him either toward transcending his situation or toward self-surrender to it, either toward risk or away from it. In his life there will be moments of security, calm, and peace. But there will be no final fulfilment. There will be no overcoming of the ambiguities which attend decision. There

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<sup>47</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3:30.

will be moments in which the endless round of duties fathered by habit will be broken by the suffering of being, when the meaninglessness of routines will be disclosed. When man takes his finitude into his actions and attempts to transform his life; when he seeks to pierce the shell of plausibility which surrounds his world, making it tolerable; when man seeks the ground of his finitude in the infinite and ultimate: there is transcendence.

Transcendence is symbolic in so far as it means that a bridge is laid across the abyss which separates the conditioned from the unconditioned. Transcendence is the crossing over which is a transformation. A change is effected in man "in principle" although not in fact, since breakdown and failure are the inevitable result. Man still dies. However, as Karl Jaspers writes, "it is in acting out his own personality, in realizing his selfhood even unto death, that he finds redemption and deliverance."<sup>48</sup> The transcendent act "restores" man to his essence, restores him to his openness to the power of being in him. Transcendence can be imagined as an ascent. Its opposite, fall or fallenness, can be imagined as a descent through the conditioned to nothingness. By a curious paradox, the one movement passes through the other. The two interpenetrate.

Tragic man, in transcending his situation, becomes guilty by identifying himself with that toward which he is directed. He abrogates the power of being to himself. He has not created his own possibilities, but he seizes them arbitrarily as though he had. In

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<sup>48</sup>Karl Jaspers, Tragedy Is Not Enough, trans. Harald Reiche (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), p. 42.

reality, to use an existential formulation, he is "thrown" into them. He cannot maintain himself as their ground without denying the power of being, thereby profanizing it. He undertakes the symbolic quest literally. He accepts or maintains the authority of one form over all others.

How can this paradoxical situation be accounted for dramatically? How can a change be effected in principle though not in fact? With these questions we enter into the dialectics of transcendence. The drama critic requires a vocabulary which is able to do justice to these questions, and to the dimensions of the scene and the action which it encompasses. Dealing with the shift in dramatic perspective, from Chekhov to the present, it was noted that a "key" word had changed: "act" gave place to "being." For the present encounter with the plays of Tennessee Williams I shall attempt to synthesize the two into a "being in act," being appearing through act, intention manifesting itself through action.

The first step toward developing an adequate vocabulary is to explore the resources of the traditional vocabulary. In his book A Grammar of Motives, Kenneth Burke has developed such a vocabulary featuring "action" as key word and suggesting that the origin of language is in verbs. Any verb with connotations of consciousness, intention, or purpose falls under this category of action, for "the basic unit of action is the human body in purposive motion."<sup>49</sup> The basic linguistic ratio is that of scene to act. "There is implicit

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<sup>49</sup>Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Prentice-Hall, 1945; reprint ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 61.

in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it. This would be another way of saying that the act will be consistent with the scene."<sup>50</sup> The demand for consistency does not rule out the possibility of incongruity between scene and act. The so-called theater of the "absurd" offers many fine examples of this disjunction, the effect of which is to throw an audience on its guard, and make it aware of the mystery of simple actions.

In the theater the props on the stage "contain" the action of the play "ambiguously." As the events of the play unfold, the ambiguities of the set are resolved. Act and scene fit together. As man sets out on the pilgrimage of his life, as he gets under way and on his way, he takes some kind of path. Implicit is the idea that the path crosses a ground. Every first act (or "way") must be enacted in some kind of scene (or "ground"). This entails a definition of action. To say how an act is, to speak of it substantially, raises to attention the paradox which is at the heart of dramatic realism, which Burke calls dramatism: the paradox of substance.

"Substance" is etymologically a "scenic" word. It belongs to a whole family of scenic words - that is, words for placement. The paradox resides in the fact that though "substance" implies what is intrinsic to an act, it means that which stands under, that which supports - in short, that which is extrinsic. Thus, definition is a negative undertaking: to define an act in its context is to say what it is in terms of what it is not. So far, Burke shows us the disposition of terms.

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

No adequate study of human relations, let alone a study of drama, is possible without a theory of transcendence. This is the key to Burke's trans-position of terms. He perceives three dramatic "moments," which Fergusson adopts, and which Burke names poiema, pathema, and mathema - the act (purpose), the sufferance (passion), and the learning (perception). The movement through these moments is transcendence. For each action

. . . involves a corresponding passion, and from the sufferance of the passion there arises an understanding of the act, an understanding that transcends the act. The act, in being an assertion, has called forth a counter-assertion in the elements that compose its context. . . . And when the agent is enabled to see in terms of this counter-assertion, he has transcended the state that characterized him at the start.<sup>51</sup>

In grammatical terms, what was "a part of" becomes "apart from." Apposition becomes opposition.

Every principle or "first" contains the "spring" of its opposite, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the development of language called the negative. The strength of an affirmation lies in the fact that men can roam far afield and still return to it to orient themselves by it. The paradox in this "flexibility" is that in affirming it they depart from it. Sooner or later the departure and the extent of it are remarked, but not before a new key-term is found to serve as the starting-point for a fresh departure.

As Burke goes on to say, "the moment of crisis in transcendence involves a new motive discovered en route."<sup>52</sup> The mood of the crisis is ironic, because there is a certain inevitability in the formula

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 38.    <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 421.



that what goes forth as A returns as non-A. What is "suffered" is a reversal, what is called the "peripety" of drama. Such is the case in the leave-taking/home-coming motif which I used as illustration earlier.

### Irony

The basic strategy of drama can be defined in the infinitive mode: to be situated. Irony contributes to this strategy: to be situated/to be completed. Irony is the drive to completion, and as such the encompassing medium of dramatic action. That "drive to completion" is a far too general definition, and that irony is a particular mode of completion, shows both the scope and the limitation of this exposition. I want to elaborate upon what Kenneth Burke has described as the going forth of A which returns as non-A.

To speak of the "ironic" perspective of a character within a play seems to pinpoint the mood of that character as negative. But "irony" as it is being employed here refers to the negative as an objective principle within which all of the perspectives of a play are interpreted. Thus, all perspectives are implicated in the irony pervading a single perspective, because this perspective is a part of the total, objective and complex development of the play. This total development is what I will call the "action" of the play.

In considering dramatic "situation" it was stated that the end is implicit in the beginning as a latent possibility. Drama takes place in the present tense, but it is dominated by the expecta-

tion of what will be. A direction is presupposed in the present and the expectation that it will be pursued, that what is happening will be taken to its inevitable conclusion, is aroused. When non-A makes its appearance it is not "simply" other than A, or unrelated to A. Non/A bears the stamp of A - under the impact of the negative. It bears a "complex" and ambiguous relation to A. Expectation of A suffers a "reversal," and this "reversal" is the ironic mode of a play. It is essential to drama that of all the possibilities arising from the hypothetical A the possibility arrived at, the one which is sought out, is non-A. In his study Irony and Drama, which leans heavily on Kenneth Burke, Bert O. States writes:

As ironies proliferate in a play, we begin to anticipate the inevitability of a master irony. . . . But from a more strategic standpoint - assuming that something must be continuously feeding an audience's anticipations in a play - we could say that drama simply is peripety, and that the objective of drama is to make human experience as peripet-ous as possible.<sup>53</sup>

The ironies of a play are controlled by, and manifest, its hidden eiron. Formally speaking, every play has only one irony which the "action" of the play imitates or bodies forth on all levels in a variety of ways. Irony and action cannot really be distinguished because they are integral to each other.

The action of a play passes through the tension of A/non-A, from A to non-A, thus formally completing itself. Through irony the finite form is completed in itself.

Reversal brings with it discovery, what in the paradigm of

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<sup>53</sup>Bert O. States, Irony and Drama: A Poetics (London: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 26-27.

action is called "perception." For example, with the end of Tom's confession The Glass Menagerie is rounded off, but it is not completed. The action of Tom as narrator is "to confess" and this action passes through irony. Memory focuses upon Amanda as the dominant character, from whom Tom as character wishes to escape. But the action of Tom as narrator implicitly asks "why, then, am I not free?" and in the end the discovery is made that Laura holds him back, and not Amanda. This discovery illuminates Tom's attitude in the negative. He says to Laura that he is more faithful than he intended to be. But he is only faithful in the sense that, not knowing what "bound" him back, he was not free to dispense with it. This is only a part of Tom's "bad" faith. He says that he is more faithful which leads to the observation that his faithfulness has been in his inability to distort Laura or her part in his life. Unable to weaken the hold of her "image" on him, he has finally to face it. In a sense, then, Tom's memory play is deliberately directed away from Laura only to find her inescapable in the end. The negative, "bad" faith becomes positive as Tom "turns" to Laura and addresses her, realizing that he cannot free himself, that only Laura can free him from Laura.

Discovery brings to consciousness a "tragic flaw." Such is the view of a long tradition. This "flaw" serves as the point of "identification" between the audience and the character on the stage whose heroic proportions set him "above" them. The flaw means that through hubris or pride the hero over-reaches himself. He has a peculiar blindness which cuts him off from his own vitality and casts him

down, so that his downfall is a most humbling experience. Irony as the medium of drama discloses men who are anti-heroic, who are characterized by modest human, or less than fully human, stature and who share with all men not a flaw, but a basic lack of insight into their cosmic and social situation which discloses them to be mastered by it. The characters most frequently singled out for attention, at least in Williams' plays (e.g. Blanche Dubois and Larry Shannon), desperately try to assert control as the ground slips away beneath their feet.

The audience, typically, has more insight than the anti-hero. The audience is "above" the anti-hero. "Flaw" and "lack of insight" hardly exhaust the ground of "identification" between audience and dramatic character. As "suffering" in the ironic mode assumes priority in the dramatic paradigm over "purpose" and "perception," the basis of "identification" is seen to be more akin to what the theologian means by "original sin" - universal fact and personal act, the fact actualized in the act. As a result of this shift in understanding, the audience does not witness the "magnification" of human being and of human values but their "de-magnification."

The tragic flaw is "recognized." Reversal entails recognition, by one or more characters, of the situation. But "recognition" implies only cognitive enlightenment: the flaw could be removed if it was only personal. In Elia Kazan's analysis of A Streetcar Named Desire the flaw has no vestige of the personal and is entirely social: Blanche clings to a "tradition" which no longer works. The tragic flaw is psychologized, which means that it is turned into a sickness not shared

by the general audience, or it is allegorized and the social determination of the character or characters renders them victims of circumstance.<sup>54</sup> "Tragic flaw" is not adequate to describe what is discovered in the peripety or reversal of a "modern" play.

In the light of what was said about "original sin" as fact and act, or being in act, a more penetrating expression for individual intentionality in "reversal" might be "conversion." The everyday usage of the word "conversion," with its religio-moralistic connotations, almost precludes it from the present context. However, in the sense of a re-turning of the whole being, the stepping into the primal "situation," the word "conversion" bears the full implications of "being in act." The conversion, or failure thereof, of the individual characters is an imitation of the peripetous action of the play as a whole. Thus, the ironic "curve" of a play brings out not only a recognition of penalty but "metanoia" - a radical and new awareness of guilt, of personal culpability in every act and not just in a single, unprecedented, act.

The definition of "irony" in the negative reflects a sense of "fatality" in dramatic action. Dramatic events seem to find their end with "inevitable" efficiency. But fatality is not necessarily negative.

As the medium of a total, objective movement, irony is either mastered or unmastered. The quest for grace is either mastered or unmastered. It is either framed by acceptance or by rejection. In

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<sup>54</sup>Elia Kazan, "Notebook for A Streetcar Named Desire," in Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theatre, ed. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), p. 367.

simple, grammatical terms, estrangement and the gracious overcoming of estrangement translate as rejection and acceptance and the vocabularies which arise from these attitudes. Where expectation is "simply" negative, a double negative emerges. Beginning with non-A a play proceeds to Not-non-A, a hidden, grounding, positive perspective. The closing words of The Night of the Iguana are a good example of this insight. Knowing that she must go on alone, Hannah still makes a petition to stop. She makes this petition in the negative: "Oh, God, can't we stop now. . .?" But it is not a simple negative statement. It is a question and an invocation which affirms the negative. This double negative is what I call mastered irony and it is imitated in the trans-actions of all the characters in the play. From within the negativities of the situation, the life-giving positive emerges, and while it does not nullify the negatives, it does make them supportable. In this way the situation is transcended.

Unmastered irony begins with a positive and proceeds to its opposite; or it begins with a positive, proceeds toward the negative, but falls back upon the positive; or it begins with a negative and returns to the negative via the positive. When the ambiguity of irony is not confronted it is not mastered. That is not to say, however, that because irony is not mastered a play is not drama. "Mastered" and "unmastered" are adjectives describing the grammatical frame of the irony.

In conclusion of this excursus on "irony," it should be added that "reversal" and "transformation" interpenetrate. Transformation is a change in key-terms and hence a change in substance or first

principles. What occurs in the moment of reversal is a linguistic transsubstantiation. So far as dramatism is concerned, dialectic is the category of categories. A colloquy can seldom be understood fully "in itself," but more often as an answer, or as a response to some prior directive. As Martin Buber says in his paper on "Drama and Theater:"

Drama is therefore the formation of the word as something that moves between beings, the mystery of word and answer. Essential to it is the fact of the tension between word and answer; the fact, namely, that two men never mean the same thing by the words that they use; that there is, therefore, no pure reply; that at each point of the conversation, therefore, understanding and misunderstanding are interwoven; from which comes then the interplay of openness and closedness, expression and reserve.<sup>55</sup>

In his Poetics, Aristotle views tragedy as the imitation of an action. In Burke's terminology, where language is treated as symbolic action, this imitation would be "symbolization," rather than the badly abused idea of "representation," which has demonstrative and pictorial, nounal and not verbal, overtones. The more important feature of the definition is the stress upon action, because as Aristotle continues, life is action. (Chekhov, on the other hand, would certainly say that life is suffering.) Therefore, character and spectacle are subordinated to, and revealing of, action. In keeping with my stated objective of viewing the tradition in terms of the pressing concerns of the modern drama - hence the need to outline "being in action" - this "action" will be understood as the formation of the word as something that moves between beings of which Buber speaks. "Formation" is a verbal noun, or gerund - from the infinitive

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<sup>55</sup>Buber, Martin Buber and the Theater, pp. 83-84.

"to form" - and as Burke notes, "in the tradition from which Western philosophy stems, 'form' is the act word par excellence."<sup>56</sup>

In the study of drama the critic must be aware that there exists a tension between dynamics and form. It is the tension between potential and actual, which is also the tension at play in the "attitude" which man adopts.

### Attitude

Burke is inclined to regard an attitude as an "incipient" act, with some hesitation because of the ambiguities which attend the word "potentiality." "Incipient" means just beginning, partially in existence though not fully so. "Attitude" shares the paradox of substance: just as it can be the first step toward action, it can also serve as a substitute for action, and hence, as a dissolution of drama. Paul Tillich has caught the tension of incipency very well in the second volume of his Systematic Theology where he writes that "man experiences the anxiety of losing himself by not actualizing himself and his potentialities."<sup>57</sup>

An attitude, in everyday usage, is a moment of arrest. As such it is ambiguous. For the arrest may follow upon the heels of action, which means that its quality will be summational or culminative, with no further resolution required. This is the case in the lyric, where action is transcended by the lyric state. Or as in drama the moment of arrest may pretend decision, a decision which will effect change.

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<sup>56</sup>Burke, A Grammar of Motives, p. 190.

<sup>57</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:35-36.



The danger here is the utter fascination with deliberation for its own sake, as is the case with Hamlet, whose brooding delays and almost short-circuits the intended act. On the boundary the question of the incipient act is none other than "to be or not to be."

When the constellating term is "act," the negative is not a proposition, such as "it is not so," but a command, as with the "though shalt not's" of the Decalogue. Man experiences nothingness first as the inability to meet the moral commandment. In the garden of Eden the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil presupposes the possibility that man will transgress, that he will literally trans-gress - walk across and beyond his prescribed limits. He will cross the bridge and claim what is forbidden; but only in this way can he go beyond his finitude and become man.

In drama "attitude" is the beginning of the act which transcends "situation." Before proceeding now to define "action" it is necessary to consider another dimension of the attitude or disposition which is before us: the failure to transcend through flight from the situation.

#### "Flight" as a Non-Transcending Motif

In Williams' plays the figure most frequently marked for development is the fugitive. He is not wayfaring but wayward. Like the Kilroy of Camino Real he likes situations that he can easily get out of. He likes situations that he can master. The fugitive is pursued, and what pursues him he seeks to forget in flight. "I would have

stopped," says Tom Wingfield, "but I was pursued by something." His mother, Amanda, harps on his lack of initiative. Tom is drifting. Williams seems to say, "So it is with man." Things happen around him and to him, but the boundlessness and shapelessness of his possibilities so frightens him that he is unable to choose for himself. He is unable to choose himself! So he is unable to choose for others, or to affirm them in their direction. It is the turmoil of himself which this man sees in the world. The arrest of motion, the act of stopping the flight, the ceasing to be a fugitive, does not of itself mean a resolution. Arrest of motion has the character and forcefulness of a question. It forces upon the fugitive the possibilities which he has been fleeing, and since these possibilities cannot realistically be divorced from his "thrownness," it thrusts upon him explicitly the meaningfulness of finitude. It presses upon him with the force of his own lack of resoluteness. It presses him to drive beyond himself, and to transcend himself.

However far in time and space man runs, he can never get past the knowledge that flight buoys him up. If he succeeds in forgetting what is too painful to bear, he can never forget that he is running away from it. This means that what he is pursued by is always "there," "before" him in both senses. The fugitive is anxious, and his anxiety throws him back repeatedly upon the "what" of his anxiety, a definite potential for being. Flight again and again insinuates itself into his consciousness.

Man cannot beg the question of his own being. As he drifts from purpose to purpose, testing the immediate practicability of each,

the essential mystery of "situation" sinks further into oblivion. Man is the question which he asks about himself before any question has been formulated, as Paul Tillich says.<sup>58</sup> Where he turns away from the mystery of his situation he experiences a loss of his relation to the power of being - the breaking of the divine-human covenant - and hence the loss of essential humanity which is constituted by this relation.

The paradox of substance comes into play when man discovers the meaning of being in meaninglessness. It appears in radical doubt as the faith which makes doubt possible. It appears where man is driven to the boundary, for "each of life's possibilities drives of its own accord to a boundary and beyond the boundary where it meets that which limits it,"<sup>59</sup> that which resists it. On the boundary the questionableness of human being turns into an in-vocation, a call to act, to respond, and to decide.

The paradox of substance, though it serves well the inquiry into metaphysics and theology, requires some modification if it is to be acceptable in the study of drama. Burke argues that if there is an ultimate of beginnings, there is also an ultimate of endings, "whereby the essence of a thing can be defined narratively in terms of its fulfilment or fruition."<sup>60</sup> Time and space are essential elements in the drama. The form of the drama expresses

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>59</sup>Idem, On the Boundary (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1962), p. 97.

<sup>60</sup>Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (Prentice-Hall, 1950; reprint ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 13.

"the temporizing of essence."<sup>61</sup> The emphasis on the end is consistent with Aristotle's notion of entelechy which Burke insists is inseparable from imitation.

An end is both a purpose rounded out and a termination. Here a "death" is marked and a passage or transition to a new purpose and end, arising from the first, commences. Man leaves home in order to find home. When a man is nostalgic he is not seeking some furtive respite from the present - at least, not only this. He is expressing the desire to return to something which can only be reached by the purchase of memory. He is expressing a longing to return, although the goal is the fulfilment of his yearning. Hence, nostalgia requires man to turn not to the past but to the future in search of his home. Only in this turning will he be able to affirm the present, the need of which nostalgia underscores - if only as a time in which to secure one's searching.

In order to proceed, some clarification is required of the notion of "imitation."

### Imitation

In the sixth chapter of his Poetics, Aristotle states that "tragedy is an imitation, not of man, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality."<sup>62</sup> Continuing in the eighth chapter he observes that "the

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-14.

<sup>62</sup>Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher with an introduction by Francis Fergusson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 62.

imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole."<sup>63</sup>

The translation is that of S. H. Butcher, who preserves the sense of an action. Aristotle intended the imitation of the action of the cosmos, but in such a way that action in general was not the object of imitation, but rather an action in particular. I have already underscored the movement from potential to actual in which drama is caught up. It would not be wrong to describe this movement as the actualization of the action. This is an intriguing phrase, introduced with some justification? Is the idea that actualization corresponds to imitation? What does imitation mean?

It is probably easier to say what imitation does not mean. For example, it does not mean "representation." Connotations of mimicry and copying are foreign to what Aristotle intended by the word mimesis. I have suggested that Kenneth Burke attempts to restore the theory of entelechy which was an integral part of it. "Actualization of an action" follows this lead. Burke has also spoken of the symbolization of an action, and this is probably the most appropriate redefinition which mimesis has received. Francis Fergusson resorts to the phrase "showing forth,"<sup>64</sup> and Tom Driver writes that "the action. . .is imitated, or bodied forth, by the arrangement of the incidents."<sup>65</sup>

To further complicate matters, Burke has perceived in Aristotle

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>64</sup>Fergusson, Idea of a Theater, pp. 124, 150.

<sup>65</sup>Tom Driver, The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearian Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 77.

"the appeal of wonder"<sup>66</sup> in tragic imitation (Poetics IX, 12). That this observation springs us into another problem - that of catharsis - there can be no doubt. Drama makes its appeal to the sense of the ineffable. Wonder points us to mystery, which is neither social ritual nor "mystification." Wonder does not seek to denude what is mysterious. It seeks to safeguard it as mystery.

"Symbolization" is suited to the definition of the play as a comprehensive symbol. It carries the same burden of meaning as Fergusson's word "analogy:" "the language, plot, characters of the play may. . . be understood in more detail and in relation to each other as imitations in their various media, of the one action."<sup>67</sup> That action cannot be considered as a spiritual content or theme because, in that case, it would be possible to say simply and directly what it is. The action of a play is one action and not a series of actions. Each of the characters performs certain deeds, and we are in the habit of calling them actions. But the action of the play is not one action among others, even one to which all of the others are ultimately reducible. Action encompasses the complexity and diversity of the play. In Fergusson's words, "by action I do not mean the events of the story but the focus or aim of psychic life from which the events, in that situation, result."<sup>68</sup> Action is the motive "which governs the psyche's life for a considerable length of time."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Kenneth Burke, "A Dramatistic View of 'Imitation,'" Accent 12 (1952), p. 240.

<sup>67</sup>Fergusson, Idea of a Theater, p. 47    <sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>69</sup>*Idem*, The Human Image in Dramatic Literature (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 116.

Fergusson's remarks show the influence of "depth" psychology. I find his insights illuminating, but have chosen to reject "psyche" in favor of the more adequate notion of "situationality."

The critic should be attentive in each outward event for the principle which generates it. I use the word "principle" just as I have used "substance," "essence," and "ground" elsewhere. In view of the temporizing of essence, action is the hidden ground and goal of the drama. It is the transcendent dimension of the play - originative and form-giving. It is the telos, that in the beginning already has the end latent in itself. To employ a simple though indispensable play on words: "action" is in-tension, which means that it is the inner directedness of the play as a whole, the relation of the conditioned forms to the unconditional aim. "Action" is also the forming of a word between characters.

A distinction needs to be made between the finality of the message which the playwright might wish to introduce from outside the play to resolve the tension, a finality which is imposed through one character who attempts to summarize the whole vision for us; and the finality of the tension itself, which is resolved from within the context of the dramatic situation. Tension or in-tension shows the revealing-and-concealing character of personal encounter. Resolution means that this dynamic twofold relation has been taken up into the personal encounter.

### Action

To proceed with the insight into the dynamic nature of action,

the contradiction inherent in saying "action is. . ." must be formally acknowledged. To define is to cut off, to limit, to close off possibilities, to mark out a single avenue of approach and reject all others. Definition is de-termination. The action of a play is best expressed in the infinitive mode: to strive, to seek, to find.

"To be" cannot, grammatically, be included. Neither can it be included ontologically. The word "infinitive" makes the reason for this insight clear, as Martin Heidegger explains in his Introduction to Metaphysics: "infinitive" is "an abbreviation for *modus infinitivus*, the mode of unlimitedness, indeterminateness, namely in the manner in which a verb accomplishes and indicates its significative function and direction."<sup>70</sup> The infinitive underlies all of the inflections of the verb. "Every human attitude to something, every human stand in this or that sphere of being, would rush away resistlessly into the void if the 'is' did not speak."<sup>71</sup> Being is not a being: ". . .the presence of what is present is not finally and also something we face, rather it comes before. Prior to all else it stands before us, only we do not see it because we stand within it. It is what really comes before us."<sup>72</sup> It may be helpful to proceed with an example.

In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof the "action" can be interpreted by the infinitive "to make the lie true" (165). A case can be made for Maggie's relationship to Brick, Brick's relationship to Skipper and Big Daddy, and Big Daddy Pollitt's relationship to his cancer, demon-

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<sup>70</sup>Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 46.

<sup>71</sup>Idem, What Is Called Thinking?, trans. with an introduction by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 174.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 98.



strating how each bodies forth the centrally intended action.

Maggie would like to make Brick love her, thus making the lie about her pregnancy true. Brick would like to escape the truth about Skipper, that, in the words of Big Daddy, "You! dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it! - before you'd face truth with him" (124).

Big Daddy, in spite of his insistence that he has lived with lying - "you got to live with it, there's nothing else to live with. . . ." (109) - is still overpowered when the truth about his condition comes from Brick, the only person whom he trusts and who is himself "crippled" by the truth. These two characters carry the middle act of the play, so that the forceful impression of truth as crippling and killing is binding on the third act, which is played out against the awful negative of Big Daddy's dying. Though it does not take place on the stage, Big Daddy's absence is a direct refusal of Big Mama's efforts to resist the truth. This absence brings "truth" in its many guises out into the open: for example, the simmering rivalry of Mae and Maggie ends with Maggie's announcement of her pregnancy as a kind of challenge. The first act is more ironically suggestive, working, as it does, around the "pretence" of a birthday party at which everyone, except Big Daddy and Big Mama, know the true state of their lives. This is seen "indirectly" or "obliquely" in the tension between siblings, the forced gaiety, and even the presence of Mae and Gooper who do not as a rule spend their vacation on the Pollitt plantation. "Nobody says, 'You're dying.' You have to fool them. They have to fool themselves" (51). Though Brick and Big Daddy are directly confronted by each other with truth and

find it inescapable, they cannot accept it, and run away from it. The truth, and the truth that one must die, most profoundly, shakes all of reality, and shows it to be all a lie. It is the flight from truth that Maggie, in all her intensity, means by "the dream of life:" "life has got to be allowed to continue even after the dream of life is - all - over" (57). This dream is that life or, for Brick, youth, is everlasting, and that there will always be plenty of time. The truth, which shatters this innocent dream, is that time has run out on the dream; and the truth is a judgment. Maggie points to the need to accept the truth that the dream of life is a lie: but why can it not, then, be transformed into "truth?" The ambiguity of this final question, which is Maggie's question, closes the play. The perspective which this question discloses remains "unmastered." It is shaded over with ambiguity. Thus, the play is neither tragedy nor comedy. But to say that nothing will come of Maggie's efforts to make Brick whole again, that the perspective which is reached at the end of the play is not determinative of its action - this ambiguity must be fully explicated.

It can be seen why imitation cannot be equated with the copying of nature from the preceding argument. Nature is no longer the all-embracing realm of life that it once was. The Greek word from which "nature" is derived means the power of emerging and enduring, of emerging from the hidden ground, like the stem of the plant, its branches and leaves, from the root in the earth. Where it is possible to hold before us this arising and perduring, "imitation" would not be significantly different from "bodying forth." However,

the word "nature" has become split off from its active and verbal essence and been reduced to "natured" nature, a scene which is acted upon. The original word figures action intrinsically; the latter extrinsically - much as a photograph "captures" a scene, by betraying what the scene essentially is. The photograph has a vanishing point, and sacrifices a range of vision, which the eye has. Therefore, if "imitation" means that the dramatist approximates the everyday with a "film" record of activities, nature is further reduced to "human" nature, or the reality of consciousness, and becomes the object of psychologizing.

The aim of a play is unified symbolically or analogically. When the play is divided into act and scene, not arbitrarily but to mark off completions, the rhythm of three sequential modes, which is the movement of the play as a whole, is repeated on a smaller scale. Each scene has purpose-passion-perception. The purposes may be many purposes, many perspectives, all pointing back to the hidden "action." Susanne Langer says, in Feeling and Form, that drama is a whole world coming into being. That world is "presented only as each character in turn actualizes it in his story and according to his lights,"<sup>73</sup> Francis Fergusson argues. Each character has a single perspective on the whole, and this partiality prevents him from giving away the whole story. From purpose, and the proliferation of purposes, arises the suffering or passion, attended by expectation based on the intuition of how things are. A possibility, or a multiplicity of possibilities, are presented which require further clarification.

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<sup>73</sup>Fergusson, Idea of a Theater, p. 115.

For example, flight insinuates itself into the fugitive's consciousness. In the moment of perception the itinerant is able to speak his plight. Aristotle has called the perception "recognition" - "a change from ignorance to knowledge"<sup>74</sup> - a drawing together or gathering into focus and resolution, where resolution is understood to mean a decision to act. I have already commented upon the need for a more adequate expression for "recognition," taking into account the depth of estrangement which the "modern" experiences.

Each dramatic mode imitates or bodies forth the seeking action. Thus, the unity of a play is symbolic. Plot, as the arrangement of incidents, reveals the seeking action in that the outcome of every deed, and of the play itself, bears a direct relation to the foundational action. Character development, or individuation, is the individual form of the seeking. Having said that, and reflecting back upon the brief study of "action," it is possible to see how the argument can be carried a step further - a most significant step further.

#### Trans-Action

"For the word is never something for and in itself but only comes to completed reality through being received."<sup>75</sup> In this perspective "action" is understood as "trans-action," or what Buber calls "the formation of the word as something that moves between beings." The action of a play is essentially dialogical, and not

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<sup>74</sup>Aristotle, Poetics, p. 72.

<sup>75</sup>Buber, Martin Buber and the Theater, p. 10.

monological. Language is event. It is not first and foremost "rational discourse." Language is first speech. Man's being as man is so bound up with language as speech that it is true to say that "existence is spokenness." Not only are man and man in dialogue, they are a dialogue, a particular speaking which expresses a particular way of being situated.

That there are frequent misunderstandings and few moments when each one is able to fully trust the other, that communication more often than not degenerates into "battle" or "conflict of interest," attests to the impurity of dialogue. But it is out of the depths of primordial dialogue, the living twofold relation in which "persons" are born, that individuation comes.

So significantly does this insight transform what has already been said that it requires some introduction and then - extended treatment. The fact cannot be disguised that such expressions as "being-in-the-world" lend themselves to a philosophical vocabulary which begins with man "in himself." It protracts the difficulty of understanding individual quests and divergent perspectives as somehow unified.

Martin Buber begins with the "attitude" of the whole being of man, but he proceeds to develop a fuller basis or "form" (gestalt) of human being in the "between." Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" and Buber's "between" are diverging concepts. I will make no attempt to conceal their differences behind similarities or some kind of synthesis. Beginning with Heidegger the question of what man transcends toward is a legitimate one. The apparent answer is "his

essence." But it is not immediately clear what that essence is. It is not so easy to overcome the awkwardness which attends the description of "worldhood" or "being in" where several characters are involved with each other. This awkwardness results from the fact that relation to others is not considered ontologically "essential" to human being. "Relation" is essential in Buber's understanding of man. Man transcends himself in the direction of the concrete other. His speech is formed in the encounter or meeting with the other person. His resolution is taken in face of the other person. His situation is determined by the concrete other person, before the other person, and with the other person.

Before we sit down in the theater, and before the players transform the boards, there is speech. Man's intentionality is carried in speech, communicated to his fellow-man. The form of his relationship to the fellow-man - "I-Thou," "I-It," or degrees of both, to use Buber's terms - is incarnated in speech. Speech is not just a useful tool, more useful the greater skill and mastery is displayed. Speech is the encompassing situation of man. It takes its form, primordially, "between" man and man, and not "in" man.

The great question to be presented in the following pages is the bearing of the speech-philosophy of Martin Buber on drama and on the forms of grace in Williams' plays. "I speak, therefore I am." But speech presupposes someone who hears and answers. Dramatic action is formed in the situation of the spoken existence of man with man.

## II. DIALOGUE, INNOCENCE, AND GRACE

In theory few men are as free as a playwright. He can bring the whole world on to his stage. But in fact he is strangely timid. He looks at the whole of life, and like all of us he only sees a tiny fragment; a fragment, one aspect of which catches his fancy. Unfortunately he rarely searches to relate his detail to any larger structure - it is as though he accepts without question his intuition as complete, his reality as all of reality. It is as though his belief in his subjectivity as his instrument and his strength precludes him from any dialectic between what he sees and what he apprehends. So there is either the author who explores his inner experience in depth and darkness, or else the author who shuns these areas, exploring the outside world - each one thinks his world is complete. If Shakespeare had never existed we would quite understandably theorize that the two can never combine. The Elizabethan Theatre did exist, though - and awkwardly enough we have this example constantly hanging over our heads. Four hundred years ago it was possible for a dramatist to wish to bring the pattern of events in the outside world, the inner events of complex man isolated as individuals, the vast tug of their fears and aspirations, into open conflict. Drama was exposure, it was confrontation, it was contradiction and it led to analysis, involvement, recognition and, eventually, to an awakening of understanding.

This quotation from Peter Brook's The Empty Space reflects forcefully the dilemma and plight of contemporary drama. For, like the actors and directors who take the written blueprint and endeavour to breathe life into its shorthand, the playwright is wrestling with the question of what the theater and drama are. Brook has accurately drawn out the tension which is the strength of drama: the exploration by man of his relationship to the society in which he moves - the prevailing ethos, the forms and pressures of the age. Where these pressures are only dimly perceived and reflected, where the social context remains

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Brook, The Empty Space (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 40.

essentially unexplored, man performs his actions in a near void, and however much he may agonize, the depth and mystery of life are withdrawn from him.

Have words failed us, or have we failed the word? This is the special concern of this section. The "word" is the special concern of the playwright who reaches beyond what Miriam, in Williams' play In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel calls the "well-defined circle of light," and steps into the "dimness that increases to darkness." The circle is "the protection of our existence. . . our home if we have one."<sup>2</sup> It is most dangerous to go beyond it. How can this crisis of transcendence be bodied forth? Are words adequate, or is language too riddled with cliches to be recovered in its symbolic immediacy?

The "word" encompasses not only what is spoken, but what is gestured and unspoken as well - what silence disturbingly manifests. The "word" is not a series of declamations. It is all too easy to hide the true character of the human event behind words. Rambling, "idle" talk is a perfect cover for real conflicts. "Drama was exposure," Brook says. Exposure breaks down where one man claims to open himself to another unreservedly and becomes infatuated with the idea of confessing.

All real living has a thoroughly dramatic character. "All real living is meeting,"<sup>3</sup> says Martin Buber in his classic work I and Thou. The tension which arises between man and man, or between man and the

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<sup>2</sup>Tennessee Williams, Dragon Country, (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 11.



world, or between man and God, is not dialectical but dialogical. Two terms are not synthesized into one higher term which overcomes the conflict, because it is not "terms" which are involved. Rather, man and whatever stands over against him, facing him, retain their distinctiveness. However, simply because a conversation is struck up between two people does not mean that they are "in dialogue."

There are many mediate and mediating uses of language. For example, "rhetoric" covers all of the arts of persuasion, a whole range of possibilities for exaggerating, distorting, lying, and wheedling. What rhetoric demonstrates most convincingly is the ambiguity of everyday speech. Ambiguity becomes an advantage in dealing with another person. A certain degree of detachment is possible; a role can be assumed; demands can thus be deflected. But in dialogue the masks are let down, or cast aside, and men stand nakedly unreserved. "Speech is unreserved" does not mean that the flow of words issuing from the mouth is continuous, but attests to the depth of the utterance which requires a response. Unreserved speech is ultimately meaningful speech, expressing ultimate concern, in which the hitherto disguised being of man steps out into the open.

All real living is dramatic in the sense that man enters with his whole being into his situation, and responds to its call with all that he is; not with reason alone, for reason does not have the dramatic character of life which arises spontaneously and unpredictably. Reason is a worrisome plodder.

In a short work entitled Daniel (1913) Martin Buber first establishes a twofold relation of man to his experience - a relation

which he calls "orientation" and "realization." These are, strictly speaking, "attitudes." It has been seen how attitudes, as incipient acts, are determinative for dramatic action. Experience may be accounted for the sake of specific aims, or for its own sake. It may have fixity or fluidity.

The question which immediately underlies this twofoldness is that of the nature of human reality. For what does a man recognize as real, "the hours in which the many overshadow and weaken the one or those in which the one shines in the undiminished fullness of its splendor because it is related to nothing other than to itself?"<sup>4</sup> In realizing, man does not relate his life-experience to anything else but itself. He does not observe the myriad connections which it has with other lives or with other objects. Man realizes "only as a whole and united person,"<sup>5</sup> only as he expresses a readiness and a willingness to "perpetually begin anew, perpetually risk all anew."<sup>6</sup> It is not as a reasoning animal, or by taking thought, that man realizes, since "it is not. . . my thought that beholds the abyss, it is my being."<sup>7</sup> Living with the whole being means danger, the constant threat of annihilation because the stability of man is called into question. It is an unfolding, a becoming and not a having, or possessing.

Orientation, on the other hand, "installs all happenings in formulas, rules, connections which are useful in its province but remain cut off from a freer existence and unfruitful."<sup>8</sup> Orientation

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<sup>4</sup>Idem, Daniel: Dialogues on Realization, trans. with an introduction by Maurice Friedman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 90.    <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 88.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

means that man takes his bearings from a world-view. Just as realization signifies renewal, orientation signifies preservation, the shoring up of the fragments of life against impending ruin. Orienting man is goal-possessed, and unable to escape the dispersion of his energies in his manifold aims. He lacks a single aim and a specific sense of direction. He has, so to speak, entered the forest and lost his way. Orientation is order without comprehension. Since the whole of the universe is put together, man reasons that it must be reducible to its elementary parts and functions, and that it can then be reconstructed from the discoverable relation of its components. Orienting man is eminently informed about his world. But the vast reservoir of information cannot give him the meaning and without meaning he longs for some security against the threat of absurdity, against a world which refuses to answer to his pleading.

The realizing man knows that the promise of security is vain and empty. "Realization relates each event to nothing other than its own content and just thereby shapes it into a sign of the eternal."<sup>9</sup> It is not the place of the event in a continuum which is known, but "an event which is fully complete and formed in itself."<sup>10</sup> The realizing event penetrates the rest of reality with meaning.

The task of realization is endless. There is no once-for-all meaning which can be attached to life, and no unchanging value. The emphasis falls upon the "immediacy which alone makes it possible to live the realizing as real."<sup>11</sup> Immediacy means spontaneity. Orienting man decides with only a part of his being. Realizing man decides

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.    <sup>10</sup>Ibid.    <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

with his whole being, "with immediate decision as out of a deep command."<sup>12</sup> Each decision is a new beginning by man "vowed to the holy insecurity,"<sup>13</sup> taking upon himself the risk of living in the "moment," however incapable of sustaining that burden he may be.

Although man's relation to the other is intimated in Daniel, it does not become the explicit theme until Buber moves away from "life-experience" and recognizes the uniqueness of man in "relation." "To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude."<sup>14</sup> He takes up a fundamental posture and sets himself toward the world in one of the two "ways." He enters the primary word and takes his stand in it. (When I say "takes his stand" it is in full awareness that "stand" is a member of the Stance family of words, conferring the scene of action, and intimating direction.) He may stand in the attitude of Thou, or the attitude of It, but since the basic or primary word is the word of relation, he says either I-Thou or I-It. These two basic words are developments of "realization" and "orientation" respectively.

"In the beginning is relation,"<sup>15</sup> Buber continues in I and Thou. The primal relationship has two partners. When man speaks the word "I-Thou" his whole being enters into relation with the partner whom he addresses. He turns toward that partner as the whole and undiminished man that he is. The other is met as the very one he is. He is affirmed in his "primally deep otherness,"<sup>16</sup> which means that "the basic

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 92.    <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>14</sup>Idem, I and Thou, p. 3.    <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup>Idem, The Knowledge of Man, trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith, with an introduction by Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 96.

movement of the life of dialogue is the turning towards the other."<sup>17</sup> Not merely the physical turning to face the other is intended, since I might speak past him. This happens in monologue, whose basic movement is reflexion. The other does not stir opposite the I, but only the experience of the I as it is projected onto the other, a part of the I which is identified in the mirror of the other. The genuine Thou is not an inward Thou, although man has an innate Thou which is realized in the Thou of encounter. I-Thou begins with the turning of the whole being of man toward the other, in the awareness of the other as absolutely and utterly not I - "the immense otherness of the other."<sup>18</sup> The partners in the meeting are independent subjects. But it is not simply the independence of the partners that is affirmed. Buber affirms the independence and uniqueness of the relation between them. The I of man only comes into being with the saying of the "Thou." Therefore, "man-as-such" is abstracted from his relation to the other. He "exists anthropologically not in his isolation, but in the completeness of the relation between man and man; what humanity is can be grasped only in vital reciprocity."<sup>19</sup> Thus, in the study of drama, any attempt to say what a character is must be cognizant of the word of relation. The possibility to exist monologically, to soliloquize for example, is founded dialogically.

The uniqueness of man is in the meeting of I and Thou. There is no "I-as-such," only the "I" of the basic words "I-Thou" and "I-It."

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<sup>17</sup>Idem, Between Man and Man, trans. with an introduction by Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Collins, 1961), p. 40.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 41. <sup>19</sup>Idem, Knowledge of Man, p. 84.

The "I" of each of them is different. When one says "I-Thou," he speaks with his whole being. When one says "I-It," he never speaks with his whole being. I-It takes place within a man. That is what it means to say that a man "experiences" his world. He does not go out of himself to experience; he projects upon the world; he exploits it for self-intended aims. The world submits to this kind of investigation, but it does not answer man's searching gaze. It is not concerned "for it does nothing to the experience, and the experience does nothing to it."<sup>20</sup>

Relation in the It-world is strictly derivative. Experience is always experience of something. The world of It is the world of means and ends. The world is man's acquisition, his possession, the object of his having. The world and its particulars are merely things and more things which continue to accumulate. But the It-world is reliable in so far as things can be precisely defined by their simple location and predictability.

There is mystery of a kind in the It-world, although it is merely the hiddenness which is mysterious so long as man does not penetrate his own ignorance about it, at which point his curiosity seeks in another direction. The world of It remains the world of experience whether the experience is inner or outer. And "in the act of experience Thou is far away."<sup>21</sup>

It-speech is always mediate. Thou-speech is always immediate. The other is met directly. I-Thou stands beyond the functional, beyond need and desire. One cannot plan to meet the Thou. I-Thou means

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<sup>20</sup>Idem, I and Thou, p. 5.    <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

mutuality. For the encounter of I and Thou can only take place when both partners are in the attitude of giving. Then, and only then, can real receiving follow. Nothing is held back, but "everything depends upon the legitimacy of 'what I have to say.'"<sup>22</sup> The self and the other do not dissolve into one, but the self is held over against the other, and the other over against the self. Both the I and the Thou of every genuine dialogue are irreplaceable, and the dialogue itself is unique from all others.

As man approaches genuine dialogue, his being is so concentrated into the single act of relation that he loses the sense of partial, or individual, action. This activity approaching passivity is always a going forth from himself toward the other. But the possibility of a world, and of the other, is only given in the primal setting the world at a distance. "I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou."<sup>23</sup> I-Thou precedes I-It. Why this is so can only be explained through the word "distance."

Only man can say "I am here" and "the world is there." Distance is what is given to man as man. Setting at a distance can flow into relation. But if it thickens, if it becomes fixed, then the world is no longer a world. It is merely useful. Man's I is uttered only in the act of meeting the Thou; and it is only after the "I" is spoken that man is able to elaborate the distance between himself and the other, and to become detached.

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<sup>22</sup>Idem, Knowledge of Man, p. 86.

<sup>23</sup>Idem, I and Thou, p. 11.

I-Thou is not intersubjectivity. It is not fellow-feeling, because it is not derivative. I-Thou initiates man into the realm of being, into the realm of spirit. And "spirit is not in the I, but between I and Thou."<sup>24</sup> This means that man cannot be understood under the category of "substance," but only in terms of a primordial relation which occurs in a "region" called "the between." I-Thou is reciprocity, which means not just affirming, not just giving approval to, the other. Reciprocity signifies the acceptance and confirmation of the other as other. In turning to face the Thou, he is fully "intended," in his actuality and in his potential for self-realization, and made present in the personal being of the I.

The whole meaning of reciprocity. . . lies in just this, that it does not wish to impose itself but to be freely apprehended. It gives us something to apprehend, but it does not give us the apprehension. Our act must be entirely our own for<sup>25</sup> that which is to be disclosed to us to be disclosed.

In this citation from Eclipse of God it is possible to catch intimations of the immense freedom and responsibility of the I-Thou relation. I-It does not know this freedom because it is founded upon a defensiveness toward the word which is regarded as a threat to the self. I-Thou is founded on trust. To use a biblical distinction, I-Thou means covenanting and not coveting.

When man stands in the "between," in the interhuman, all security is shattered. "But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It."<sup>26</sup> When the event of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, Eclipse of God (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), pp. 98-99.

<sup>26</sup> Idem, I and Thou, p. 16.



relation has run its course Thou passes again and again into thinghood. However, It can become Thou. Just as there is no realizing or orienting man, so there is no man who speaks only "Thou" to the world, or only "It." The two attitudes are entangled confusedly in the life of every man, which leads to the conclusion that there are degrees of both attitudes. A distinction must be made, at the very least, between direct dialogue; the kind of speech that points back to direct dialogue; and monologue, which is entirely reflexive. The "between" does not exhibit a smooth continuity, but is ever and again reconstituted in accordance with men's meetings with one another.

It is only when man takes his stand in the "between" that he discovers the mystery and essence of humanity. The way for man to the infinite leads only through fulfilled finitude - the hallowing of the everyday. "He must put his arms around the vexatious world, whose true name is creation; only then do his fingers reach the realm of lightning and of grace."<sup>27</sup> Reduction and faith are incommensurable. The other is no less real than this I. It cannot be taken any less seriously. It is in relation that man touches the absolute. "Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou."<sup>28</sup> Dialogue comes about not only in and through language but also in spite of language, wherever the pretense of the spoken word is broken through and the barriers of self-being are breached.

The unity of I and Thou is the eternal Thou - not a "concern" at

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<sup>27</sup>Idem, Between Man and Man, p. 89.

<sup>28</sup>Idem, I and Thou, p. 75.

all, but a "presence." Spirit is the Word which penetrates to the center of each one, speaker and listener. There is no special content, because under the conditions of existence the ambiguities of the word are overcome only fragmentarily.

Earlier, drama was defined as the symbolization of an action, and it was indicated that this meant the formation of the word as something that moves between beings. Drama is not dialectic, in which the individual encounters opposition and through wrestling with it overcomes it and arrives at a transcendent station where another such struggle may commence. Drama is the unfolding of the dialogic, and some care must be taken to distinguish it from dialectic. In drama it is not man by himself which is witnessed, but man with man, two or more beings who persist as separate and other.

In drama man is set over against man, and this movement is the possibility of relation which unfolds from it. But how often does the primal setting at a distance of the other end in the distortion of possessiveness! Instead of meeting the other, which meeting is the soil in which confirmation may take root, the one seeks to possess the other and conform him to his will; or the one seeks dissolution or union of self in the other. Both extremes meet in transgressing otherness.

All real living is meeting. Living means being addressed. A word (wort) demanding an answer (antwort) happens to me. It happens fortuitously. There is no way in which it can be anticipated or prepared. Hence, within this context of dialogue we speak of the "unexpectedness" of being, and of "wonder." The event does not con-

clude with the cry or word but with the response which fulfils or fails to fulfil that which gave rise to the cry. Man with man is thus answer-able. Responsibility means to respond. But a man cannot respond until he is in the situation and face to face with "Thou." Man has the potentiality to respond, to step daringly into the openness of the "between." Often he flees his potential; he flees from the conflicts which he fears in the meeting with the other. He does not realize that another conflict is thereby spawned. Meeting overcomes conflict. Where man ceases to respond he ceases to hear the word.

In I and Thou Buber writes that "every relational event is a stage that affords him (man) a glimpse into the consummating event. So in each event he does not partake, but also (for he is waiting) does partake, of the one event."<sup>29</sup> The life of drama is the swinging movement between the two primary words, I-Thou and I-It. It is a discontinuous alternation between moments of making present and moments when a person falls from actualized presence into mere subsistence, or potentiality.

To meet the other may mean opposing him. It requires of each man that he stand his ground, that he accept the reality of separation, that ever-renewed distancing that is the pre-requisite for all relationship. We accept the other, often in spite of what he is, in the "moment." We trust, listen, are open. Trust enables us to move into dialogue and secures access to it in the future. We confirm the other by accepting the whole of his potential, not only in him

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

but in ourselves as well. In conversation with the psychologist Carl Rogers, Martin Buber has said:

. . . There are cases when I must help him against himself. He wants my help against himself. You see, the first thing of all is that he trusts me. Yes, life has become baseless for him. He cannot tread on firm soil, on firm earth. He is, so to speak, suspended in the air. And what does he want? He wants a being not only whom he can trust as a man trusts another, but a being that gives him now the certitude that 'there is a soil, there is an existence. The world is not condemned to deprivation, degeneration, destruction. The world can be redeemed, I can be redeemed because there is this trust.<sup>30</sup>

It is "this trust" which overcomes estrangement, and confirmation which overcomes guilt. In dramatic terms, grace comes through the other who meets me in trust and confirmation or acceptance.

The modern emphasis upon the modes of "passion" and "perception" in the dramatic paradigm have led to the modification of the definition of action as "trans-action" - in Chapter One above. The reflections on the meaning of "dialogue" point the way to a further set of reflections on the meaning of innocence and grace as the motif which determines Williams' plays.

"Man is the question, not the answer."<sup>31</sup> Who is man? If Buber's insight into the basic relational "form" (gestalt) of human being, and the grounding of this form in speech, is heeded, then the question of man's identity is not susceptible of an abstract and "objective" answer. No scientific answer is adequate. The "modern" - dramatist, philosopher, and theologian - is acutely aware of the "conditioned" as his proper element. The demand of a "here and now" realism obstructs

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<sup>30</sup>Idem, Knowledge of Man, p. 183.

<sup>31</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:13.

his path to a final solution of his dilemma. Simply to raise the question of who man is - this most particular and concrete of questions - is the task of the modern. Direct answers are few. The reason may be that this question, so immeasurably great in significance when rightly, "existentially," asked, bears already its own answer or answers. The question of "who" man is shatters all easy answers which begin with the question of "what" man is. The question of how to assume and accept responsibility for the forms of one's own personal experience leads to the recognition of the presence of a saving power within those finite forms, a power which is form-giving and thus not bound to any particular expression. The question of man, rightly asked, begins with the situation of the "real" man.

Man is the question which he puts to himself in word and deed. If, in reflecting upon his "questionableness," he attempts to show that the answer to the question is immanent within himself, even in his depths, he succeeds only in showing the depth of his brokenness by choosing to "situate" the unity of that life in the powers of disruption. He makes himself the center and starting-point of his own questing action in its many, diverse forms. He becomes self-grounding. The tragic stature and solitude of man arises from his inner boundlessness. He takes his start, in analyzing himself, either with his possibilities or with his limitations. In either case, it is his isolation which he intends to escape or transcend and he fails. This situation is not reversed if his essence is conceived as the limit of his existence, because man, in his reason,

always arbitrates his own limits, and is able to set himself as knower beyond them. Man may transcend himself, in his solitude, without meeting any limit.

Man's essence, as his going beyond himself, means that he is possibility. The other person is one among the possibilities that he may choose. Man's essence as lying beyond him means that every effort to describe himself from himself falls short. This much has been gleaned from Martin Buber's biblical personalism.

What I hope to suggest here, in approaching the question of the "forms" of innocence and grace, is that no understanding of the question of man which begins with the "individual" or "the single one" is adequate in the living context of drama. This is evident when the tension between the "boundary" and the "center" of life is drawn out.

To live on the boundary man must be able to draw from the richness of the center of his life. But the center of life is de-void of meaning. Man has usurped the role of creator by taking the center of his life into himself. It is through this usurpation that man loses possession of himself and loses his freedom in spite of his protests that he "creates" himself out of nothing. The true boundary is at the center of man's existence. But man "without a center" seeks for the boundary on the periphery of his possibilities. Thus, he lives through the boundaries endlessly. He does so because he seeks life, the very life which he does not find at the "center." At the center of man's life is death, for finitude penetrates every one of his activities and his very being. Man is temporal, and in his "fallen" state this means that his life is enclosed - turned in

upon itself. Fallen man experiences his time as a life-devouring monster. Fallen man is finite freedom. Man in his innocence is created freedom. What the difference between "created" and "finite" is cannot be determined from the condition of fallen man but only through the revelation of God, which exposes man's sin as sin. The same exposure points out man's true center which is not in him. The true center of man's existence is God; and the boundary of man's existence is his meeting with God through the other. Drama may show forth this encounter symbolically.

In front of man, confronting him, is the law of his own being, his being for others and his failure to realize this demand. The command to love God and one's neighbor with every fibre of one's being shows that otherness is not a possibility for fallen man. His inmost intention drives him upon his inability to love his neighbor. He experiences the command not as an ideal which may eventually be reached but as a present demand upon him before which he repeatedly fails. He fails in one of two ways: either he does not meet the other in his otherness, which means that the other is not recognized as a real limit and hence sinks into the realm of "It," as a reflection of the "I" and its purposes; or the "Thou" is raised to the absolute and unconditioned, which means that man is not able to challenge "it," that he is empty in himself. The "Thou" becomes, once again, an "It." In his estrangement from the "center" of his life man experiences the other not as "other" but as "alien," not as "graciously given" limit but as "threatening" limit, because in "it" he is confronted by his own finitude.

Man's salvation - his liberation from the bondage of sin, and estrangement from his "center" - does not take place once and for all in a ritual action. Man does not mediate his own salvation. It touches his life through the meeting with the other. Martin Buber has shown that man does not stand in either the primary word I-Thou or I-It, and that time and again the primordial relation disintegrates. Buber points out that man cannot will encounter. He cannot force it to happen. It is not one among his many possibilities. Meeting concerns man in his entire being. But in order to speak of existence as "spoken word" it is necessary to break away from any gnostic dualism of human nature.

Man is not a material body and a spiritual soul. His fallenness, his corruption, is not only of the body, because it is not of the body to begin with. The body is not a prison in which the pure soul is held captive. There is no part of man which is not subject to the vicissitudes of time. In the creation narrative of Genesis, chapter 2, man is created from the dust of the earth. The bond to earth and body belongs to man essentially. The body is not the "outer" man, and man is not "existence within a body."

In the account of Genesis, chapter 1, man is made in the image of God. This means that man is created free. He is in relation to God and this relation is no possibility for him. God freely creates man as the creature who is free for others. Freedom is not something arbitrary, but freedom for others. To point to the image of God in man is to acknowledge the fundamental transitivity of human concern. Man's freedom for others reveals that he is limited by them and de-



pendent upon them. Real transcendence is expressed in the transitivity of man's concerns; and the real transparency of man to himself occurs not in reflexion which ultimately delivers man over to himself as an object in his environment and as "broken" but in meeting the other as "Thou." Such transitivity is not a part of a rhythm of existence: I-Thou followed by I-It, followed by I-Thou . . . etc. To point to the "rhythm" of primary words is to mistake Buber's intention and to misunderstand the radical discontinuity of existence as he sees it. If the speaking of I-Thou were a possibility of man's individual life, it could be reconciled with the speaking of I-It and "fitted" into the continuity of life. But I-It expresses the fact that man is locked into himself.

Man's life is always ahead of him in so far as it goes unfulfilled in the present. Man is always seeking himself; but he always already misses the living answer which he seeks because he does not know where to seek for it. Why does he not? The answer to this question introduces the problem of the creation and fall of man. The two sources for the present discussion are the second volume of Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology and the short but brilliant interpretation of Genesis 1-3 of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, entitled Creation and Fall. The greatness of Tillich's interpretation lies in the balance which he realizes between being and act, fact and responsibility, in the fall. However, Tillich tends to be individualistic, less biblical than Kierkegaardian, which is accounted for in his emphasis upon "autonomy" and the struggle to attain it. He writes, for example, that "freedom is the possibility of a total and

centered act of the personality, an act in which all the drives and influences which constitute the destiny of man are brought into the centered unity of a decision." In view of this emphasis, I will lean more toward Bonhoeffer, whose interpretation is basically "relational."<sup>32</sup>

Man attempts to steal the likeness of God. He does not intend to "steal" and thereby deny God. He simply intends to know God in a way that God has not given Himself to be known.

"Those who reach out for life must die - 'whoever would save his life will lose it.' And nobody will reach out for it who has not lost it."<sup>33</sup> The prohibition does not indicate, at least not immediately, a rift between creature and creator. In other words, the prohibition does not tempt man. The prohibition establishes a gracious limit around man's life: it protects him against the latent power of opposites in him. Thus, God preserves man in his created freedom, his unbroken unity in obedience to the Creator. But in reaching out for the forbidden fruit that freedom is already lost. Life is already lost. Man is delivered over to death. This is better expressed by saying that man, in transgressing the command, knows that he must die, and that his life must come to an end. He discovers that there is no security in this knowledge, and that it casts him back upon himself. He dies in that he is no longer able to live in the presence of God. He discovers the sentence upon him: his life

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 42-43.

<sup>33</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall/Temptation, trans. John C. Fletcher (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 55.

is not a gift but a judgment. He must "serve time;" he must live. As Bonhoeffer indicates in his lectures, the tree of life does not have a prominent place in the narrative because life is never a question in the "created" order.

However, the question of the serpent contains its own, false, answer. It questions man about his own limit. It asks about God. "Man is expected to be judge of God's word instead of simply hearing and doing it."<sup>34</sup> Man is called upon to differentiate between the Word of God and God. As Bonhoeffer argues, the revolt against obedience is cloaked in a "higher" obedience, a possibility of "being for God" that man has found out for himself. In this man discovers himself apart from God, and apart from the other created "Thou." Adam's likeness to God is the fact that he has no limit. He loses it along with his creatureliness. "Eve only falls totally when Adam falls, for the two are one. Adam falls because of Eve, Eve falls because of Adam, for the two are one. In their guilt too they are two and yet one. They fall together as one and each carries all the guilt alone."<sup>35</sup>

When God creates Adam he sees that it is not good for him to be alone (Gen. 2.18). Eve, taken from a part of him, is one with him and yet different. "Then the eyes of both were opened. . ." (3.7). Adam and Eve "fall" together; and they fall apart as Adam blames Eve for his own transgression. In their created freedom Adam and Eve are not ashamed of their nakedness. But when their eyes are opened they know that they are naked and cover themselves. Adam tells God that

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 67.    <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

he "was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." In keeping with the analysis of existence as "spoken" it is acknowledged that nakedness is not only physical and sexual, but that the biblical author recognizes in physical nakedness a true symbol of the exposed secret of man's being. Shame is the immediate result of transgression. Man seeks to cover himself. In turning away from God he forfeits his true covering. His partner is no longer protection. In shame man acknowledges the limit which he has surpassed, because shame is shame before someone - because one's nakedness is seen and what is seen is that one is not one's own being. The sound of God drives Adam into hiding. Adam flees before God.<sup>36</sup> Bonhoeffer argues that it is man's conscience that drives him into hiding, and that conscience becomes man's defense against God, pointing to the inescapable presence of God in spite of itself.<sup>37</sup> Adam would deflect the blame from himself; he would free himself from the accusative voice. In blaming Eve he blames God through His own free creation. Adam blames God for his transgression because he hears only a voice accusing him. Adam lives to save himself. And this very attempt to save himself points to his fallenness.

Adam knows Eve and this means that he desires to eliminate the other person as person and as creature. Yet the limit endures, and its endurance is met with hatred and the attempt to destroy it or to

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<sup>36</sup>This motif of flight was brought out earlier - in Chapter One - in another context. The similarity in the two treatments - the failure to deal with "experience" - should be noted. The biblical narrative is here examined as a paradigm of the dramatic "loss of innocence."

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

subdue it or swallow it up.

Adam is commanded to live. Not that he does not wish to live, but that he now knows that his life leads to death, that he has his end in the earth from which he was molded, and that he will be nothing. His life becomes, in this knowledge, tormenting and absurd to him. Every moment of his life is entangled in death and he wishes to escape it. But his wish to escape death is his longing for life at the same time. In Bonhoeffer's words, "it is thus flight from life and reaching out for life at the same time, because it is flight from God and search for God in one."<sup>38</sup>

The question posed by the serpent confronts man with possibility, not with any particular possibility, but with possibility-as-such. It arouses man to the possibility of being for himself - Heidegger's characterization of the "natural" man as "Being-ahead-of-itself"<sup>39</sup> - under the guise of being for God. The unity of man's created freedom is unchallenged. It is, in Paul Tillich's words, "essential or potential; it is finite and therefore open to tension and disruption - just like uncontested innocence."<sup>40</sup> In the encounter between the serpent and Eve the very subtlety of the serpent's question introduces the possibility of God-likeness. It introduces something other than the image of God.

What finally drives man out of the security of the state of "dreaming innocence" is anxiety. It is not possible to say with any

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>39</sup>Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 236.

<sup>40</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:35.

clarity that anxiety is anxiety over or about finitude. This is the significance of the symbolic expression "dreaming innocence:"

Both words point to something that precedes actual existence. It has potentiality, not actuality. It has no place. . . .It has no time; it precedes temporality, and it is suprahistorical. Dreaming is a state of mind which is real and non-real at the same time - just as is potentiality. Dreaming anticipates the actual, just as everything actual is somehow present in the potential. . . .

The word 'innocence' also points to non-actualized potentiality. One is innocent only with respect to something which, if actualized would end the state of innocence. The word has three connotations. It can mean lack of actual experience, lack of personal responsibility, and lack of moral guilt.<sup>41</sup>

The truth of this interpretation is borne out by the repetition in the biblical story. God commands man (Gen. 2.16); the serpent inquires, apparently without ulterior motive, "Did God say? . . . (3.1); Eve repeats the command; the serpent denies that Eve will die; and then follows a dreamlike contemplation on the part of Eve in which she sees what in innocence she cannot see: "that the tree was good for food," and something else, that it was "to be desired to make one wise" (3.6). But of what moment is this wisdom? If man's being is toward God, then it is knowledge of God which is desirable and which tempts him. But in the moment that it becomes desirable the plight of man is already clear. In that moment the inevitable becomes real or actual. Man awakens from the dream. He does not die, but he discovers what it means to die, and this is worse than death. He knows good and evil, the power of opposites, and the ambiguity of life. Anxiety is the precondition of sin. Thus, it is not sin. Man, in the state of dreaming innocence, as created freedom, sins inevitably

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

though not necessarily. He might turn to God and there find his anxiety overcome. Much depends upon his turning to the clever creature and the way in which the question is asked, because man does not transgress intentionally - although anxiety is implicit in dreaming innocence - but in spite of himself. As Paul says to the church in Rome, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (7.15). This is based on the prior assertion that he does not understand his own actions.

Reading out of the Genesis account what the indirection of the symbol will allow, Adam is one man and humanity. Sin, as the isolated act, is inseparable from sin as "the universal fact."<sup>42</sup> Act and being are bound in tension. Freedom and destiny are ambiguously interpenetrating under the conditions of existence.

However, from the interpretation which has been presented it is not possible to see a continuity between creation and the world after the fall. A real abyss has opened which man cannot cross. The meaning of preservation conjoined with creation is not the same as the preservation of the world cut adrift by man's transgression.

The promise of creation has become ambiguously blessing and curse. God preserves man in his fallen state. He has compassion for them: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3.21). The gift of procreation shall be painful; Adam's husbandry will be "work." The blessings of life in the paradisaal garden are thrust upon man as a curse when he is "thrown" out on his own.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

There is, in this "thrown" preservation of man, the grace of the preservation which man experiences as wrath. This is how his existence expresses its loss of center in relation to the other. In every particular act man actualizes his universal destiny under sin (as estrangement). He seeks to create righteousness and life - inevitably at the expense of the other. The promise of fulfilment is corrupted through sin, as fact actualized in every act.

Thus, every one of man's acts, even when he attempts to turn toward God, reflect his inability to do so, and reflect his estrangement from God. They reveal every attempt on the part of man to reach God to be self-justifying. When man attempts to justify himself, whether by works, by ascetic practice, or by meditation upon sin, he misses the abysmal depth of his transgression. He thinks to use God's grace to renew himself; and in this fashion he denies the depth of that grace. For there is nothing in man to correspond to that grace; nothing in man to warrant it. God's grace as His infinite judgment over man reveals that man cannot seek life on his own, and that he runs up against nothingness, the Not that stands over him, the boundlessness of his possibilities which judge him, when he tries. Man's apostasy may take the form of busy-ness, for example, the zealous pursuit of divine law (Rom. 10.2-3); or recklessness, where out of hostility man turns his back on the imperative and his destiny. But if man in his "fallenness" blinds himself to his destiny, he cannot destroy his essence, because it lies beyond his reach, in the "between," in the interhuman.

Emphasis upon the "dialogical" and the "primary words" in which



man stands discloses the logos character of man in his encounter with reality - the whole of man and not just his mind brought into the speech-event. Logos means not only the rational but also the creative power "in-forming" reality. As fallen, man's essence, his freedom for others, is distorted by his attempt to have the other. Otherness is completely missed.

How is it, then, that man is questing? How is it that he is put into question? This radical questioning takes place in the flight to his limits or through his possibilities. For man is fleeing what it is impossible for him to flee - what he is. "What he is" is "in nothingness." Man deceives himself, although he does not consciously and cynically prepare the lie. He is in bad faith (Sartre) and it is disclosed to him that bad faith is nothing other than inner disintegration. He lives under a permanent NO! which declares him lost and grips him the more he struggles against it.

Modern man's lostness appears in his anxiety about meaninglessness. But worse still, in his everyday existence he allows this to be just the way the world is. However, mask his anxiety he may, destroy it he cannot. Modern man asks the question of meaning with his whole being. What is the answer to this question, and from whence does it appear.

New life, new creation, or new being is the answer and it means that a person has become sensitive to his own involvement in sin, and his great need of forgiveness. But it is doubtful that in the moment when his estrangement is realized man will raise the question of new being, because the appearance of this new being is paradoxical - it

cuts across the accepted way of understanding man's predicament. It turns this understanding upon its head. "The Cross is the symbol of a gift before it is the symbol of a demand."<sup>43</sup> It is precisely this gift-character that man in his estrangement rejects. He sees, in the event of the Cross, only a continuation of the way the world is, because he persists in starting from himself. So when is it that man lives under "the paradox of God accepting a world which rejects him?"<sup>44</sup>

It does not strike him as a general, universally valid, truth. It strikes him as the truth of encounter. As Martin Buber says, "every relational event is a stage that affords him a glimpse into the consummating event. . . . God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed."<sup>45</sup> It is in the interhuman, in the meeting of I and Thou, that "God with us" becomes reality. What is spoken is the word of grace. It is the power of newness for the human situation.

It is not an act of estrangement which needs this grace, since it is not only sin which needs justification: it is also the estranged being of man, the sinner himself. Despair over one's guilt is overcome by the in-spite-of character of grace. Grace does not create a being who is unconnected with the being that receives grace. "Grace does not destroy essential freedom; but it does what freedom under the conditions of existence cannot do, namely, it reunites the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 106.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>45</sup>Buber, I and Thou, pp. 80-81.

estranged."<sup>46</sup> Grace is the power of reconciliation; it does not turn man into what he thinks he ought to be. It proclaims him accepted and acceptable just as he is, in his estrangement - on the basis that there is nothing in him which enables God to accept him. Paul Tillich states the paradox very well in the words "accepting acceptance though being unacceptable."<sup>47</sup> Grace is not a quality, but an event - in drama, the event or "action" which is determinative of the form of the play.

It is communion which makes solitude, and the guilt borne in solitude, supportable. It is communion which makes solitude resonate with meaning. Without communion with the Thou, man's aloneness and apartness manifests itself as loneliness and emptiness. In relation to Martin Buber's biblical personalism it was said that in dialogue men stand nakedly unreserved. Man seeks encounter and he flees from it at the same time. He seeks protection with the other, and yet he knows how the other covers himself, in order to defend himself. He sees his own shame reflected in this primordial gesture of the other. It is under the impact of grace that true reserve is disclosed in dialogue, that man is sheltered in the interhuman, that his nakedness is clothed. The wrath of God is disclosed as the love of God. The content of the disclosure is a love which takes upon itself despair and meaninglessness and which, at the same time, judges.

"So we are always of good courage," Paul writes to the Corinthians (II Cor. 5.6). Courage is trust in the promise of transformed

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<sup>46</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:79.

<sup>47</sup>Idem, Theology of Culture, p. 142.

reality. Courage is the acceptance of the fact that one is unacceptable before God.<sup>48</sup> It means that a "YES" is pronounced over the "No" of anxiety, a "YES" which overcomes it. It means that man experiences his life in the indicative and not in the imperative. Courage means self-affirmation based upon the meeting with the "Thou." Behind the courage of self-affirmation, and bearing it up, is the courage to respond to otherness. Self-affirmation means the courage to receive self in trust from the other. Man affirms himself in his being-for-others. It is when he lives from dialogue that he is able to realize his potential. The true center of human existence is in the "God with us" of the "I-Thou" meeting.

Space and time are determinative for this encounter, just as they are determinative for a world-view. But while the time of the world-view is No-more/Not-yet - a double "Not" - the time of the interhuman is already/Not-yet. The fulfilment sought "beyond" the human situation is already "there," in the midst of that situation. In Jesus as the Christ, Paul Tillich argues, "has appeared what fulfilment qualitatively means."<sup>49</sup> "Qualitatively" qualifies fulfilment as prepared but only fragmentarily realized in the present. In the present context that means that I-Thou sinks back into I-It but that the moment of the primordial word I-Thou shows the promise and its fulfilment and directs the life of man. Thus, man lives from the end or fulfilment and not from the voided middle of time. Existence is no longer a curse standing under a double "Not." It

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<sup>48</sup>Idem, Courage to Be, p. 164.

<sup>49</sup>Idem, Systematic Theology, 2:119.

is received as benefit and blessing. For out of the midst of estrangement appears the "true" form of reality which overcomes estrangement. This form of reality is met anew in the encounter of man with man. The dialectic of covering and dis-covering, of concealment and exposure, is lived in the positive where the dialogical form or gestalt is met.

The presentation of the quest motif- lost innocence/grace - is now complete. As the motif is traced in the movement of the Genesis narrative, it points us to the concrete here and now of meeting, or dialogue. It has been pointed out that drama can symbolize this meeting, and that the form of the play expresses the event of grace by its open-endedness. It remains to be seen how this motif is realized in two plays by Tennessee Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire and The Night of the Iguana.

### III. A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE OR "TWO SISTERS"

The following two sections are intended to test the insights worked out in the previous sections through the analysis of two major plays by Tennessee Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), and The Night of the Iguana (1961).

Something must be said about the principle of selection involved here - why an overview of Williams' work has been ruled out, and why these two plays have been singled out. An overview would defeat the purpose of the methodological orientation already achieved. It is not only themes which reflect religious concern, but the form of drama, its quest character. To generically study the products of drama demonstrates a failure to understand drama in its tensions and oppositions, in its dynamic structure.

It is felt that the present selection, based upon a reading of Williams' entire published theater, reflects the playwright's vision and insight into dramatic form better than any other selection could. In the plays which follow chronologically the writing of The Night of the Iguana Williams sacrifices vision to experiments with form. Not only dramatic, but also theatrical, potential is lost. Furthermore, there is an underlying thematic continuity and formal affinity between Streetcar and Iguana which encourages the study of them together.

Streetcar has attracted a large critical following and it will be fruitful to see in what crucial respect the critics err. This is

not the case with Iguana and I am satisfied that no critical dialogue can contribute to my approach to that play. My approach to Iguana reflects, in its length, an attempt to deal with the "action" of the play from as many angles as possible, while the treatment of Streetcar reflects a concern for "modifying" what critic and director have already realized.

In an article entitled "A Streetcar Named Desire: A Study in Ambiguity," John Gassner emphasizes the unrealistic "causation" in the individual "motivations" in the play. He tries to take Williams on his own terms, steps into the play and gets caught up in its psychologizing. As a result he gives in to making value judgments which distort the play. For example: "Her (Blanche's) plight is attributed to the bizarre - and to me specious - circumstance that her husband killed himself after realizing that he was a hopeless homosexual,"<sup>1</sup> "who killed himself when his sense of guilt become unbearable."<sup>2</sup> What about Blanche's condemnation of him which has repercussions for her own present dilemma? Is this condemnation, and the indirect statement of Blanche's own self-condemnation not more to the point of the confession in which she reveals the circumstances of her husband's death? Gassner misses the point. He focusses on "believability" and "credibility" as criteria for judging the play. He begins with a pigeon-hole approach: Williams is judged by the standards of realistic theater, and he suffers badly for it.

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<sup>1</sup> John Gassner, "A Streetcar Named Desire: A Study in Ambiguity," in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, ed. Travis Bogard and William Oliver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

A more serious critical investigation of the play is undertaken by Leonard Berkman in an article whose title announces the author's perspective: "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche Dubois."

Berkman argues that "if an argument is to be put forth that Blanche does not begin and proceed and end at the same low point, that argument must hinge on a value" which Williams was himself guided by; and Berkman's intuition is basically sound, as he locates that value in "the belief in intimate relationships. . . as paramount among life's pursuits."<sup>3</sup> He underlines the lack of trust in Blanche's own marriage, the lack of truth which, when it is discovered, is greeted first by further pretence and then with open hostility, consummated in fatal violence. This outcome accounts for Blanche's aversion to, and confusion at, the violence on the poker night, but is also reflected in the consummation of her relationship to Stanley, the so-called "rape" which takes place at the end of Scene Ten, and Blanche's threatening gestures toward Stanley with a broken bottle.

However, Berkman is mistaken in saying that, with her history of deception, "Blanche is beginning (as shown in the action of the play) to force the truth to break through."<sup>4</sup> I think that this is a too simple interpretation of Blanche's motives for revealing herself, whether to her sister or to Mitch. Berkman goes on to say that Blanche's confession to Mitch in Scene Six shows her "rising to the height that intimacy demands."<sup>5</sup> He seems to overlook the fact that

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<sup>3</sup>Leonard Berkman, "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche Dubois," Modern Drama 10 (December, 1967), pp. 251-2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 253. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 254.



Blanche's confession is a declaration of her fatality, that the confession is not utterly guileless; that Blanche in fact implicates Mitch in her life and draws him in. This is even more true of the second confession in which Blanche, having further retreated into herself, is not really confessing to Mitch at all, but rehearsing her own self-estrangement and self-condemnation for herself. So the statement that "Blanche has a positive impetus for revealing her past to Mitch completely, since her difficult admissions can bind the two of them all the more deeply together"<sup>6</sup> demonstrates the naivete of Berkman's reading. How difficult are Blanche's confessions? For example, what exchange precedes the second one?

Mitch realizes that Blanche is "boxed" and the recognition takes place on the part of both characters that they are not meant for each other, that Mitch knows about Blanche and is no longer a "stranger" to her questionable past. Blanche has really lost Mitch, but she has been drinking and acting "flows" from her. Berkman fails to account for the ambiguity in the disclosures by Blanche of her past. The positive element, however undistorted it may be, is never "simple." It is not only Blanche's response to the call of intimacy but her pointing to her inability to accept intimacy, an ambiguous admission that Mitch treats "simply" and without understanding in the "simple" act of embrace which covers Blanche up without accepting her exposure of herself.

This "simple" view of Blanche persists in Berkman's attempt to fix her "flaw:"

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

The conscious drive toward propriety and refinement that her upbringing and environment have confirmed within her are not less profoundly respected by her than the sexual and emotional longing which she had to forego propriety to satisfy. Ultimately it is<sup>7</sup> neither drive that Blanche would want to yield.

This fails to draw out the inner division in Blanche. Does Blanche really seek to overcome it, or simply to prolong it? Again, I would incline to the view that Blanche seeks to have Mitch confirm her in her inner division, since she sees him as "a cleft in the rock of the world" (387) without whom she would be driven upon the rock of the world and become insane.

This same naivete is evident in the interpretation of the final scene:

Interestingly, it is Stan now who has to take upon himself the burden of a guilty lie. Whether or not we can wholly credit Stella's declaration that she could not continue to live with Stan if she believed Blanche's accusation of rape, it is obvious that Stan is not able to admit the truth to his wife, and that his lie drives him to compound his guilt by having Blanche committed to a mental institution.<sup>8</sup>

What exactly does Stella say? "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley" (405). Berkman has narrowed the context of this statement down to the inter-act "rape" of Blanche. But does the whole play not reflect Stella's struggle to choose between Blanche and Stanley? Is the play not betrayed in seeing, as only Blanche could have seen, that Stanley has her committed to an asylum? Berkman virtually ignores Stella. He takes the scene away from her. But it is Stella who has had Blanche committed and who comes to a realization of what she has done. Berkman leans in the direction suggested by Elia Kazan's film version of the play, which will be considered

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 256.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

shortly. But why not? After all, how can Stella have Blanche committed and still decide "for" Blanche against Stanley? That difficulty is overcome if Stella is overlooked and Stanley is pegged as the "real" ant-agonist to Blanche's prot-agonist.

One final criticism of Berkman's approach is in order. Though he emphasizes "guilt" and the other person accepting Blanche's guilt, he never articulates Blanche's need to accept and not merely to deflect or escape her own guilt. The paradoxical formulation "accepting acceptance from the other" is foreign to Berkman. But Blanche does implicitly tell Mitch that she cannot accept herself.

Berkman is not alone in interpreting the play "from" Blanche, and thus seeing intimacy or whatever else there is of value disintegrating along with her. No attempt will be made here to relate the many attempts that have been made to champion Blanche and thus place the world of Stanley, Stella, Steve, Eunice, and Mitch under the negative. It must be seen that "value" already presupposes a framework, that "intimacy" is inseparable from its dramatic formation. Blanche's perspective is not, by any means, the only one to be taken into consideration.

I would like, finally, to engage Elia Kazan, the director, who has recorded his own impressions of the play in a production notebook. Though he attempts to account for the "spine" or action of each character in the play individually, he begins, significantly, with Blanche, and a personal memo to himself: "Try to keep each scene in terms of Blanche."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Kazan, "Notebook," p. 365.

How this flash of insight is transposed effectively to film can be seen if we consider the closing sequence of the production. We see Stella running up the stairs of the New Orleans tenement house in which she and her husband, Stanley Kowalski, live. A poker game is in progress in the downstairs flat, which belongs to the Kowalskis, and Blanche Dubois, Stella's sister, has just been taken away to an asylum. Throughout the play Blanche has acted as a divisive force between Stella and Stanley, exerting her authority over Stella in order to pull her away from Stanley. The poker game is a significant repetition of an earlier game which broke out in violence with Stella retreating to the upstairs flat, only to return when Stanley called for her. Now at the end of the play, under the impact of Blanche's departure, Kazan would have Stella do what Blanche was trying to persuade her to do - leave Stanley permanently. "I won't go back!" Stella exclaims in Kazan's production, voicing a "simple" negative. The play has not prepared us for this action, or twist in the action, unless we are willing to concede that from the opening lines Blanche has the controlling perspective. Even then I think Kazan has broken the tension unnaturally, because Blanche still completes her action. She originally gets on a street-car named Desire, transfers to one called Cemeteries (death) and gets off at Elysian Fields, which is that only in name. Blanche is never able to admit it as her final resting place. Throughout the play she is nervous and restless and the inner fatality of her action finally drives her beyond the tenement house to an asylum. So what does Kazan's interpretation contribute to the play?

Blanche's own psychological turns, for example, her characterization of Stanley for Stella in Scene Four and her confessions, encourage psychologizing on the part of director and critic. In leaning toward the activation of psychological insight into behavior, Elia Kazan beats the drums of sexuality. Stanley "conquers with his penis."<sup>10</sup> Mitch represents "violence - he's full of sperm."<sup>11</sup> Kazan sees this sexuality everywhere around Blanche, but he fails to do justice to her own sexual self-torment, her inability to accept her sexuality. Thus, "in the Aristotelian sense, the flaw is the need to be superior, special (or her need for protection and what it means to her), the 'tradition.'"<sup>12</sup> This interpretation is mistaken because it fails to explicate the deep cleavage in Blanche - her need to be exceptional because she is, in her own way, aware that she is capable of the "commonness" with which she charges Stanley (322). "She won't face her physical or sensual side"<sup>13</sup> is a good description of Blanche's action, not in tension with but guiding the infinitive "to find protection, to find something to hold onto, some strength in whose protection she can live, like a sucker or a parasite."<sup>14</sup> Kazan makes much of Blanche's dependence in order to make her a passive victim, determined by her past, which is not really hers at all but an impersonal "tradition," and by Stanley who is for Blanche the personification of brutal desire, the streetcar on which she rode into the French Quarter of New Orleans (321). In Kazan's interpretation Stanley is Blanche's nemesis. "Blanche he (Stanley) can't seem to do

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 377.    <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 378.    <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 369.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

anything with. She can't come down to his level so he levels her with his sex."<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is Stanley's rape of Blanche that constitutes for Kazan the inflexible "turn" or "reversal" in the action of the play: everything leads up to it, and down from it.

What about the innuendo in Scene Two, when Blanche and Stanley are left alone in the house for the first time. Blanche touches off something in Stanley. She is coy with him, and it draws the rejoinder, "If I didn't know that you was my wife's sister I'd get ideas about you" (281). Does this mean simply that because Blanche is Stella's sister she is "out-of-bounds?" Or does it mean more - that Stanley sees something in Stella which is inviolable, and that Stella, indirectly, prevents him from touching Blanche, in whom he sees something else? Blanche is not "essentially" passive but only "apparently" passive. She initiates Stanley's "ideas" about herself. But Stella stands in the way until the sordid truth about Blanche Dubois is fully known - that she is unlike her sister and, thus, "fair game." (This metaphor is in keeping with the hunt imagery of the romance tradition which Blanche employs.) It would not be unrealistic to characterize Stella as Blanche's "shadow" throughout the play until she fully emerges in her decision to push Blanche out in Scene Eleven. As "shadow" Stella bodies forth the "identification" with her "big sister" in the passive mode.

However, Elia Kazan does not approach the situation in this way. He is more interested in focusing the cultural-mythic "quality" in Blanche, thus "directing" the play to tragic proportions. Blanche is

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

"a last dying relic of the last century now adrift in our unfriendly day. From time to time, for reasons of simple human loneliness and need she goes to pieces, smashes her tradition. . . then goes back to it."<sup>16</sup> In the process of tragedifying Blanche it is forgotten that Blanche's relation to a tradition is through the medium of memory, an ironic filter which presents Blanche's e-state of beautiful dreams, the plantation genteely named "Belle Reve," as a charnelhouse. "Belle Reve" focuses the tradition of romance as a state of innocence which is "lost." Blanche is cut adrift from this dream, which includes her marriage to a boy who she thought "almost too fine to be human" (364) and who she subsequently lost. Blanche looks for "romance" with boys, as she quests for the innocence which she lost when she opened the door to a room which she thought was empty but which was occupied by her husband and another man. Stanley she immediately singles out as a "man" (280). The newspaper boy and even Mitch are "boys," but Stanley, lacking the innocence of first love, is a threat, a "man." He is a threat, not because he is utterly different from Blanche, but rather because of the attraction of Blanche to the "Stanley," although she would call it brute desire, in herself, with which she is at odds, and from which she flees.

In New Orleans Blanche begins to act out her dream of innocence to make it real once again. The ironic filter of memory places her in the anti-heroic and anti-mythic, though strongly personal, mode. This contention does not gibe with Kazan's reading and will require some explanation.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

The title of the play indicates a direction: for Blanche "desire," in its absolute opposition to "death" (389) becomes identified with death, in true Burkian fashion, as Blanche plunges toward the "asylum" (sanctuary?) from light in the darkness of lunacy - darkness, which she tells Mitch has always been a comfort to her (383).

Light is what Blanche consistently shelters herself from, because as she tells Stella in the opening scene "you didn't dream, but I saw! Saw! Saw!" (262). What Blanche saw was the procession of death at Belle Reve, the diminishment of the property and the simultaneous fading of the dream of innocence, which meant her own "fading," and which led her to the actions which caused her to be "thrown" into the world and upon its mercy. She emphasizes sight again in describing the Allen Grey incident to Mitch: "unable to stop myself - I'd suddenly said - 'I saw! I know! You disgust me . . .'" (355) after which, as she explains, the light went out. Thus, light is anathema to Blanche. She refuses it; she is running from it. In the opening scene she announces to Stella that "I won't be looked at in this merciless glare!" (251), and her strategy to avoid facing the light of truth about herself extends from covering a "naked light bulb" (300) to drawing attention to her appearance or looking in a mirror and powdering herself in order to "appear" presentable and not give herself away. "You haven't said a word about my appearance. . . Daylight never exposed so total a ruin!" (254), she says to Stella in order to deflect attention away from her "hidden" self. Blanche is questing for the negative, for the



darkness of "Elysian Fields," the underworld of the shades in mythology which will "cover" her own inescapable self-exposure. When she is not looking in a mirror she is in the tub washing herself, trying to make herself "clean" and free of the past by "simply" refusing to accept it as essentially a part of herself.

Blanche's action is less obvious than "to find protection;" it is more like "to cover herself," "to find concealment," and that means manipulating the light of truth to achieve her end. Kazan is correct in his observation that she "is playing 11 different people."<sup>17</sup> But Stanley roots out the truth and presents it to Stella in Scene Seven: "The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel!" (361). From that moment Blanche is "unmasked" and the irony of her role-playing is sharpened: the only person she is any longer fooling is herself. Self-dramatization is the essence of concealment, and of "bad faith." Heightened self-consciousness pushes the crisis or judgment or "moment of truth" into the background of the immediate situation. Awareness on the part of other characters of Blanche's pretence - the posture which she adopts toward them - only serves to intensify the acting and clarify the oppositions. As Blanche tells Mitch in their last encounter, in Scene Nine: "So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out" (387). From the moment of her arrival Blanche proceeds to "play," to repeat her play, until she is played out again.

This last observation brings us to the symbol which is employed throughout: the poker game. Blanche is "playing out" her hand,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

"bluffing" as she goes. She realizes her acting without gravity - insisting that she never lied in her heart (Scene Nine, 287), which in itself is a half-truth because she covers up the truth in order not to have to face it. This lack of gravity or seriousness establishes the opposition between Blanche's playing and the men playing cards. Stanley "plays" with utter seriousness, "for keeps." The seriousness of "play" pervades his conversation. In the second scene Blanche psychologizes him: "You're simple, straightforward, and honest, a little bit on the primitive side I should think. To interest you a woman would have to -" She pauses and Stanley picks up the "drift:" "Lay. . .her cards on the table" (279). The sexual innuendo ought to be noted as well. "Don't play dumb," Stanley commands (281). In the seventh scene Stanley tells Stella about her sister: "You know she's been feeding us a pack of lies here?" (358). In Scene Eight, to Stella and Blanche, he directs the challenge: "What do you think you are? A pair of queens? . . . Every Man is a King!" (371). Violence is an implicit, understood facet of "play," and the play is framed by this "serious" play in as much as the closing lines, spoken by Steve, "This game is seven-card stud" (419), are blunt, direct, and filled with the unromantic sexuality of the "hard" world. Blanche is "soft," and her play is a mode of indirection, by contrast. She insists that "playing" does not touch her real self.

The playing out of memory, of ritual purification, and here it is important to remark once again that bathing is not positive but negative as a way of concealment, Blanche's means of washing away her

guilt, is the shell which Blanche constructs around herself to buffer herself from the gravity of the situation. This playing points to the ambiguous weaving of "appearance" and "reality," of "innocence" and "experience." "A woman's charm is fifty percent illusion" (281) Blanche tells Stanley. "I don't tell truth, I tell what ought to be truth" (385) she tells Mitch. She is driven out of Laurel but she only intimates to Stella that she was not "good" in her last two years there. She runs away from lunacy (254) into a situation which she sees to be "absolute lunacy" (Scene Three, 303). Her acting is regarded by the other characters with utter seriousness; and they indicate, as they become aware of her "history," that she has betrayed them by acting. But Blanche misplaces her own seriousness. She is overcome by the violence of the poker night while Mitch insists that she not take it so seriously (308). Blanche insists that she "can't be alone" (Scene One, 257), but she betrays her own need of others by deceiving them about herself and "playing" with them. "I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection," (386) she tells Mitch in her last scene with him, absorbed in the past and alcohol. The truthfulness of this disclosure masks, in the vocabulary of Romance, the bluntness of her intention, which is "seduction." In terms of the play, the hunter becomes the hunted. Blanche goes hunting and finds her sister, "precious lamb" (251), a newspaper boy, "honey lamb" (339), and Mitch, who belongs in this group as her "rosencavalier" (339). These are Blanche's potential sacrificial victims. The vocabulary of Romance, in its ironic modification or "demagnification," betrays Blanche.

In what way?

Notice how Blanche plays upon the "sign" of her birth - Virgo the virgin (329) - and her name - "It's a French name. . .the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring" (299). Spring figures in Blanche's self-imagining as the time in life when the young make "their first discovery of love" (302); as the time in Blanche's own life when she made the discovery "all at once and much, much too completely" (354); as the time in her life which she attempts to play out and repeat over and over in little intimacies with young, "boyish" and innocent strangers, and create the *joie de vivre* (344) which will dispel her inner confusion over aging. Blanche weaves the illusion of innocent play around herself to cushion the shock of experience - the reflection in the mirror which shows death catching up to her. The imagery forms a composite: Blanche puts forth the appearance of inviolable virginity. Berkman and Kazan do not need to mythicize Blanche. She does an adequate job of it herself. She is Artemis/Diana, woodland goddess - who loves to be waited upon (333) - and bringer of death to women - to Stella, in the form of an inheritance. Eunice is the counterpoint with her realistic credo that "Life has got to go on" (406). Stanley, with his "commonness," is ideal for the role of the "mortal" Acteon, who sees Diana and her attendant bathing. Stanley is partly responsible for the demythologizing of Blanche, but Blanche betrays her own invented selves frequently - for example, to Stella: "Is he (Mitch) a wolf?" (292); "I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick" (322); and to Mitch: "Voulez-vous couchez avec moi ce soir?" (344). Mitch, of

course, does not understand a word of French. Obliquity or indirection is the key to all of Blanche's self-disclosures. The purpose is never apparent; but Blanche herself insists that "you never get anywhere with direct appeals" (318). Thus, the reality of Blanche's loss of innocence, her fallenness, does not jar with the appearance which she presents to the world because it remains an undertone. Stanley explodes the myth of the inviolable virgin with information obtained from a company connection, at first verbally - as indicated in the shift from the formal title "Sister Blanche," with its connotations of celibate vocation and her relation to Stella, to "Dame Blanche," a derogatory appellation directly stating her situation as an "easy" woman, or prostitute. If Stanley discloses Blanche to the naked light of reality verbally, with Mitch symbolically pulling the "shade" from the light fixture, his "rape" of Blanche - and "rape" is a dubious description in view of how Blanche acts the role of passive victim - makes the demythologizing complete, beyond a shadow of a doubt. When Blanche continues to romanticize in the final scene it is out of her imprisonment in herself. Stanley's decisive act is inevitable if the "directions" in Scene Two are heeded. His words bear this observation out: "We've had this date with each other from the beginning" (402).

Irony underlies the Diana/Acteon pairing in so far as Blanche's verbal assaults on Stanley - to Stella - do not neutralize his act of disclosure, eventuating in the "rape," but only temporarily slow it down, as in Scene Two where she attempts to satisfy his inquiry into the loss of Belle Reve by indirection and emerges from the house say-

ing "I think I handled it nicely" (285). Blanche attempts, verbally, to turn Stanley into an animal, a beast. But she renders herself more vulnerable by doing what she elsewhere knows cannot succeed: she attempts to reach Stella by direct appeal, and only succeeds in throwing Stella into a quandry, finally alienating her from herself. Stanley discloses the truth to Stella, and it might have met with mixed sympathy and shock rather than disbelief and shock were it not that Blanche had already played out her deception.

The weaving of appearance and reality as inseparable in Blanche, confronted by "realism" as it is manifest in Stanley, drives Blanche away from any tenuous apposition toward absolute opposition: she chooses appearance, magic, and darkness.

The preceding excursus on the anti-mythic and anti-Romantic movement of the play frees us to consider the central paradox of Blanche's personal quest. She comes "to be near" Stella, to close the distance between herself and others. She is apparently seeking intimacy. But the more people get to know the truth about her, the more trapped she feels. Thus, her song in the second scene proleptically draws the tension: "From the land of the sky-blue water, / They brought a captive maid" (270). Blanche identifies herself as the "captive" forcibly removed from her innocent and virginal state. She succeeds in reversing appearance and reality. The "dreaming" state of innocence becomes real and Blanche acts it out, while the ironic presence of death at the center of this dream is seemingly ignored. She enacts the ambiguity of death-desire/innocence repeatedly -

notably before the young newsboy. The death-desire polarity is inescapable, and she is "captive" to it, unable to find a way out of it. Blanche seeks intimacy but cannot bear the possibility of anyone discovering her secret - not even herself. Thus, having reached in Scene Six with Mitch the possibility of realizing the connection with him, this being validated by Mitch's question "Could it be - you and me, Blanche?" (356), Blanche does not look forward to a truthful relationship. She does not force the truth out. She sings the popular lyric about the make-believe world that "wouldn't be make-believe/If you believed in me!" (361). There are two conditionals here: the acceptance of pretence as all there is and the "if" of being believed in by someone. For Blanche it is not a question of her believing in Mitch, but only of him believing in her. Thus, Blanche is involved/detached in relation to Mitch. "I want to deceive him enough to make him - want me. . ." (335) she explains to Stella, but it never crosses her mind whether she wants him or not. Stella puts the question. Blanche's answer reflects her personal detachment from him, and her impersonal involvement: Mitch is her means of escape from the Kowalski household.

Blanche flees to strangers, whether young men, or the doctor at the end of the play who seems to conform to the figure in her romantic death-vision. In this flight Blanche is not free of contradiction - for example, "intimacy" with "strangers" - but more a prisoner of it. Since she cannot live with the contradictions, she flees into the darkness of insanity, closing the circle upon herself as a creature who, like her dead husband, is too fine to be human. She dreams of

dying from "eating an unwashed grape" (410), surrounded by a faceless crowd of strangers. Here is a contrast of insights: Stanley sees Blanche as "washed up like poison" (361) while Blanche, in her hot tub, tries to wash herself clean. She sees uncleanness entering her through the mouth; Stanley sees it coming out from within her. To use a familiar metaphor, Blanche is like a whitewashed tomb, outwardly beautiful, inwardly full of dead men's bones and uncleanness (Matt. 23:28). At any rate, Blanche herself makes the connection between uncleanness and death.

Blanche's longing for a way out, coupled with her inability to make a direct appeal, either to Mitch, Stella, or Shep Huntleigh, and her playing with innuendo, lead to her expulsion from "Elysian Fields." In her confusion at meeting the doctor and nurse she runs back into the tenement, back into the "trap." The final twist is that she looks for danger from the wrong source, leaving herself vulnerable to Stella, who is finally responsible for casting her out.

Now Elia Kazan's approach to the play through Blanche implicates both Stella and Stanley in her "doom." There is something basically wrong with this interpretation, for though it is quite natural to associate Blanche with death, Belle Reve, and the Mexican woman in Scene Nine vending flowers for the dead, it is only natural to associate Stella with life, for that is Stella's action in the play: "to give birth." Blanche appears in search of someone that she can use to get possession of herself. She sits, in Scene One, "very stiffly. . . her legs pressed close together. . . her hands tightly clutching her purse as if she were quite cold" (250). The tightness and nervous-



ness of Blanche are in direct relation to the sterility of her life and the "tension" which dominates it. Stella, in contrast, is relaxed and "open." Kazan remarks that "she's in a sensual stupor."<sup>18</sup> He characterizes her in the negative, Blanche in the positive. He goes against the action of the play, pitting Stanley against Blanche, largely overlooking Stella because she is seen to be identified with Stanley, basically satisfied by him, and willingly pregnant because it justifies her indolence.

The ambiguities of innocence and experience and the quest for comforting darkness are expressed in Blanche. She never, consciously, arrives at any acceptance of things as they are - perhaps because she begins by trying too hard to tolerate them. While both Berkman and Kazan work out Blanche's tragic downfall, locating her transcendence in her confessions and her dignified departure, I am inclined to deny to Blanche any transcendence. Her departure shows her beginning again, at the end, to play herself out. Stanley knows things only as they are, and as they were, which aligns him with Blanche. Stella stands between the two and must choose. What she tells Blanche about Stanley confirms Kazan's intuition about her stupor, in part. She has not made conscious what it is about him that appeals to her. But we see Stella wavering between Blanche and Stanley until she consciously chooses Stanley. She does not drift.

A good case can be made for Stella as the seemingly "passive" and "hidden" center of the play. Blanche gravitates toward her, tries to dominate her and ends up "imitating" her, something which is

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

implicit in her departure, dressed in "Della Robbia blue" (409), the color of the Madonna, the "virgin mother." Once again the paradoxical mingling of innocence and experience emerges in the foreground. Kazan is right in saying that things cannot be the same between Stella and Stanley after Blanche's departure. But that ought not to be a "simple" forecast of doom. Stella has a baby. Her relationship to Stanley has been "fruitful." It shows promise of life.

This chapter has one objective: to demonstrate that Blanche, much as she dominates the stage, appearing in every scene, is not, in herself, the "key" to the play. The tendency to monologize the play is prevalent, as I have indicated, but I also maintain that a play is constituted of a polyphony of voices. It is just that some are drowned out by others. The intuition that the abiding "value" in Streetcar is the intimate connection formed between people is accurate but the exposition of it must not be determined by Blanche's failure to make the connection. Blanche and Mitch are an "incompatible" pair, but that does not instantly make of Eunice and Steve, Stella and Stanley, "incompatibles."

It is undeniable that Blanche requires attention, but she ought not to be "singled" out. She ought to be "paired," and particularly with Stella. My own inclination is to view the play as the confrontation of "Two Sisters." Because a "direct" confrontation does not occur we should not be discouraged. Blanche brings the message of death, and finally succumbs to it herself, while failing to draw Stella in with her. This is where I see Kazan's production going astray. Blanche does not "see" the future that Stanley says in Scene Seven is

"mapped out for her" (367). But Stanley does not see it clearly either. He would send Blanche "back" to Laurel, where he knows, and herein lies the cruelty of his intention, that she will find no support. In Stanley's view it is only if Blanche goes "back" that he and Stella can go "back" to the way they lived before Blanche's unexpected (from Stanley's point of view) arrival. It is worth noting that as Stanley makes his appeal to the past, to "was," at the end of Scene Nine, Stella goes into labor - pregnant with "will be," the future. Stanley and Blanche are fighting the same battle from opposite poles, she from "direction without vitality" - be-ing cut off from the "dream" estate which she and Stella have inherited, desiring to "repeat" a "first" love which disintegrated, in intimacies with strangers - and he from "boundless vitality without direction" - for example, smashing the light bulbs in the house on the wedding night, an act which "thrills" Stella. It is possible to see not only Stanley, but also Blanche, as destructive. Blanche threatens the Kowalskis' marriage. In terms of detail, her violence is mostly verbal, although at the end of Scene Ten she threatens Stanley with a broken bottle.

Blanche is certainly more cerebral than Stanley, though he is more "feeling" - for example, the embrace with Stella at the end of Scene Three, significantly repeated in Scene Four and at the end of the play "in reverse," with Stanley running out to Stella, as Stella had run out to Stanley. Blanche, in her failure to integrate the simple "old-fashioned ideals" (348) into the violent confusion of the world is only more complex than Stanley in so far as she fails to

share her dilemma with anyone and is locked into herself. Stanley is already paired with Stella. Blanche is still searching. Even Blanche, aware that she is out of place, that the "scene" does not correspond to its name, that its appearance does not meet expectations; aware that she will, in spite of her persistent efforts, be driven out and beyond Elysian Fields, and using this possibility of being "hounded" and "persecuted" to make Stella feel guilty and thus prolong her stay, does not see the ironic twist in her completion of this action. She does not foresee that the darkness of insanity from which she is fleeing into a more comforting darkness is really the only darkness that offers comfort. Blanche the alien and stranger depends upon strangers, third-person entities who are not a threat because they do not know her ways. With Blanche, inner experience and self-dramatization are virtually a permanent retreat from real, "existential" communication.

Blanche is "soft," but as she tells Stella in Scene Five, "it isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft and attractive" (332). When what ought to be openly conflicts with what is there are "tricks" of "hardness" which Blanche uses to prolong the illusion of softness. This underlying hardness ripples through Blanche's softness. A fine example of this is the expression which she addresses to Mitch when they are alone: "Voulez-vous couchez avec moi ce soir?" has the appeal of coyness and genteel discreteness, yet it is a direct offer of seduction. Blanche has seen experience - which is identified with death - destroy innocence, so she desperately tries to restore it. But is experience always and only destructive? Is

"innocence" all?

Blanche fixes reality in the past, a romanticized past. This rigidification of life means that the present does not get its chance. Mitch must conform to the mold of southern gentleman and beau, and when he doesn't, he is dismissed. Streetcar opens in a very subtle way as a repetition of Blanche's past. She has come seeking to be near the other inheritor of the dream estate. But Blanche is looking for "my sister, Stella Dubois - Mrs. Stanley Kowalski" (246). Stella implicitly has a twofold identity, a fact which is inescapable even for Blanche, and which means that she must confront the "unknown" Stella. However, the appellation "Mrs. Stanley Kowalski" is only an afterthought for Blanche. She is apprehensive about meeting Stanley because, as she later explains to Stella, as she reads her letter to the Texas millionaire, "forewarned is forearmed" (325), and Blanche has no image of Stanley. That Stella's place is not what Blanche had imaged from the address, and that Stanley does not know that she is coming, only adds to her apprehensiveness. But she does not reckon with the "unknown" Stella, as her approach immediately demonstrates. She treats Stella like a child, reverting to their former relationship, and further establishing her authority by implicating Stella in her guilt over the loss of Belle Reve. She insists that Stella will reproach her and then proceeds to reproach Stella.

In this opening scene two brief glimpses of the "unknown" Stella act as counterpoint to the voice of the past, as represented by Blanche. "You can't describe someone you're in love with" (258)

she tells Blanche. Blanche lives by sight and appearance, which reflects her distance from people. Stella does not describe or explain or objectify. In this instance she compromises and shows Blanche a photograph. She goes on to say how her life is centered on Stanley.

As Blanche is emphatic about how she "stayed" and suffered, Stella rises to defend herself: "The best I could do was make my own living, Blanche" (260). Blanche lingers to witness death while Stella goes on in search of life. Is that not how the play works itself out, with Blanche, in her eleven different roles witnessing her own death, and Stella making her choice of life conscious? Does not Eunice's insight that "life has got to go on" support and confirm this direction in Stella?

Also in the opening scene it should be noted that where Blanche sees "the ghoulish-woodland of Weir" (252) Stella sees the L & N railroad tracks. Stella is in touch with the real world and with her feelings. Blanche's reproaches reduce her to tears. The first scene opens the possibilities. The remaining scenes confirm them.

Scene One shows the rift between Stella and Blanche - incipiently. Scene Two opens with Stella appealing to Stanley to understand Blanche, to flatter her. She tempers Blanche's initial reaction to the house by telling Stanley that "she wasn't expecting to find us in such a small place" (271). She attempts to mediate between Blanche and Stanley, but her indifference over the loss of Belle Reve, partly induced by her meeting in the previous scene with Blanche, serves to stir Stanley up, so that he brings to her attention the Napoleonic Code, whereby "what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and

vice versa" (272), and reaffirms the legal conditions of their marriage. When he begins to rummage through Blanche's belongings Stella has had enough and when Stanley asserts that "the Kowalskis and the Dubois have different notions" (275), she angrily agrees. Thus, Stanley is left to thrash out with Blanche the loss of Belle Reve - and not Stella who is the inheritor. Stanley's interest is only financial. The two identities are reaffirmed in this scene and Blanche learns that they are coming together: Stella is going to have a baby.

There is little to pursue in the third scene, the poker night. Stella stands up for her rights in the house and Stanley, already fuming over his losses in the poker game, turns on her. By the end of the scene the intimacy of the two is restored, with Stella returning to Stanley - perhaps forgiving him.

Scene Four belongs to Blanche and Stella, Blanche with her hysterical reaction to the poker night violence, and the directive "to find a way out of this desperate situation for both of us," and Stella opposing her, at first gently and apologetically. "You're making too much fuss about this. . . It wasn't anything as serious as you seem to take it" (312) she tells Blanche. She reaffirms her tolerance of Stanley, recognizing that he must also tolerate her in the worst of times. But Blanche is incapable of understanding this "tolerance." She sees the surface, the appearances; she is not present for the intimate exchange at the close of the preceding scene. This hiatus between what she sees and what Stella knows, that "there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark - that sort of make everything else seem - unimportant" (321), means that

Blanche is permitted her "opinion" (313) of the facts but no exclusive right to judge the situation. Blanche is clearly incapable of understanding what Stella means as anything more than brutal desire. The point is that because Blanche wants to get out, she assumes that Stella "sees" as she does when in fact Stella does not: "I'm not in anything I want to get out of" (314). In fact, Stella points out to Blanche her mistaken assumption (320). Blanche does not see Stanley as Stella sees him: "The only way to live with such a man is to go to bed with him. And that's your job - not mine!" (319). This is all negative for Blanche. The irony of it is that Blanche is moving toward a usurpation of Stella's place beside Stanley and is blindly leading her on. The direct assault on Stanley only renders Stella cold and Stella closes the door on the past when Blanche challenges her: "I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with." Stella is equally final: "Well, you're taking entirely too much for granted" (320). Blanche attempts to mock her and Stella refuses to say anything more (321). When Stanley appears, she embraces him in front of Blanche, not out of desperation as Kazan argues, and not simply in defiance of Blanche, although she wants to "show" Blanche. Blanche wants to understand, to see, and Stella gives her this opportunity.

The quarrel in Scene Five between Eunice and Steve, with Eunice threatening to call the police and then doing what Stella calls the "much more practical" (327) thing, going out for a drink instead, and later getting together with Steve, bodes forth the poker night vio-



lence and Stella's brand of tolerance. There is no ultimate seriousness in this "violence." Reconciliation is ever-possible.

In sharp contrast to the previous scene Stanley refuses to kiss Stella when he comes home. He denies Blanche this privilege and she, catching the threatening undertone, appeals to Stella, whether she has heard any "gossip." The half-truth in Blanche's choice of word should be noted. Blanche concedes that "there was - a good deal of talk in Laurel" (331). Stella responds with naive disbelief: "About you, Blanche?"

In this way the ground is prepared for Stanley's disclosures in Scene Seven. Stella has asserted her choice - in Scene Four - but this does not mean the expulsion of Blanche - not yet. "It's pure invention! There's not a word of truth in it" (361) she exclaims initially. "This is making me - sick!" (362). Still she attempts to conceal her shock from Blanche. She buffers Blanche because "I don't believe all of those stories. . . It's possible that some of the things. . . are partly true" (364). With this rupture of her faith in Blanche, Stella must acknowledge that she disapproves of what she naively calls Blanche's flightiness. She tries to introduce the story of Blanche's failed marriage to garner sympathy for her, but is forced to admit that "it was - a pretty long time ago. . ." (365). Stella is obviously confused and Stanley attempts to embrace her, to comfort her, recognizing her shock. However, Stella "gently withdraws from him," thus establishing herself as separate from him for the remainder of this scene and the next. Though she is appalled that Stanley has informed Mitch and has arranged for Blanche's de-

parture, she is unable to argue with him because of her own misgivings about Blanche. She tries to hide from Blanche. In fact, in the eighth scene she attempts to take Blanche's side, "seeing" Stanley as she does, tragedifying Blanche as victimized by "people like you" (376). That she does not attack Stanley directed is an indication that the rift is not final. But Stella is about to give birth and thus her strength is not in this defense of Blanche.

What I have attempted to show is the consistent distinguishing of Blanche and Stella in terms of attitude, and the choric support which Stella's attitude receives, leading toward the overwhelming truth of Scene Eleven: to choose Stanley means to "sacrifice" Blanche.

Eunice is even more clearly supportive in this closing scene. By encouraging Blanche in her playing she eases the strain on Stella who Eunice confirms in her decision to have Blanche committed: "No matter what happens, you've got to keep going on" (406). Eunice directs Stella's attention back to herself, to her own welfare. She throws her arms around Stella to comfort her, and when Blanche resists the nurse Stella appeals to Eunice for help. Eunice responds by holding her back, preventing her from going to Blanche and reaffirming: "You done the right thing, the only thing you could do" (416). Eunice is Stella's strength in this scene, the realistic part of her which knows that suffering must be accepted and that life must go on.

Ironically, Stella must "see" as clearly as Blanche once saw - her own responsibility in the "death" of another. It is only after

Blanche's departure, when Stella is overcome with remorse for Blanche, that Stanley attempts to comfort her. This follows Eunice's final gesture: placing the child in Stella's arms. "Stella accepts the child" (418). In this way Stella accepts her orientation toward life. She is not, as Blanche was, completely overwhelmed at the sight of "death" and her part in it. The play closes on this note. The baby is the affirmation of the play, the transcendence through the trans-action of Stella and Stanley. Descriptions and words are foreign to this affirmation. Its speech is the new life of the child. Its direction is implicit.

The departure of Blanche and the final words on Stella's lips - "Blanche! Blanche, Blanche!" - make the affirmative, unspoken gestures ambiguous. Stanley's embrace is no less ambiguous, if it is recalled that in Scene Eight he pointed Stella "back" to the way they lived before Blanche's "untimely" arrival. The question of what Stanley's embrace might mean lingers. The play stands in the shadow of this ambiguous situation.

There is a little "irony" in the shape of this chapter. In order to get to Stella it was necessary to re-explicate Blanche and risk doing what those I have argued against did: sacrifice the play to her. My objective, given the framework of the method employed, has been to set Blanche's singleness in the context of her failure to "pair," and of the relative success of other characters in this direction. Between Stella and Stanley there is a depth of communication that Blanche, standing outside looking in, can only mock and try to level.

A Streetcar Named Desire focuses the shattering of a form of "dreaming innocence." The attempt to "live" this state of innocence leads to death. It must be transcended. But Blanche repeatedly fails to step into the "between" where this transcendence could take place. She fails to "see;" she is "blind," and unable to call upon another, not only in relation to Mitch but also in her failure to pick up the telephone and call her Texas millionaire. Blanche lives on the boundary, but she is unable to see that clearly. Stella, on the other hand, compromises; she adjusts and tolerates. The boundary does not permit that. Insanity is the other side of the boundary - giving up the struggle to balance innocence and experience. The crater left by the impact of Blanche's departure is not filled by the possibility of the reconciliation of Stanley and Stella. The formation of the "word" of grace, as it is seen in the closeness of Stanley, Stella and the baby at the end of the play, as a frame of acceptance, arises out of rejection - the rejection or loss of innocence for both Stella and Mitch. The withdrawal of basic trust in the word of relation allows only a glimmer of light to break through on its restoration at the end of the play. Thus, Streetcar stops with the loss of innocence - Stella's real innocent trust in Blanche, the breaking of which, as I have shown, is carefully developed.

#### IV. THE MODE OF INCOMPLETION IN

##### THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

The Night of the Iguana develops through the form of an "incomplete sentence." However insignificant that may sound, it does suggest how completely Williams is guided by the "grammatical" concerns which were worked out in the previous sections.

Before going on to an analysis of the play it may be helpful to outline its basic movement briefly. A tour guide named Larry Shannon arrives with a party at a run-down hotel on the west coast of Mexico. He is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and no longer able to cope with the demands of his female tourists. With the key to the bus in his pocket he ascends the hill to the hotel and enlists the support of the proprietor, Maxine Faulk, to help him stave off any attempts to get the tour moving again until he has had a rest. As it turns out, the dissatisfaction with Shannon arises from his failure to stick to the tour guide and his seduction of a young girl in the party. To compound Shannon's troubles, Maxine's husband has just recently died and she is looking for someone to "fill his shoes." Shannon seems the obvious choice.

A second party arrives, a New England spinster who paints quick sketches for a living, and her dying grandfather, who is trying, in spite of lapses of memory, to complete his last poem. Shannon turns to the spinster, Hannah Jelkes, and she to him, and their mutual support breeds trust. Shannon discloses the history of his breakdown to Hannah

and she helps him over it when an authorized person from the tour outfit shows up to wrestle the key from Shannon. Shannon, in return, helps Hannah through the most difficult moments of her grandfather's "performances."

The play develops "through" the form of an incomplete sentence. In his/her own way, each character attempts to say completely, to know completely, what the total "action" is. This initiative creates conflict with other characters who are attempting likewise to complete themselves. In existential communication or dialogue they come to realize that they are incomplete in themselves and are only complete in accepting incompleteness and in being open to the other person. This is the underlying aim of "incompletion," or the mode of incompleteness.

Communication is an act, even when its form is so distorted that communication is thwarted. The failure of direct address (I-Thou) has its own integrity and is no more pseudo-act, unless it is interpreted "simply," by disregarding its intention, which is never fully knowable anyway. Failed communication also interprets cognition. Thus, though in the analysis of Iguana two "perceptions" are given specific attention, Shannon's "existential" perceptions, the way to these perceptions receives priority, in keeping with the sequential modes of drama: purpose-passion-perception. What is being sought in the following pages is the formation of the "right" word, which makes possible acceptance of the word in its finitude. This acceptance, in its paradoxical formation "accepting acceptance from the other" is the only possible transcendence. But this transcendence comes through "broken gates" between people.

Having arrived at the Costa Verde hotel, Larry Shannon is confronted by the driver of the bus tour which he is conducting who demands that Shannon make some effort to passify the disgruntled tourists. Shannon tells the driver that "a tour conducted by T. Lawrence Shannon is in his charge, completely - where to go, when to go, every detail of it. Otherwise I resign" (260). All or nothing - Shannon guides his life by absolutes. He is either fully in control or spinning out of control. A few minutes later he tells Maxine, the hotel proprietor, that he has written to his "old bishop this morning a complete confession and a complete capitulation" (268). He has said everything that there is to say in a letter. Speaking to Maxine about her late husband, who Maxine says "was always a mystery to me" (270), Shannon remarks that "he (Fred) was just cool and decent, that's all the mystery of him. . . ." (270). Again, Shannon encompasses in words the "real," in this case "mystery." He reduces mystery to no-mystery.

This is not a motif peculiar to a single character. Early in the second act, when Maxine inquires of Hannah directly whether she and her grandfather are insolvent, Hannah replies "Yes we are - completely" (291). Of course this must be seen in its relation to Hannah and Nonno's arrival "without reservations" (279). They have neither rooms booked in advance at the hotel nor resources to fall back upon, financial or emotional. They are holding back nothing and are thus at the end of the line as Hannah freely admits to Shannon in the first act. If she and Nonno are not permitted to stay, "then what, then where? There would just be the road, and no direction to move in, except out

to sea. . ." (282).

In order to meet expenses Hannah assumes the role of a quick-sketch artist. She draws people, but she does not judge them (344). When she first appears, alone, in Act One, she encounters Shannon, himself alone on the veranda, and questions him: "Are you. . .you're not, the hotel manager, are you?" (267). This same observant eye discerns, in the second act, that Shannon is "completely alone" (298). It is Hannah who points out to Shannon that, in expounding his personal idea of God, he has stopped and made an "incomplete sentence" (305). In the third act, when Shannon accuses her of having certain "spinsterish attitudes" and of not being "emancipated," Hannah's response is quite candid: "Who is. . .ever. . .completely?" (344). Her question bears a double meaning. It is a direct, rhetorical, reply to a statement and an indirect question responding to a question that is not asked. This second and penumbral intention deflects Shannon's accusation, turning it aside from Hannah to an indefinite, third person "who." Yet Shannon is the "who" that is questioned. The directness and completeness of Shannon's observation of Hannah's attitude is challenged and exploded. To be emancipated is to be free of the self. Shannon's reply to Hannah's question reveals how it impinges upon his condition, since he accuses her once again, saying that she has "suddenly turned into a woman" (notice the indefinite article and the sweeping statement) who, like "all women" wants "to see a man in a tied-up situation" (345). Is Hannah attempting to wrestle from Shannon an acknowledgement of the incompleteness of his statements? Carried a step further, in terms of the grammatical concerns of drama,



does this mean that Hannah is struggling with Shannon to make conscious his life-attitude in its incompleteness?

Further on in the third act, Hannah attempts to explain to Shannon what she understands a "home" to be. She asks whether it makes any sense to him, and he replies: "Yeah, complete. But. . .". Hannah quickly points out "another incomplete sentence" (357). In this exchange Shannon's "all" is qualified. "We better leave it that way" he goes on, saying that he is afraid of hurting her. The qualification of his complete understanding does not arise from within himself. It is Hannah's presence that stops him, and it is Hannah's consent that allows Shannon to continue, to say what qualifies his "complete" understanding. It is only when Hannah frees him to say that Nonno is a "falling down tree" that Shannon is able to point to this contingency of human dwelling. In this dialogue Hannah is Shannon's real limit.

Proceeding in the third act, Shannon, alone on the veranda, comes to grips with his crack-up. "It's always been tropical countries I took ladies through" (369). Again, though this time consciously, he is confronted by the "incomplete sentence" (369). Reckoning with the probability of staying at the Costa Verde and outliving Maxine, he reflects "cruelty. . .pity. What is it?" (369). Shannon is finally face to face with the widow Faulk, Maxine, even though she is not present with him at the time. Through the indirection of their communications in the first act Shannon always manages to bypass Maxine. Now, in the third act, he hesitates, saying "don't know, all I know is. . .". The incompleteness and the silence which stretches beyond words

seem to indicate that Shannon is slipping back into brooding about himself, so that Hannah, in drawing attention to this possibility ("You're talking to yourself"), arrests the slipping and escaping from the reality of incompleteness. In his denial of this possibility and danger, Shannon affirms a new direction. "No. To you." The direction of his words is "to you," to Hannah, because "I knew you could hear me out there, but not being able to see you I could say it, easier, you know. . ." (370). The words taper off into incompleteness, questioning Hannah's understanding on the basis of Shannon's trust in her. This is borne out in the repetition of "I knew you. . ." in the appeal "you know." Shannon trusts Hannah to know what he intends but cannot say.

A moment later, when Hannah asks Shannon to free the iguana which is tied up under the veranda, Shannon asks her "truthfully" (that is, he asks her to say completely) whether her wish to see it freed does not show that she recognizes her grandfather's situation paralleled in the reptile's. Hannah replies "yes, I. . ." and the words abruptly end in speechlessness. Now Shannon does something "uncharacteristic." He does not capitalize upon Hannah's failure to answer fully. Rather, he frees her from the incompleteness, from the dreadful speechlessness that encompasses speech. "Never mind completing that sentence" (370). That "never mind" is the acceptance of the incompleteness (as complete?). Shannon leaves the stage with a machete to free the iguana, to perform a further act of grace, while Hannah registers her trust in him: "I knew you'd do that" (371).

The final encounter which spells out the motif of incompleteness

follows directly Shannon's departure from the veranda. Nonno excitedly calls Hannah to his side and loudly exclaims "I! believe! it! is! finished!" (371). "I believe," Nonno says, and this credo exclamation parallels the "I know" of both Shannon and Hannah. "It is finished" has a dark parallel in the saying of Jesus in John's gospel: "When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished;' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (19:30, R.S.V.). This parallel saying presupposes an auditor who, as a member of the post-Easter community, is able to realize the great paradox inherent in it. It is life that is finished and closed off by death; it is the "passion" which is finished in this perception and thus there is release; it is conflict that is resolved "in anticipation" in these words which look ahead. Here where all seems ended life is actually beginning. This could be a clue to the "hidden" action of The Night of the Iguana. Or is too much being made of Nonno's affirmation of trust in the completion of his poetic endeavor?

Having recited his final poem, Nonno questions Hannah excitedly:

Nonno: Have you got it?  
 Hannah: Yes!  
 Nonno: All of it?  
 Hannah: Every word of it.  
 Nonno: It is finished?  
 Hannah: Yes.  
 Nonno: Oh! God! Finally finished?  
 Hannah: Yes, finally finished. (372)

The repetitive quality of this exchange points to Nonno's need to be confirmed in his credo; and it directs attention to the poem that the "how" of its completion might be ascertained. Yes, it is finished! But how is it finished?

The poem seems to be rounded off and closed in five stanzas with

the refrain "without a cry, without a prayer/With no betrayal of despair." "Without," "without," "no," the negatives follow in succession, denying words and suffering. The refrain encloses the history of the "fall" of a tree. It may be an extended metaphor of the tree of man, the repetition of stoic calm intensifying awareness of the crisis (judgment) under which all life stands in view of the outcome of the history. But the poem stands within the context of the play, and its statemental quality is broken by the recollection of two incidents which are "personal" - Shannon's gaze directed toward the orange tree (302) and, in his conversation with Hannah about the meaning of "home," the characterization of Nonno as "a falling down tree" (357). The words "gone past forever" confirm the finality of "fallenness" in the play. Thus, the "intercourse" of fallen beings is "bargaining," negotiating one's life and time confronted with "the earth's obscene, corrupting love." Obviously the poem captures the general situation (nounal) of the play: Shannon and Hannah negotiating with Maxine, Maxine exemplifying the earthiness of love which Shannon longs to escape, though it is within him too. The tree of Nonno's poem, "whose native green must arch above" this entangled nether world, is alien to this world. Yet, in the chronological picture which the poem presents, this world is finally unavoidable. Thus the fifth stanza commences with the words "and still;" in spite of this inevitable happening no complaint is heard. The silence is not acceptance. Resignation and acceptance are not the same. This insight is carried from the conclusion of the first act where Nonno, reciting his first stanza, says the words "with no

expression of despair. . ." before fading memory engulfs his attempt. In the completed poem "expression" is replaced by "betrayal," the use of which word acknowledges the reality of "despair." The negatives of the refrain are thus not a denial of despair, which is real, but a denial of any expression of despair. The refrain already bears the seed of "incompletion." The refusal of expression points to the something more which lies beyond saying. The poem is structurally complete with stanza five. It observes a state, but there are clues that this stance is not possible.

It would not be unfaithful to the play to argue that Nonno's quest is for a form which is able to state the human situation as it "looks" to be; that his failure at the end of Act One to complete it, and his repeated attempts, in spite of failing memory, to complete it, point to the necessity of finding another way of saying which is not a statement.

The final stanza of the poem confirms the apprehensiveness of the refrain. It acknowledges the very real anxiety, not in the third person but in the first person. It is a personal petition: to courage, to be strong and to accept, accepting that the "heart," the center of all willing and being, is "frightened." As an intercession the stanza is open, calling for a response. It is a question: "could you not as well. . .?" "To dwell" reflects Hannah's use of the word "home" in relation to "heart" (357). A home is not a place (static), but to build (active) "a nest in the heart of another" (357); a home is "between" two persons.

How does the poem body forth the motif of incompletion? In

terms of its content, the strength to endure is sought beyond the self. It seeks the in-dwelling of what is lacking in the self: courage. Formally, there is a hiatus between the fifth and sixth stanzas. In being finished the poem is, by virtue of its address and question, open. Being complete, it is incomplete, because it does not make a statement but is an act of petition and seeking.

The grammatical and dialogical guideline which can be drawn from this analysis indicates that to affirm the question means to treat it with ultimate seriousness. To try to proceed beyond the question means that it has not yet been re-ceived, that it has not yet had an impact, as opposed to being per-ceived. It is only by an act of grace that the dialogic question can be affirmed. Thus, Nonno perceives in the third person and attempts to encompass the "situation" impersonally and passively. But it cannot be "finished" in this way. The third person perspective is subjected to the question of the first person.

Hannah's words at the end of the play confirm the "finish" of the poem. "Oh, God, can't we stop now? Finally?" Again, the question is united with a petition, and the play ends with Hannah faithfully (that is to say that she experiences its impact) affirming the question. To speak faithfully is to speak from understanding-in-trust. It means to speak in spite of the fragmentariness of every form of saying, while affirming this fragmentariness. Hannah's question, phrased in the negative, recognizes the imperative "to go on" while affirming the fulfilment of the present, temporally and corporally. Thus, it underscores the ambiguity of human seeking to be finally sit-

uated and at rest. The question does not dangle in mid-air. Being a question-in-faith, trusting in the hearer to answer, it bears its own answer, in the affirmation of the question.

It is necessary at this point to reassert the inner connectedness of being and saying. To be complete and to say completely are inseparable. The Night of the Iguana affirms, not a quality of experience, but the mode of incompleteness. It remains to be seen how this analysis can serve as a guideline for the study of the play. A catalogue might be made of all the "incompletenesses" that appear throughout the play. But the more fundamental task is to relate the mode of incompleteness to the "action" of the main characters in the play.

The general trend is to study drama in terms of a static situation which breaks down and then, through a sequence of conflicts, crises, and resolutions, is re-established. It has already been argued that "situation" means "to be situated." The mode of incompleteness in the present play points toward being which moves toward static situation, but cannot achieve it because in repose restiveness lingers as the stigma of finitude.

The scenic properties provide an insight beforehand into the possibilities of the play. What we see is a dilapidated hotel in a tropical setting. A host of possibilities open up: heat in relation to Shannon's fever; tropics in relation to fast decay - of the hotel, of Shannon, of flesh, hence corruption; the condition of the hotel as prefiguring the absence of Fred and making, at the same time, an ambiguous statement about existence "past repair" (297). The separate cubicles afford a glimpse of the present state of things, of existence:

the separateness of Maxine, Shannon, and Hannah; and the possibility of advancing this state of isolation bodied forth in the prison metaphor - "What's your cell number?" (286), "How about wall-tapping between us by way of communication? You know, like convicts in separate cells communicate. . ." (366). The intended sarcasm and irony of this last example pales before another prospect, that offered by Hannah of "one night. . .communication between them on a veranda outside their. . .separate cubicles" (352). The cubicles afford the possibility of coming "outside" from "inside" oneself. So Shannon and Hannah emerge from their cubicles in the second act, she self-consciously adjusting her artist's smock, he attempting to fasten his clerical collar (300), in preparation for their role-playing. Moreover, Shannon uses his cubicle to hide from Charlotte, the girl who is infatuated with him (294). But the scene is only the possibility of action and not particular action. It establishes the range of possibilities which the play explores. But even the scene is not static.

The play opens with a repetition. Shannon is, as Maxine remarks, "back under the border" (255). And as Maxine continues to remark, after Shannon has enlightened her about his personal difficulties with his tour: "So you've got the spook with you again" (263). A little later she notices that Shannon has a cross suspended about his neck and comments: "That's a bad sign, it means you're thinkin' again about goin' back to the Church" (268). She repeats this to Hank and Shannon confirms it as his "action" or at least the better part of his action: "to go back to my. . .original. . .vocation" (271). This motif of re-turn leads inevitably to Maxine's threat that Shannon is "going into



the Casa de Locos again like he did the last time he cracked up on me" (341).

A variation on this motif is played out in the arrival of Hannah and Nonno at the Costa Verde hotel. As Hannah explains to Shannon in the second act: "when I saw he was failing, I tried to persuade him to go back to Nantucket. . . Still he insisted that we go on with the trip till we got to the sea. . ." (314). Shannon's experience points to a plunging spiral on which the Costa Verde is but a temporary stop before he goes on. Hannah's progress, in its linearity, lacks the fatality of Shannon's spiral.

The play brings out the irreconcilables in Shannon's self-destructive quest. When he arrives he ignores Maxine and calls for Fred. He puts Maxine off, distances her from himself with the command to get dressed. But he is told flatly that "Fred is dead" (257). Thus, the first note of finality is introduced into the play. Like Maxine, he cannot quite realize it. "So Fred is dead?" (257) he says dumbly. His expectation of talking to Fred and what this implies for him is thwarted. A further note of finality appears when Maxine inquires whether he is "going to pieces." "No! Gone! Gone!" (259) Shannon responds. The play, so far as Shannon is concerned, is reflected in the movement from the statement "I can't lose this party" (258) to the question "I lose this job, what next?" (259) because, as Shannon perceives, "there's nothing lower than Blake Tours" (259). He has reached the end of the line, this realization already being made, though only in a limited way, in relation to his most recent problems with Charlotte and Miss Fellowes, in the declaration "I can't go on. I got to rest

here awhile" (258). Shannon's refusal to relinquish the bus key and allow the ladies to go on their way is partly explained in the picture he sketches for Maxine of the daily round of the tour and his inability to find "a chance to escape" (262). He does not consciously see himself postponing the inevitable. In Hank's two first act appearances Shannon refers to the situation as "a test of strength" (260) and "the test of a man" (269). Shannon is trying "to control the situations" (259) as they arise, and the bus key is his final means of retaining control and possibly escaping the final verdict if he can "reason" with Miss Fellowes, and make her see his predicament. He uses other evasions: accusing Maxine of jeopardizing his prospects by her appearance (Act One, 266) and later Charlotte (Act Two, 297); he presents himself as a victim of circumstance, for example, in his definition of statutory rape: "that's when a man is seduced by a girl under twenty" (267). This same pose is carried through his second act exchange with Charlotte: "I love nobody, I'm like that, it isn't my fault" (297). These examples touch on Shannon's elaborate attempt to deflect blame from himself to those around him, which is supported by his basic, physical posture: repose in the hammock. He seeks to reverse his situation and this accounts for his talk about going back to the church. He has gone as far as he can in tours; he must secure a future in which to live.

Though he makes "a complete confession" he wants to go back on his own terms. This paradox is reflected as the impasse centered on the bus key, which is not broken until the third act. The ladies wish to move. Hank comes up the hill to intercede on their behalf but

Shannon refuses to budge. Miss Fellowes fails in her approach; she and Hank together fail.

It is important to appreciate the tension that builds around this single property (the bus key). Shannon's passivity is an indication of his vulnerability: three times in the first act he appeals to Maxine for help, with Hank, with the ladies, and with Miss Fellowes in particular. Her subtle demands turn him to Hannah. Shannon's passivity is an indication of his need to be released from the tour and from himself. Yet he desires to maintain control, justifying the stop at the Costa Verde to the ladies in terms of cuisine and scenery, while concealing his personal reasons for stopping; and acting out, in the third act, when Jake Latta has forcibly acquired the bus key, his emancipation from responsibility to the ladies, or anyone (334), by uncereemoniously urinating on their luggage. The appearance of Latta is a repetition of the first act efforts to obtain the key, the symbol both of authority and control. Latta does not fail because he possesses the authority of Blake Tours which Shannon cannot deny, in spite of his attempts to do so by personal insult. He finally succumbs and finds himself "stranded," in spite of his impotent protestations that "I will not be stranded here" (334). It ought to be remarked how this protest, like the earlier "I can't lose this tour," reflects Shannon's restiveness-in-repose. He really cannot move and yet he must move. He is, as he tells Judith Fellowes in the first act, at the end of his rope, and yet he must "try to go on, to continue, as if he'd never been better or stronger in his whole existence" (272). Shannon protests against the finality of his "last tour" (268), against the de-

parture of "the last of my -- ha, ha! -- ladies" (340). On what basis does he enter this protest? After all, Maxine has offered him a place to stay.

Shannon is relieved of his burden of responsibility; but this burden is the "key" to his self-esteem. "I love nobody" (implicitly not even himself) he tells Charlotte, and he indicates to Miss Fellowes that he is living on a remainder: "everything left of my faith in essential. . .human. . .goodness" (272). In his attempt to maintain control he appeals to Miss Fellowes as a gentleman, "and as a gentleman I can't be insulted like this." It should be noted once again that the negative discloses the difference between how things are and how they ought to be, and how powerless Shannon is to effect change. He draws further upon his status as "an ordained minister of the Church" (275), only to be accused of fraud. The idea of returning to the church presents itself as a possibility of proving himself, just as the attempt, in the second act, to put on the clerical collar is an attempt "to show the ladies" (300) that he has dignity and is worthy of their respect. He seeks to locate his own essential goodness in the status which his actions betray. Confronted by Latta's "authority," he asks in amazement: "Don't you realize what I mean to Blake Tours?" (333), and again emphasizes his credentials and lineage. He appeals to a static, apparently permanent, being-situated to redeem himself. When it fails he does what, in his own self-consciousness, he cannot account for: "God almighty, I. . .what did I do? I don't know what I did" (340).

At this point Shannon's compulsiveness, already reflected in his

conversation in the first act with Maxine when she inquires why he "takes" young girls, and he answers that "I don't want any. . . ." (267), reaches a crisis. He reaches his nadir in humiliation. Moreover, he perceives that this humiliation is self-inflicted. The impact is real and not another of his self-indulgences, as the repetition of the question "what did I do?" and the utter disbelief of "I don't know what I did" (339, 340) indicate. This perception parallels, in its further development in the third act when Shannon, alone on the veranda, reflects upon his gradual cracking up (369), that of Paul in his Letter to the Romans, in which the manifestation of sin in personal existence is explored: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (7:15, R.S.V.). Shannon's initial inability to comprehend his action is not a further attempt to absolve himself from culpability, as his next gesture confirms. He tries to rip the cross from around his neck: the symbol of his suffering and of his "vocation," whether this be taken to mean ordained ministry or the vocation of being human. Shannon attempts to free himself from his vocation. The gesture points to his loss of dignity: he cannot bear the cross.

Why is there this terrible conflict between the "is" and the "ought" in Shannon's life? It can be fixed on his Romanticism. Shannon is guided by a Romantic self-consciousness, best seen in his lyrical and confessional indulgences. He speaks of "one indescribable torment after another" and "chasms measureless to man" (262). This last expression echoes Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Again, the negatives must be noted: not-describable, not-measurable. Shannon has a spook who

mocks him. Self-derision supports his ironic judgment of others. He is consistently acting, which he acknowledges to Maxine as Hank departs for the second time: "It's horrible how you got to bluff and keep bluffing even when hollering 'Help!' is all you're up to. . ." (269). His desire to confess to Miss Fellowes is likewise an indulgence. He renders himself vulnerable but his intention - to gain sympathy and thus to ensure his control - is defeated by Miss Fellowes response: "how does that compensate us?" Shannon counters with calculating bewilderment: "I don't think I know what you mean. . ." (271). And yet, it is true that he does not understand this refusal to indulge him, and is, perhaps, threatened by it. The confession becomes a fulcrum for her attempt to seize the situation in that Miss Fellowes interprets it as an admission of incompetence. Shannon is confronted by realism which puts the lie to his ideal of imate "goodness." Shannon's appeal to his position or status is an appeal to his innate goodness. It is a denial of his acts.

If Shannon does believe in the essential goodness of human nature, he does not take his own need for salvation with ultimate seriousness. We see him trying to work out, for himself, his own final justification. The departure of the ladies closes off any possibility of that taking place, and the spontaneous offense - urinating on their luggage - only deepens the impact of his being "stranded," and alone. The seriousness of his action, or actions, finally jars him out of his complacency and he expresses his need to be free of the cross - his longing as well to be free of the realistic. It should be noted that Shannon confesses that "my life has cracked up on me" (271) and not, signifi-

cantly, "I've cracked up." He maintains a posture of detachment even toward himself. Thus there is no question of responsibility in the confession. Shannon sees his life closed by fatality, and not open to destiny.

A further display of self-derision occurs when Shannon, tied in the hammock, is cruelly mocked by the Germans. He begins to shout, and the shout is repeated three times before it falls away into silence, the wordless encompassing. "Regression to infantilism" is the phrase which Shannon repeats. In the total context of the play Shannon's purpose - to go back to his original vocation - is suffered as the tension between "regression" and "restoration." Where does the restoration motif appear? In the second act Hannah asks Shannon about his inactivity in the church. Angrily he puts her off, and then answers "politely," attempting nevertheless to shock Hannah with his "fornication and heresy. . .in the same week" (302). He relates his offense, repeating the words "I said, I shouted" (303, 304) dramatically, in an attempt to shake Hannah as much as he shook his congregation. He preached the condemnation of the "senile delinquent" (304) God to "those smug, disapproving, accusing faces" (303). Now, having collected evidence for his own personal idea of God, Shannon wishes "to go back to the Church and preach the gospel of God as Lightning and Thunder" (305). All of the images which he employs reflect his own self-condemnation and self-judgment. Shannon's "god" is a projection of himself and an apocalyptic vision. That "projection" is involved is evident from the words "there he is. . .and here I am" (305); yet the appeal of self-consciousness is hollow because Shannon's "god" is not "omniscient" but only

"oblivious" (305) and impersonal. This "god" is not the creator and redeemer of men, but an impersonal natural power of being to which "mercy" is foreign. If it is kept in mind that Shannon's self-consciousness curves back upon itself in the act of projection, then the end of the second act, the rebellious cry of this self-consciousness - "if he doesn't know that I know him, let him strike me dead" (326) - is shot through with irony. The knower is unknown to himself and still he reaches out to his own vision of judgment to be embraced by it. He does not know what he is doing! Yet he calls it by its real name: death.

Hannah makes an appeal to Shannon, already fumbling, as can be seen from the "gapiness" of her speech, with the realization that statement is an inadequate form. "I think you'll throw away the violent, furious sermon," she tells him, "and talk about. . .no, maybe talk about. . .nothing. . .just. . ." (305). Shannon prompts her to continue and Hannah complies: "Lead them beside still waters because you know how badly they need still waters, Mr. Shannon." The echo of the twenty-third psalm is transparent: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . .He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul." Hannah appeals to Shannon to be Shepherd and not Judge.

How are the strands of the "passion" united? Shannon's assertion of human goodness conflicts with his acts of heresy and fornication. It is important to be aware of the moralistic and judgmental connotations of both words as Shannon uses them, and how they support his "Romantic, detached judgment" of the world. Twice he defends himself against the charge of atheism; but what he wants to preach is



an impersonal, unloving, and unconditional condemnation and rejection. Is Shannon's religion really any different from atheism in its denial of the promise of God's mercy, paradoxically involved in his judgment, in spite of Shannon's objections and his evidence? "Evidence" of "god" is supportive of statement and static, final, situation. The apocalyptic cry of judgment serves the same purpose. In her invocation of "still waters" Hannah points to something qualitatively different. If Shannon judges without compassion, the judgement will fall heaviest upon himself. But just as Shannon's "god" is a projection of his own self-alienation (with the spook personifying another side of this alienation), and an expression of his Romantic idealism (with emphasis on "knowing" as opposed to "acting"), so the perception of judgment is an aesthetic indulgence, because Shannon does not understand himself as being under its impact. He stands apart from it in his falsely prophetic egoism and, therefore, cannot understand how he acts in the third act. ("I don't know what I did.")

The judgment does become "real" and effective (340) and out of panic he tugs at the cross. But it is Hannah who removes it. It has been noted how Shannon appeals to Maxine for help in Act One. The exchange with Charlotte in the second act also deserves attention, since Charlotte appeals to him: "Help me and I'll help you" (298). Shannon denies this mutual prospect immediately: "the helpless can't help the helpless." Shannon does not speak out of need, but is consciously deflecting Charlotte: "Don't complicate my life" (296) and "Let me go" (298). Self-consciousness stands in Shannon's

path wherever he turns, and he is constantly seeking to escape from entanglement. Ironically, in the third act he appeals for Charlotte's help (through Miss Fellowes) to confirm his story concerning their relationship. Yet it is clear that with Charlotte's help he sees a way to justify himself. The appeals for help are attempts at evasion. Shannon locks Charlotte "out" of his cubicle and himself "in." Thus, it is only in the third act that Shannon comes to any clear perception of his predicament and its depth.

Hannah is able to treat Shannon's escapades with a degree of detachment. Sitting down to draw him in the second act she relates the story of the artist who was unable to paint the poet Hart Crane's eyes because there was so much suffering in them. Shannon refuses to close his eyes, but Hannah informs him that she can paint his eyes open. She recognizes that Shannon is acting, that his symbolically tied-up condition, his "Passion Play performance" (345), is a self-indulgence that covers up his true bondage. Hannah makes no demands of Shannon except that he confront himself.

It is through Hannah's agency that Shannon comes to realize, at the end of Act Two, why he has come to this remote Mexican hotel: "to meet someone who wants to help me" (324). It is significant that almost simultaneously Hannah makes conscious her initiative to discover "how to help you, Mr. Shannon. . ." Maxine is ruled out in the first act from helping Shannon because her loss of husband manifests itself in the need to find someone to fill his shoes, socks, and room, to restore the static and stable situation of the hotel. Maxine is not in a position to respond to Shannon's appeals for help;

her unimaginative solution is to offer everyone a complimentary rum-coco. She places her own needs prior to Shannon's. Her loose appearance, disarming and threatening as it is to Shannon, as his remark "Maxine, you're bigger than life and twice as unnatural, honey" (270) indicates, covers her real need. Shannon does not see through this cover; he does not see beyond the sexual innuendos to the real challenge. This is evident in his retort to Maxine's reflection on the state of things. Fred is dead and she "can't quite realize it yet." Maxine is at a loss to know what "Fred is dead" means to her. (In the third act she recognizes that her self-respect depended upon Fred's presence because he respected her.) Shannon judges only the appearances: "You don't seem - inconsolable about it" (257). Maxine leaves herself vulnerable, open to understanding or misunderstanding. Shannon's failure to perceive her quandry throws her back into the sexual posture of defense. "Fred was an old man. . . We hadn't had sex. . ." etc. (257). The crudeness of her defense, her complete lack of self-consciousness, covers her sensitivity.

Shannon has come to lie in the hammock and talk to Fred. He has come back seeking understanding from a fisherman, perhaps even a "fisher of men" who might heal him. In Fred's absence Hannah appears. But Fred's absence is used by Shannon to inflict subtle wounds in Maxine to make her less of a threat to him. "Fred's dead - he's lucky. . ." (328) Shannon says to Maxine at the beginning of the third act. Again, words stop short of saying what a character intends. Shannon repeats the statement that stands at

the beginning of the play. He is still coming to terms with its bluntness. But Fred no longer has to deal with Maxine, and Shannon does. Shannon must also continue; he must try to go on. The conversation which was closed off twice in the first act is taken up again: what is it about Fred that is so vital to Larry and Maxine? "Fred knew when I was spooked - wouldn't have to tell him," Shannon remarks, and this is calculated to challenge Maxine, who must be told. "Fred respected me," Maxine confesses, as the Mexican boys do not, and "it's. . .humiliating - not to be. . .respected" (328). Shannon handles Maxine's candid reflections with sarcasm. She appeals to him to accept her, just as in the first act she appeals to him to accept her appearance, to respect her as she is, to recognize her as "real," but Shannon does not want to "settle" for Maxine, or bargain with her. When she offers to handle Jake Latta for him Shannon snaps back: "I'll handle it for myself. You keep out of it" (331). He still refuses to let Maxine into his confidence, into his life. When the tourists take their abrupt leave of Shannon Maxine attempts to take control of him. But he resists. "Don't push me, don't pull me, Maxine. . .Later, Maxine, not yet" (339). Obviously something happens to allow Shannon to settle with Maxine, to accept her and the life at the Costa Verde. This something happens through Hannah.

Hannah's name, a Hebrew name meaning "grace," points to her vital role in the play. Hannah offers herself freely to Shannon. This is the first distinction between Hannah and Maxine. Hannah makes no demands. In fact, Shannon offers to help her wheel Nonno

up to the veranda. Just as Shammon is at the end of his rope, Hannah is faced with the prospect of nowhere to go, and there is a certain degree of helplessness in her relation to Nonno. In his youthful, but half-oblivious, exuberance the elderly gentleman embarrasses Hannah. He shows his weakness (and Hannah's) so that Hannah, faced with the possibility that Maxine will not take them in, must turn to Shannon and beg him to use his influence (282). She levels with Shannon from the beginning, about her financial dilemma and her fears. "I'm afraid" (282), that Nonno has said too much, she tells Shannon; "I'm afraid I have to place myself at your. . . mercy" (285) she says to Maxine; "I'm dreadfully afraid my grandfather had a slight stroke" (286) she confesses to Shannon, and he responds to her little appeals. (If Hannah directs him away from talking about God toward "leading" and shepherding, it is Nonno that he first "leads," gently as befits a "gentle-man.") Hannah fights the prospect of having to go on alone; she will not, for example, admit that her grandfather is old: "he is ninety-seven years young" (281). She does not, however, yield to Maxine. In order to establish herself and Nonno, she counters Maxine's way of "operating" with her own.

The first act establishes the similarities and parallels in Shannon and Hannah. They are both arriving at the "end" which for only one other character is not the end but the beginning. For Nonno this arrival at the sea is an arrival at "the cradle of life" (278). Nonno Coffin, literally he who says "No!" to the grave and death, intends to finish his last poem at the source of life. If

Hannah and Larry arrive at the "end" in the first act, Maxine is already living under its impact: "Fred is dead."

The second act encounter between Hannah and Larry is enclosed between the two meetings of Hannah and Maxine. Just as Shannon wins the first round in his struggle with his tour and secures temporary rest in Act One, Hannah's parallel struggle carries on into Act Two. At the outset Maxine announces that she has found another place for the two eccentrics. "But we don't want to move!" Hannah asserts. In order to stay on Hannah must bargain with Maxine. She helps her set tables and offers her a jade ornament, "as security for a few days' stay" (291). But Maxine sees through to the truth - that Hannah is indeed, financially, at her mercy. Hannah's forthright answer to Maxine's question about her circumstances draws from Maxine the same honesty, and the recognition that Maxine's situation reflects back to Fred's death, and the "shiver" (292) of horror that this still causes her. But Shannon's entrance abruptly closes off the conversation, and it is only taken up again toward the end of the act, when Hannah attempts to break up the verbal and physical (the liquor cart incident) wrestling match between Shannon and Maxine. Maxine calls her "an interfering woman" and "a deadbeat" (319). Thus, one match of strengths follows on the heels of another. Hannah threatens to take Nonno down the hill in the wheelchair, with a storm coming up, so that, in fact, she does make use of Nonno's condition to secure temporary rest. She does, for once, and ironically, do what Maxine accuses her of doing. But this is only after Nonno threatens, for the second time, to repeat the em-

barrassing outburst of Act One. It is Hannah, and not Shannon, who appreciates Maxine's loss, and how she covers it in her concern for Shannon. The misunderstanding between them is negotiated on the basis set down by Maxine: "if you just don't mess with Shannon, you and your Grandpa can stay on here as long as you want to." Thus Hannah, helped through her moments of weakness, when she withdraws to take a few deep breaths, by Shannon's patient "shepherding" of Nonno, is freed to help Shannon, to lead him beside still waters.

The end of Act Two is a caesura in the action. Now the awaited appearance of Shannon's "god" occurs and the outer disturbance of the storm is a temporary respite from the tensions of human relationships. The storm itself is a symbolic release and, in closing the act upon temporary rest, it points ahead beyond tensions. Shannon's gesture of reaching out to the rain, reaching out beyond himself, prefigures the movement of the third act, a movement which might best be described as "to be able, empowered, to accept the rest as temporary." Is Shannon reaching out for. . . what? Maxine gives Hannah no guarantees. She gives her conditions: "if you don't mess with Shannon." Yet Hannah, knowing the condition, persists in her initiative to help Shannon. The affirmation of this initiative points beyond the closure of the second act.

Is Shannon reaching out to be refreshed or renewed? The gesture is open and ambiguous. As such it already confirms Hannah's tentative and groping indication of that which sustains and empowers man to accept himself and the uncertainty of his place in the world.

Hannah points to a qualitatively different "demonstration" of God's presence than Shannon's "evidence" affords. Is it possible that the primal support and meaning cannot be apprehended and grasped in words? that words already "fix" what they attempt to reveal? that words are already inactive and failed?

The first two acts disclose all human efforts to live under the imperative "to go on" or "to try to go on" and yet "to be finally situated" or "to be completed" as resulting in deadlock or impasse. "There is God," Shannon points: "there," definitively. From within his own divided "being-situated" he points to a form of finitude which expresses, and finally determines for him, the ultimate. Shannon encompasses the ultimate in the finite. He is, ironically, because he intends to escape it, judged and condemned in the world, unable to accept it.

To do justice to the formal guideline of dialogic or existential communication, the encounter between Hannah and Shannon in the third act must be considered carefully. It is only possible because the parallels which are set up between the two are finally inadequate: though Hannah has her own "credentials," her actions, her "drawings" and observations, substantiate her claims, whereas in Shannon's case they conflict. Shannon and Hannah stand over against each other.

Through the first two and a half acts, "Shannon obeys only Shannon" (339). He pushes everyone away from him, resisting their attempts to help him by standing detached behind a self-conscious, Romantic mask. He is threatened by Maxine's confession that "I know



your psychological history," and her realistic statement that "you're not going back to no Church" (330). Where Shannon senses that he is being commanded he resists. Going back as "regression" is still open to him. Self-inflicted punishment and final self-destruction are possibilities. Or are they? After all, Maxine puts the matter bluntly: "He's acting, acting. He likes it!" (341).

Shannon turns being tied up into a way of mortifying the flesh and the passions. It is a further exercise in self-hate for him which Hannah ironically but realistically, as opposed to "fantastically," puts to him in this way: "Who wouldn't like to suffer and atone for the sins of himself and the world if it could be done in a hammock with ropes instead of nails, on a hill that's so much lovelier than Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, Mr. Shannon? There's something almost voluptuous in the way that you twist and groan in that hammock - no nails, no blood, no death. Isn't that a comparatively comfortable, almost voluptuous kind of crucifixion to suffer for the guilt of the world, Mr. Shannon?" (344). In this negative fashion Hannah puts her finger on what Shannon really seeks: atonement, or to use a significant play on words, at-onement, to be completed. Shannon sees only that he is being accused, that judgment is being brought against him, and by pointing the accusations back at Hannah he hopes to avoid it. He does not distinguish "how" Hannah "draws" him, presents him to himself, confronts him with himself. He only seeks to avoid himself. Hannah also points to the basic similarity in self-abasement, taking young girls and then praying with them for forgiveness, and this religious renunciation in the hammock: she repeats the

expression "almost voluptuous."

In the second act Shannon explains to Hannah that "when you live on the fantastic level as I have lately but have got to operate on the realistic level, that's when you're spooked, that's the spook. . ." (317). Hannah confronts Shannon with himself in the final act. She confronts him with the spook, that unreal, "fantastic," and spectral personification of Shannon's true being. The relation of Shannon to his spook can be spelled out more clearly.

We can quite well turn away from our true destiny, but only to fall prisoner in the deeper dungeon of our destiny.

And

Abasement, degradation is simply the manner of life of the man who has refused to be what it is his duty to be. This, his genuine being, none the less does not die; rather is changed into an accusing shadow, a phantom which constantly makes him feel the inferiority of the life he lives compared with the one he ought to live. The debased man survives his self-inflicted death.<sup>2</sup>

It might even be added that he perversely enjoys it. Shannon's spook is always lurking just beyond the veranda, and Shannon tells Maxine in Act One about his grinning and derisive appearance. Shannon feels himself judged by the spook. Hence, he takes measures, throwing a coconut, threatening to throw the cross, to keep him at a distance. Shannon clings to what he has because he knows that what he ought to be it is no longer realistic for him to be, as Maxine forcefully impresses upon him. His seduction of girls reflects his refusal of his original vocation, his attempt to forget it; it is a refusal as the violent

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<sup>1</sup> Jose Ortega Y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

aftermath of these "lonely intimacies," the abysmal panic, the need to kneel and ask for forgiveness, demonstrate. The spook appears as the "realistic" haunting the alienated "fantastic."

Hannah draws Shannon's picture for him - in words. She points to his Romantic self-indulgence, his conducting tours "as if it was just for you, for your own pleasure" (345). He lashes back at her, recommending that she give Nonno hemlock. Even his backlash is Romantic. Hannah refuses to humor his "cruelty" while maintaining her respect for him, her understanding of the difficulty of his struggle. She challenges his basic trust; she challenges his resistance to trust, but as one actor informing another that it is dishonest for them to perform in front of each other. There is, perhaps, a moment of panic when the lighted cigarette falls under Shannon, roped into the hammock; but it is more important to recognize from this incident that pain is not a part of Shannon's "act" of atonement. That he breaks loose "unassisted" (351) causes Hannah no surprise. It is expected as part of the performance, part of Shannon's survival of self-inflicted death. He is still toying with the penultimate. What he needs cannot quite be expressed: "to believe in something or in someone - almost anyone - almost anything. . .something" (352). Hannah's description is in terms of the penultimate and the indefinite: not "every-thing" but only "any-thing" and "some-thing." "Your voice sounds hopeless about it," Shannon interjects (352), in spite of which Hannah affirms "something to believe in." She denies that it is God, that it is unapproachable like Shannon's "god," impersonal like his "god." Hannah affirms "broken gates between people so they

can reach each other, even if it's just for one night only" (352). This means that Hannah affirms in the finite and broken existence of each person a possibility, out of basic trust, to "meet" the other, for "understanding" to take place "between" them. The hopelessness in her voice is a subdued awareness that there is only the finite and broken to affirm, and in which to affirm whatever understanding can pass between people. Yet it is the power of this understanding that it renders the question of permanence secondary.

Hannah is in a position to help Shannon because she has known something like the spook herself and has combatted this dark side of her being, endured it, and discovered that the broken gates can be affirmed. Shannon is afraid to risk himself and attempts to put Hannah off with "realism," with the fact that she will have to go on alone. But Hannah turns "aloneness" back on Shannon, and draws out his loneliness in his intimacies "for which you despise the lady almost as much as you despise yourself." What is taking place effectively is the stripping away of the masks from Shannon - Jacob wrestling the daemon, the Ancient Mariner with the burden of guilt around his neck, the Christ-like agon, and finally "the gentleman-of-Virginia act" (358). When Shannon's masks are stripped away, Hannah opens herself to him, demonstrating her trust in him, although this was already implicit in her entrusting Nonno with him. Indeed, Hannah answers Shannon's question directly, recounting her two encounters with love, trying to point him toward acceptance of his "being-situated."

The dialogic "word," as that "understanding" which passes be-

tween people, always seeks its own completion. It seeks the "right" word which will heal the misery of the other. The word seeks a "radical" response, a turning of the whole being of the other person, and its own confirmation in that person. It can be confirmed by being rejected. If it is not trusted, if it is held suspect, then it will be misunderstood, as Shannon misunderstands Hannah's story of the Australian salesman and judges it a "sad, dirty little episode" (363). Hannah refuses to judge or to be disgusted. Rather, she affirms that it is human, that it is not "unkind" (363) or unnatural, that its gentleness reveals the depth of human loneliness, and the need to be released toward the other and freed from the inner prison of the self. Hannah affirms a movement outward, a primordial breakthrough from the self toward the other, a being-led which overcomes loneliness.

Shannon now confesses that he is alone: "Don't leave me out here alone yet" (365). He recognizes the depth of his need. Or does he? "You mean that I'm stuck here for good?" (365). He is still not accepting, still talking from the finality of situation, speaking from the boundary and not from the middle of life. His suggestion that he and Hannah travel together is rejected as an unrealistic evasion of himself, and his need for rest. Thus, there is one last step for Shannon to take, a step and yet a "leap," beyond being at Maxine's "mercy" or "disposal," beyond being still a victim, even if resigned to being such. He is still speaking from self-understanding curved in upon itself, albeit a shattered understanding, shattered by the presence of another person whom he trusts and therefore respects, though not completely.

If to this point Hannah has "drawn" Shannon because he was unable to do it for himself (the presence of the spook attests to the degree of his self-alienation), the perception which Shannon now "re-ceives" occurs while Hannah is off the stage. She draws attention to the iguana, scuffling at the end of its rope under the veranda. Shannon makes the connection with himself and Nonno, and points out the cruel sport of which the reptile is the object. Hannah asks him to free it, but he cannot and his justification, that he is at Maxine's disposal, reveals that he cannot because he is not yet free of himself; for the merciless way in which he sees himself related to others is determined by the degree of his self-bondage. Hannah expresses her lack of comprehension that anyone could eat an iguana, and Shannon relates to her a story which makes her sick. Hannah's reaction leads to renewed self-examination on Shannon's part. He re-collects himself, that his tours have "always" been through "tropical" countries, "always seducing a lady or two, but really ravaging her first by pointing out to her the - what? - horrors? Yes, horrors!" (369). He implicates the other persons in his own hatred and disgust with the impermanent world. He aligns himself with the "gold-hungry conquistadors" (305) whom he mentions in the second act in conversation with Hannah; he aligns himself with the Fahrenkopfs, the German residents of Maxine's hotel, whom he has associated with Maxine as her "conquerors of the world" (292).

Shannon's self-consciousness reveals his true scene as over against his angry deity, "in a country caught and destroyed in its flesh and corrupted in its spirit" (305), by conquerors like himself.

Such is the way of the world, according to the flesh, the earth's obscene, corrupting love, in the words of Normo's poem. In the third act Shannon recognizes in fast decay the judgment upon all flesh which even he must suffer. He sees himself "running back" (370) to this climate. Why? Because here he arrived at a clear perception of the ambiguous progress - "gradual, rapid, natural, unnatural, predestined, accidental" (369) - of his breakdown. The place is inseparable from his restoration as well. It has a still water beach and Shannon needs to be led beside the still waters, to recover his completeness, to be able to reach beyond himself, to be free of self.

This self-examination results from the implicit recognition of Hannah's real otherness opposite him. "Now why did I tell her that . . .? Because it's true was a good reason not to tell her" (369). Shannon surrenders his wilfulness; not, however, without wilfully "ravaging" Hannah as he has other women. He ravages her by relating a little of the horror of the "nameless" world, that is, the world standing under judgment. But he does question, or experiences the questionableness of, this indulgent violence which eliminates the need for response before it can be offered. To bring the other into dialogue by transgressing otherness, drawing the "partner" into the "inner" sphere of guilt and torment, closes dialogue before it has begun. Shannon discovers that it is not enough to make assertions of truth, that he is still alone in this "truth." Thus, the "nameless" must be named because there is only this world. The judgment reflected in his words is brought to bear upon his own inner division in the realization that his tours of God's world have arbitrarily limited

that world to tropical countries. He now understands why he runs "back" to the "tropics." In the process of this self-understanding the incompletions multiply and terminate in acceptance: "So I stay here" (369).

At this point Shannon, himself free, is able to free the iguana. He confirms it in its freedom; he confirms it in its scrambling "home" in the expanded sense of that word offered by Hannah. If this act shows Shannon reaching "outside" himself, Maxine's final proposition confirms this reaching on her part: "I just want you to stay here, because I'm alone here now and I need somebody to help me manage the place" (374). Maxine refuses help in the second act (290); was implicitly appealing for it from Shannon in the first act; and now explicitly appeals. That there might be no illusions surrounding this new partnership, the character of "bargaining" ought to be acknowledged as "operative" in it. However, a gracious act makes this bargain possible, and this act takes place through the mediation of Hannah. Thus, Hannah stands alone on the stage at the end of the play, facing the prospect of going on alone, while affirming the central action of the play.

Some neglect of detail has resulted from this analysis of the play, and this must now be acknowledged in the form of "footnotes" to the text. For example, the Germans have not been treated fully. They are a sort of anti-chorus, in so far as they offer no insight into the action of the play but represent or personify the "outside disturbances" of which Hannah speaks (290), and return us briefly to the superficial surfaces of life, and distract us from the depths. They



point to the unreflective cruelty which Shamon, in spite of himself, has fallen into, as they stand about him in the third act, taunting him, exuding a consistently high level of excitement. These Germans are "unreal" or "fantastic" in their playfulness, but they do link the events of the outer world, the bombing of London, the fires of world war engulfing the "heart" of a city, with the passions of the inner world, the torments of the human heart. They act out the "obs-cene, corrupting love" of the world, for example, in the pantomine "fall" of the German woman, supported by the husband who embraces her breasts. Through their appearances the life according to the flesh is brought into confrontation with the life according to the spirit. The freakish rubber horse, the nightmarish, Hieronymous Bosch parades, almost mock the dark and inscrutable verities which the main characters struggle with.

If the Germans are "fantastic" in the negative and nightmarish sense, this can only mean that there is something that is really "real." The play points to this something "between" people, gifted to them, standing over against the torments, the "inner" torments, of the "fantastic." The picture is not so simply completed, however. If for Shannon "fantastic" indicates negative judgment, Hannah points to a positive emerging from it. "That fantastic species" (357) is how she describes humankind to Shamon, ironically echoing him: "fantastic" can mean "wonder-ful," the prelude to grace. Thus the word "fantastic" points to the ambiguity and paradox of life in the world: the "fantastic" is the "real."

What about Miss Fellowes? "Touch" to her is a "cheat," a "gyp"

and a fraud. As a model of conventional "spirituality," one who wants to live at home away from home and not see the dark underside of the world, she discloses Shannon's inner upheaval. She lacks the "grounding," the positive attitude toward touch which might challenge him. Maxine, on the other hand, lacks the "spiritual" orientation. Miss Fellowes presents an uninterrupted action - to get moving - which brings out the conflict in Shannon's troubled and ambiguous action - to rest in order to go on.

The final motif for consideration, that of regression/restoration, works with a pun on vacation/vocation. "Regression" is the final mode of escape from self into forgetfulness, the final mode of self-abasement. Pursuing it, Shannon is on permanent "vacation" from his "vocation" of being human. Hannah introduces Shannon to Nonno as a "man of God, on vacation" (315). Life becomes one long sabbatical. To really go back means to go behind all discussion of original vocation as ordained ministry to the vocation of being human. This means to confront the stark actuality and to accept or reject the destiny which belongs to it. Talk is not enough. Hannah turns Shannon away from "God" and the ultimate toward the real "tomorrow" when she will not be there to help him and he will be alone. To collect evidence of God in the world is to attempt to draw the transcendent into the immanent, to materialize it, to make it definite, to say "what" it is. Shannon must be brought to an existential elucidation of his failure to say "what," his failure to complete or to be complete in himself. Hannah points him toward what is already definite, though impermanent, appealing to him to affirm and accept that this

reality is, "that" it is. To say "that" it is is an affirmation "that" it cannot ever fully be comprehended in the finite forms of saying. This is the existential elucidation of Nonno's fading memory and Shannon's "failing - power" (369). The failure to say "what," although seemingly negative, is actually positive, in so far as it prefigures openness to encounter in which the acceptance "that" it is can be confirmed. Nonno's prayer "thanks and praise" (371) is an acknowledgement, directed "outward" toward the other, of the gracious act of the other in accepting incompleteness.

In The Night of the Iguana ultimate questions are affirmed in the absence of ultimate answers, in the mode of incompleteness: to be finitely situated. Grace is the formative power of being renewed in this affirmation.

## V. CONCLUDING UNDRAMATIC POSTSCRIPT

What follows is a sort of "concluding undramatic postscript," an answer to the question which my advisor, Dr. Dan Cawthon has put to me repeatedly in the course of writing: what brought about this particular thesis, with its subject and terms of reference?

A "polished" statement will do for a start. I attribute it to a love of literature, an integrative habit of mind, and an influential teacher. But prior to cognition and the predicates which cognitive statements provide to illuminate any situation are basic human attitudes. So there is an urge, a drive, which is fulfilled in this direction. This is not an argument for six or even for a thousand and six basic, "archetypal," dramatic situations. The situation already presupposes a hidden attitude.

To speak of "action" in its primacy over "being" is to admit a "positive" defeat: it is not possible to speak in superlatives, only in comparatives. When I say now, in view of the work that is behind me, that "it is finished," I acknowledge that "it is not finished." Many directions have been sacrificed to the one drive to finish.

This writing was dominated by the desire to be finished; so much so that in the middle of it I lost interest in finished and flew to England, to cycle through the vales and meadows from Oxford, up over the peaks to the green and, surprisingly, sunny highlands west of Aberdeen, Scotland. As I cycled I was bothered by one in-

sidious question: why are you doing this? As I neared the half-way mark in the six-week marathon I was already looking beyond it, losing interest. One day, a day on which I departed Edinburgh, I turned south-east, toward Lindisfarne, the Holy Island, and sped along the coastline, following the signposts until I reached a place where the road was washed out. The way to the Holy Island was blocked, but there were people standing about, reading the tide-table that was posted at the side of the road, turning their binoculars toward the distant object of their curiosity, but waiting patiently the three long hours until, on the heels of the retreating tide, they might walk across to this place, whose name even has an aura of sanctity about it. Being a cyclist I was much more aware of time and distance, how far I must go yet before stopping to rest for the night. No patience could stay me three hours.

Lindisfarne is even away from the main highways, at a distance of five miles, and not particularly well-advertised. The last two miles must be travelled on foot because the tidal basin is never very solid; but the catering service that was set up at the end of the road was doing a brisk trade. What is Lindisfarne anyway? I wondered that in my disappointment at not being able to visit it. It is an unspectacular, rocky and desolate strip of land whose remoteness, given the variable tides, is an additional discouragement to visitors. It is a religious community. But the beauty of the country I had cycled through only made this place less attractive. I came to the conclusion that there are no islands of holiness in the world to which we can retreat to find the safety of final answers. That road is

washed out. What is left? Maybe we have to get back on our bicycles and look expectantly to the hills. In England they are a test of any good cyclist.

Obviously, I mean more than that.

There is only the quest, and the answers which undergird the questions which we ask. It may not be often that those questions are heard in a way that discloses this hidden support. That is why the story we tell must be told again, so that its questions are rightly heard.

When you're in the middle of the journey you really don't know what the end will look like, or what the full significance of the beginning will be. It looms large, but it looms darkly. The question is how to take the dark "lightly;" how not to settle for dogmatic answers or holiness removed from the everyday context; finally, how not to be discouraged when answers and methods are thrust dogmatically and authoritatively upon us. When we start with stories and plays we cannot afford to be dogmatic unless we are prepared to sell short the human experience we are trying to make our own. There is no "full" or "final" measure, and though there are patterns of experience, the patterns aren't of much interest on their own.

I guess what I discovered at Lindisfarne did not take root in me until I had spent three additional months in a seminary. There the road to holiness was blocked once more. During my "retreat" I had the opportunity to see a performance of Eugene O'Neill's Moon for the Misbegotten. The quest was reaffirmed!

The quest in drama, the dramatic quest, appeals to the compara-

tive: to go on and on, though not unreflectively, and to accept loss as integral to the quest. My quest is to get behind the quest, not to create the meaning of it, or to commit myself to a pre-established goal, but to recover the meaning from the ciphers of experience.

"Dramatic" beginnings and endings only reaffirm the need to look behind and through ciphers. The meaning is not arbitrary.

Buber's thinking was, for me, revolutionary in this respect: he worked with the "attitude" of the whole being but sought to press beyond the intentionality of "I" to the "between," the hyphenated "realm" (I-Thou) which is our true center by way of the fully incarnate "other." Buber pointed me back to the "life" of drama and narrative, back to the polyphonic experience of the imagination. I don't pretend to any answers, but I do have one abiding question: Isn't theology in danger of losing its vitality by losing contact with the "imaginative," with the "telling" of stories, even its own stories? The quest for God, the quest for grace, however it is designated, is in the "telling," or to use Buber's telling expression, in the formation of the word as something that moves between beings. Here is a pattern for exploring the many voices which constitute a play.

As I cycled around England and Scotland I carried a slim volume for reflection: Eliot's Four Quartets. There is a pattern! But Eliot catches the paradox of it, that it is new in every moment, "a new and shocking valuation of all we have been." This dramatic quest is our very own, as we try to get behind the stating of it to the questions which drive us to make statements in the first place. This

statement, whether in word or gesture, requires something like "negative gravity." I think that Tennessee Williams must be amused at his critics. Flattered, but also amused. But the thought of anyone "theologizing" him. God forbid! That is the danger in this kind of writing, the inescapable urge to theologize and sermonize and solemnize and finalize. Like Tom Wingfield I have taken "wing" and fled, but I have come to earth again in the "field." More dangerous still, I have quested for Shannon's "night." Paul Tillich tells us that late in his adolescence he "identified" with Hamlet and only stopped short of the ultimate conclusion. We risk more in "telling" and retelling stories than we know. But we cannot become "identified." "Pathos" is a good word to describe what we need. Pathos and understanding. We are guided by them in our exploration of the finite as finite.

The writing of this thesis was a personal quest. To use a play on words that I have thus far discretely avoided: it is play-ful. It was conceived as an attempt to speak ultimately. It is an end and a beginning.

I would like, in conclusion, to express my gratitude to the "others:" Dan Cawthon, who has been friend, counsellor and teacher through five years; to my parents, who have patiently waited - and waited; to my older sister, who has patiently typed and transcribed; and my younger sister, who likes to sing a song that goes: "Let's start at the very beginning. . ."



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