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**THREE WOMEN OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

A THESIS

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**MASTERS OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

By

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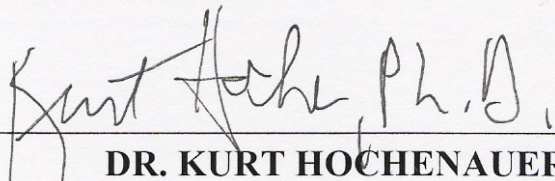
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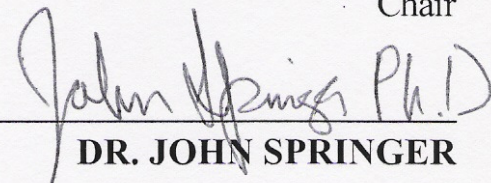
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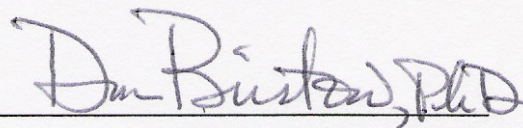
  
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**For Mom and Dad,**

**Without you this entire paper would not exist! You have brought me up with a love and thirst for education. Thank you for taking me to those Tennessee Williams shows and letting me read those scripts even though I may have been too young at the time. You have inspired me to be the best that I can be in every endeavor! I love you!**

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**Abstract of Thesis**  
**University of Central Oklahoma**  
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**Three Women of Tennessee Williams**

**Chairman of Thesis Committee: Dr. Kurt Hochenauer**

**Pages: 42**

The life and works of the playwright, Tennessee Williams will impact the lives of readers for centuries to come. His life affected the style in which he wrote, and the characters that he wrote were closely based on some of the women in his life. Among his most famous characters are three women: Amanda for *The Glass Menagerie*, Blanche, from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Maggie from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. The majority of the characters that Williams created, most have a tragic fate, including the women who are closely studied in the following paper. Upon a deeper study of these women one can find insight into the life and works of Tennessee Williams.

## Introduction

At the age of fourteen I discovered writing as an escape from a world of reality in which I felt acutely uncomfortable. It immediately became my place of retreat, my cave, my refuge. From what? From being called a sissy by the neighborhood kids, and Miss Nancy by my father, because I would rather read books in my grand-father's large and classical library than play marbles and baseball and other normal kid games, a result of a severe childhood illness and excessive attachment to the female members of my family, who had coaxed me back into life (T. Williams iii).

Tennessee Williams wrote these words in the foreword of his play *Sweet Bird of Youth* that was published in 1959. From these words, the world began to see inside the heart and soul of this already acclaimed playwright.

Williams created the most prolific characters of his time, most of them women. He was drawn to women because of the closeness he shared with his mother, Edwina and his sister, Rose. Michael Paller titled the first chapter of his book, *Gentlemen Callers*, "The Signs are Interior," meaning that everything that Williams wrote was derived from his own experiences and circumstances. Williams showed characteristics of these women in many of the roles that he created. Bernadette Clemens writes in her article, "Desire and Decay: Female Survivorship in Faulkner and Williams," that:

Tennessee Williams often constructed his female characters within the context of their relationship to men yet he did so with an astonishing attention to women's particular sexual, social, and familial roles in the South in the early twentieth century (Clemens 73).

The women of three of his most famous plays, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1948), and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), have become some of the most famous characters in modern drama.

Williams' critic Signi Falk discusses the author's intention to document survivorship amidst cultural decline in the South. Falk identifies a tattered or "seedy" quality born within female southern gentility in Williams.

All of these portraits are studies in frustration of women of a culture and refinement associated with the Victorian era that disappeared during the decade of World War I. They are all out of touch with the world around them, and they live in worlds of their own making: one of soft, sentimental dreams about their own charms, or one about their own past and successes with men. In some cases, because of the conflict within themselves, they are unaware of their own unseemly behavior (Falk 71).

Falk goes on to write that the men that appear in these plays are nothing more than developments of a theory. They are needed to advance the plot, even though they are not in the center of the action.

The men these ladies intermingle with throughout the plays of Williams are very diverse. Amanda has a son, Tom, for whom she has high hopes and dreams. She wishes him to be what his father never was. Blanche wrestles with two men, Mitch and Stanley. Mitch, the man she is hoping to marry, finally sees her for what she is and leaves her humiliated. Stanley, her brother-in-law who has seen through her from the beginning brutally rapes her and sends her away to an asylum. Maggie has a husband who doesn't love anything but his liquor. She wants so badly to have a child with him, but he will not

even share the same bed with her. These women all exist in tragic situations. These women survive in much of the same way that Williams himself did. He suffered from depression and loss. There is not a happy ending for any of these women. None of them live on to be a heroine or find their Romeo, and nor did their writer. The most tolerable situation would have to be Maggie's at the end of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. At least the audience is lead to believe that for the small fee of getting drunk later, Brick is going to go to bed with her and hopefully they will conceive a child that night. What is her victory? Surviving in the same house with a man that hates you is still however, miserable. The others are either sent away or left alone, with nothing.

Georges-Michel Sarotte writes in his article, "Fluidity and Differentiation in Three Plays by Tennessee Williams,"

The majority of his plays present characters that are too sensitive and/or too sensual to be fully adapted to their conventional social milieu. They sooner or later clash with reality, with the hostility of normal Boeotians (Sarotte 151).

In the following pages lies insight to the three most important female characters in Williams' writings. They are divided and ordered chronologically. Though these ladies do not share the same situations or the same fate, they are all threads in the vast fabric that Tennessee Williams has woven through the American stage since his first Broadway success, *The Glass Menagerie*, in 1944. My writings are not astounding; they merely scratch the surface of the fertile works of a man who was a great contributor to the twentieth-century cannon for the stage. These women all face some sort of modern tragedy. They don't encounter tragedy in the sense of a great Greek warrior; they simply



fight their own personal misfortune. The chapters that follow are meant to inform and pay a small tribute to a man who himself, much like the female characters that he wrote, was faded, broken, and denied.

## Amanda

### The Faded Southern Belle

Amanda, Tom's unforgettable mother in *The Glass Menagerie*, paints a devastating picture of what age and loss can do to a person. Compassion is indeed an element in the play as we see in the opening directions. "There is as much to be admired in Amanda and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at" (T. Williams xviii). In Nancy Tischler's words, "Amanda is a disillusioned romantic turned evangelical realist" (Tischler 32). "She labors grotesquely to mold the lives of her adult children into American success stories through nagging and moralizing, an attempt epitomized by her unendurable cheer" (Fambrough 101). Amanda is stuck in a time that has passed and will never come back. In a way she is able to grasp this and was making an attempt to re-create her life for her daughter, Laura. This new life she is trying to create for Laura however is lacking in the fact that she is no longer in Blue Mountain. Her poor daughter is not an out-going belle like she was, they have no servants, and there are not any gentleman callers to call. The fact of the matter is, they live in a tenement in St. Louis. They have very little money, and Amanda's husband, Laura and Tom's father has "tripped the fight Fantastic" out of town, as the author writes. Many scholars have debated the reasons why he leaves his family. Some say a poor economy drove him away. Even though it is during the Great Depression, Amanda makes it clear that he left his job when he left the family. At the beginning of the play, Tom is remembering his mother and sister, for he too has left them. Thus, all hope in men had been diminished

for the two female characters. No one has ever stopped to speculate what happens to the two once Tom and his measly salary from the shoe factory are gone. Laura, no doubt who deals with reality much better than Amanda can probably find a way to move on. Amanda probably isn't so lucky. I suspect that Amanda continues to look for Tom as she does with her husband whose picture still hangs as the focal point in the family home.

Peter Lang writes in his article, "Mother-Child Relationships" that "by definition of traditional roles of motherhood, Amanda is a mother to her children" (Lang 55). He goes on to say that she does the socially prescribed duties of bearing children for her husband and domestically providing for them. At the beginning of the play Amanda has just cooked dinner and summons her children to the table. She talks to them as any mother would, encouraging Tom to "chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function." Although most would not be this dramatic, Lang argues that this is the practice of any normal mother. We find out right away that she is an overly protective mother, which still isn't out of character for a mother in general. She constantly worries about Laura's position. She goes through Tom's belongings and throws out one of his books by D.H. Lawrence. Lang writes that however she may stifle their development she still provides for the domestic needs of her family.

Amanda is the character that Tennessee Williams bases loosely on his own mother. The situation of the Wingfields is much like that of his own while he was growing up. The Williams family did spend most of Tennessee's childhood in St. Louis. The Williams family was also strapped financially due to Tennessee's grandfather squandering most of the family's money trying to be elected governor, although they were not as impoverished as the Wingfields. This has a profound effect of the life and

eventually the plays of Williams'. Williams' father once worked at a telephone exchange company in Gulfport, Mississippi. He was fired and became a traveling salesman for a shoe company. It is ironic that Amanda's husband was "a telephone man who fell in love with long distance." Tom's job during the play is in a shoe factory. Williams wrote in his *Memoirs* that his mother helped change his nature by being too solicitous. One difference is that Tennessee's father did live with the family, unlike Tom's. Edwina, Tennessee's mother had also been relocated from her Southern home. Edwina grew up in Columbus, Mississippi, and had to move to St. Louis when Williams' father got a promotion with the shoe company. The family bought an apartment in St. Louis at Westminster Place, which was important to Edwina because it was a fashionable part of town. Very soon this address would become a part of the central city slum. The apartment was six rooms and a bath, much like the setting of *The Glass Menagerie*. Tennessee recounts that to him the apartment was dismal. He recalled the walls being the color of dried blood. The only windows looked out onto an alley with a fire escape, no doubt the one that would become the site of Tom's intriguing monologues.

In Tennessee's teen years, his parent's marriage began to deteriorate. His father was spending less time at home although his parents still kept up appearances at company dinners and picnics. Without a doubt, this is how it occurred with Laura and Tom's father. Eventually he left altogether. This was not the case for young Tennessee; his father put him to work for the International Shoe Company after making him leave college because of the cost of attendance. Williams had already written a play by this time. It was at this point that Tennessee began to resent his mother just as Tom resents Amanda. Edwina would burst into Tennessee's room while he was writing at night

bringing him food or just wanting to chat with him. The line from *The Glass Menagerie*, “Rise and Shine, Rise and Shine,” came from Tennessee recalling how his own mother would rouse him in the morning. He would reply as he did in the play, “I’ll rise but I won’t shine.”

Edwina also pushed Rose, Tennessee’s older sister, into everything much in the way Amanda pushes Laura. Edwina, worried about Rose’s social situation demanded that Rose join the choir at church with her. Tennessee’s younger brother, Dankin remembers in his book, *Tennessee Williams, an Intimate Biography* that,

Mother had become one of the well-know eccentrics of the congregation [at church] by virtue of her stentorian voice, especially in singing hymns such as ‘The Church’s One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Our Lord.’ Both Rose and Tom were embarrassed to hear comments from choir member that could in no way construed as flattering. Edwina also joined a country club in St. Louis, something the family didn’t have money for. Edwina encouraged Rose to play golf, a game that she was terrible at and wasn’t interested in. One incident, recalled by Dankin seems to come directly from a scene in *The Glass Menagerie*: Edwina arrived home wearing her standard look of advanced suffering, like Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*. Edwina demanded to know where Tennessee had been.

‘I’ve been at the movies,’ Tom said

‘I don’t believe that lie!’ Edwina said in character

‘Well you can go to hell then!’ said Tom.

Then Dakin remembers that his mother’s eyes shot up in their sockets toward the ceiling. She staggered backwards as if struck by a physical blow. Cunningly she

glanced behind her to make sure the overstuffed chair was in the correct position, and proceeded to fall backward in a well-planned and frequently performed faint.

‘Oh my God!’ gasped Rose. ‘Tom, look what you have done to our mother, you have killed our mother.’

I wasn’t worried. I had seen her perform this same stunt monthly while arguing with our father over the bills (D. Williams 42-44).

This very incident Tennessee recalls in Scene Five of the play.

Signi Falk writes in his biography of Williams, “Amanda though at times proud of her son, is insensitive to his position. She harps at him continuously about his eating habits, his smoking, his going to the movies and his late hours” (Falk 74). Falk says that the continual friction between Tom and his mother indicates her lack of understanding. She insists that Tom should either find adventure in his warehouse job or do without it. Tom tries to explain to his mother that he is a man by instinct, a fighter, a hunter, and a lover. Amanda explodes at the word “instinct.” It is a dirty word to her. She says that word is for animals and not Christian adults. According to Amanda, the word instinct is a term only for monkeys and pigs, Christian adults should be concerned with things of the mind and spirit.

Amanda is constantly trying to get Tom to accept his position and be happy with it. She wants him to stop being a dreamer and come to terms with his lot, however this is a feat that Amanda cannot accomplish herself. She can’t face her own position. She is alone, with a cripple daughter and a dreamer of a son. Amanda is trapped in her glory days in the South when she was surrounded by gentlemen callers and jonquils. Amanda refuses to acknowledge the fact that Laura is indeed crippled and will never be the great

Southern Belle that Amanda once was. Amanda also believes that a few new candles, a new lamp and some new clothes for Laura will transform her into what Amanda dreams for her to be. Laura goes along with this idea because no matter how hard she tries, she can't bring herself to diminish her mother's hopes. Even if she could, Amanda's will is much stronger than her own.

Tom tries to dissuade Amanda from her idea of introducing Laura to one of Tom's friends from the shoe factory. Amanda has her mind set on this and will not back down from the hope that maybe she can create the same experiences for Laura that she herself had as a girl in Tennessee. When Tom arranges for a friend from the shoe factory to come over for dinner, Amanda launches into a tail-spin. She uses all of their money for a new lamp, new curtains, a new sofa cover, and a new dress for Laura. This is a dream come true for Amanda. Her little girl will now be experiencing something that Amanda found so ordinary when she was growing up. Laura indulges her mother. She even agrees when Amanda stuffs her bra with "Gay Deceivers," which are actually just powder puffs wrapped in handkerchiefs. Laura remarks that it seems that they are setting a trap in which Amanda answers: "All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap, and men expect them to be" (T. Williams 52). Amanda, being totally in her element retreats to the bedroom to fix herself up. She emerges in an old, tight fitting, outdated gown that she announces is the dress that she wore when she led the cotillion ball. She says she also donned it on Sundays when she received gentlemen callers. Amanda falls deeply into a memory here. In the beginning of Scene Six she speaks of the summer that she wore that dress.

Evenings, dances, Afternoons, long, long rides! Picnics-lovely! So lovely, that country in May-all lacy with dogwood, literally flooded with jonquils! That was the spring I had the craze for jonquils. Jonquils became an absolute obsession. Mother said, 'Honey there's no more room for jonquils.' And still I kept bringing in more jonquils. Whenever, wherever I saw them, I'd say, 'Stop! Stop! I see jonquils!' I made the young men help me gather the jonquils! It was a joke, Amanda and her jonquils. Finally there were no more vases to hold them; every available space was filled with jonquils. No vases to hold them? Alright I will hold them myself! And then I- met your father (T. Williams 54).

At this memory, Amanda once again remembers where she is and how that meeting has put her in the position that she is in now. Her hopes for Laura are too high to bring her down however.

Through the course of the play the audience's perception of Amanda changes completely. Lang discusses this in his article. He states: "It may seem that there is genuine compassion between mother and child in *The Glass Menagerie*, but there is nothing but cruelty. In the last scene Amanda calls her son a 'selfish dreamer,' and her daughter Laura a 'cripple.' At this point her choice of words are interesting because in Scene Five she has rebuked Tom for calling Laura a cripple" (Lang 57). Amanda is even opposed to the word "peculiar," when Tom corrects himself and uses that word to describe his sister.

Critics have speculated on the cause of the cruelty between these family members. Some argue that Amanda has a neurotic pathological hatred for her husband, and



intentionally inflicts psychological harm on her children to get revenge on her husband for leaving her. Eric P. Levy writes in his article “Through Soundproof Glass: The Prison of Self-Consciousness in *The Glass Menagerie*,” that “Amanda unwittingly exploits her daughter rather than encourage her. Levy argues that Amanda’s influence on Laura is negative, citing that Amanda exploits her maternal concern about Laura’s lack of marital prospects as a means of identifying with her own past” (Levy 533). We can see this after Amanda has dressed Laura for the gentleman caller in Scene Six:

Now look at yourself, young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be! I’ve got to fix myself now! You’re going to be surprised by your mother’s appearance! (T Williams 52).

Amanda slights Laura’s appearance even as she praises her. Amanda is very cruel in this instance. Lang says that Williams does this on purpose. He also reveals that in his mind, Amanda is only concerned with the financial well-being of Laura and not her own feelings. She wishes to “unload” Laura onto someone because in her mind she knows that Tom is going to leave them much like her own husband did. Williams wants us to see that in Amanda’s eyes, finding a husband is the be-all, end-all for Laura. It is her stopping point. It is her success. In a way Amanda wants more for Laura than she has herself but she doesn’t fully realize this.

I would disagree with Lang’s theory of Amanda’s desire to find Laura a husband being purely about capital. I think that Amanda knows that Tom’s disappearance is inevitable. She does need financial security for her daughter and herself which Laura being married would certainly ensure. I don’t think that that is all that Amanda is concerned with. Amanda is stuck in an era that she doesn’t know has ended. Of course

she is no longer in her plantation home as a teenage girl hosting gentlemen callers, but in her mind this is still the procedure that Laura should go through in order to find a suitable mate. I also believe that through Laura, Amanda feels she can correct her mistake of marrying the wrong man. She goes on and on about all of her gentleman callers but stops abruptly when she recalls meeting Tom and Laura's father. In Scene One she recalls all of her suitors who have gone on to become great things:

There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank. Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds...And there was that boy every girl in the Delta has set her cap for! That beautiful, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County! He went north and made a fortune- came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold! And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But-I picked your father (T. Williams 9).

Obviously Williams wants us to see that Amanda does put a great deal of stock into each gentleman's occupation and salary, but I do not think that is all she is worried about. I wouldn't hesitate to say that Amanda was treated differently by Tom and Laura's father than she was by the rest of her gentleman callers. To a young girl as she was at the time this could have been exciting for her yet, in retrospect, she feels that this was a foolish decision and wants better for Laura.

Throughout the play, Amanda lives in a fantasy much like Laura does with her menagerie of glass. Much like Laura's dream-world of glass and Tom's dream-world of the movies, Amanda is in a reverie that was her girlhood. Falk discusses in his

biography how her fantasy all comes falling down at the end of the play during the ill-fated evening with Mr. Jim O'Connor. Tom has brought home an engaged man. To make matters worse, Laura had a crush on Jim during high school. Laura is a nervous wreck and can't eat. In a desperate attempt to turn the evening around, Amanda puts Laura in an uncomfortable isolated position with Jim. At the end when Amanda finds that this scheme has also failed, Falk says she "forgets her silly lies and sees the humiliating position of herself and Laura for what it really is" (73). She brutally castigates Tom for what has been her own folly. She accuses him for allowing her to make a fool of herself. She forgets that Tom has tried to talk her out of the idea of the gentleman caller in the first place. Falk boldly declares that the final scene of *The Glass Menagerie* is one of Williams' best. The play ends tragically. Tom is gone; Laura's hopes and precious unicorn are shattered. Most tragically in my opinion is that Amanda has seen her reality. Her charade of gentleman callers and finding Laura one that she would have wanted for herself is now a goal that she is incapable of reaching and only at this point in the play does she truly realize this. Williams leaves us at the end of the play with absolutely no hope.

Perhaps one would find the most tragic lot is that of Laura's. Williams would lead us to believe that Laura will be able to move on. She may get sick to her stomach, or fall going out of the door however, Williams would lead us to believe that Laura will find her way out. Tom has already found his way out. He has sought and found his idea of adventure with the Merchant Marines. The most tragic picture in this story is that of Amanda. She has nothing. All that she has ever known and hoped for is gone and there is no way that she can ever get it back. Those days that she lived for are gone. She is a

faded Southern Belle. She is faded as her beloved jonquils fade in the hot summer sun of Blue Mountain.

**Blanche**  
**The Broken Woman**

“I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.” Blanche speaks these famous last words at the end of the tragic *A Streetcar Named Desire*. When the action commences in Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*, we see the broken Blanche on a journey to her final tragedy, arriving at her sister’s home on Elysian Fields in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the time, one may not know that she is a broken woman, broken in every sense of the word. Time will tell. However, the tragic road she has traveled to get to her sister, Stella’s home.

She appears as a perfect Southern lady, in a white suit, according to the notes, who has come for a visit. Perhaps she is a little disheveled but that is easily explained away by the fact that she has been traveling all day. She also seems shocked at the sight of the shabby flat, which makes complete sense knowing that she has come from a genteel Southern plantation in Mississippi. This place is supposed to be her refuge. She is not used to a downstairs flat, instead her beloved plantation, Belle Reve. Blanche is introduced to a crude and decaying world to which Stella has become accustomed. Blanche will only fall deeper into this “trap” when she meets Stanley. Signi Falk reminds us of the symbols that Williams uses that are very intriguing.

Actual trolley names provide Williams with appropriate symbols. Blanche was told to take a streetcar named Desire, transfer to one named Cemeteria, and get off at Elysian Fields-nomenclature that mixes Freud and classical mythology. It would take Tennessee Williams to place the sex-happy adult children of the New

Orleans slums in the Greek Isles of the Blessed. In this Gulf Coast heaven which lies between the river and the tracks, and where the “Blue Piano” in the bar around the corner symbolizes the easy mingling of Negro and white, there lives a colony of married couples whose lives represent sexual contentment, uninhibited and unashamed (Falk 80-81).

Blanche is there, in her white suit, white a color that Williams used to portray innocence and even virginity. Falk writes that Williams has the great ability to combine “childhood innocence and sexual prowess” (Falk 83). Blanche appears out of place in this new world she has entered. Her sister, on the other hand, is not fazed by the vulgarity of her surroundings. Bewildered at her sister’s contentment Blanche keeps up the charade of casual conversation as any proper Southern lady would do at afternoon tea.

Blanche does reveal to Stella early on that their beloved Belle Reve has been lost. Blanche only admits this after a drink that “buzzes right through her and feels so good” that the plantation is no longer in their possession. Blanche’s long monologue about how the Grim Reaper lived on the doorstep of Belle Reve gives the first insight to Blanche’s situation. Obviously Blanche has come to depend on liquor in order to calm her nerves. Perhaps this is the only way she can bear to function after the tragedy that she has been through.

Blanche: I, I, I took the blows to my face and body. All of those deaths!  
 The long parade to the graveyard! Father, Mother! Margaret, that  
 dreadful way! So big with it, it couldn’t be put in a coffin! But had to be  
 burned like rubbish! You just came home in time for the funerals, Stella.  
 And funerals are pretty compared to deaths. Funerals are quiet, but deaths

–not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, ‘Don’t let me go!’ Even the old sometimes say, ‘Don’t let me go!’ (T Williams 27).

At this moment Blanche shows her vulnerability. Stella understands and tries to comfort. It is obvious that Stella is concerned with her sister’s well-being and not necessarily with the loss of Belle Reve. Stella also knows how to deal with Blanche, something her husband will not acknowledge or try to understand. Critic Walter Kerr writes in his article, “Pieces at Eight,” that the play “escapes into the heroine’s insanity; the play remains thrilling but this is to wash out the struggle rather than dissolve it” (Kerr 125).

Stanley comes home from his bowling league to find that Stella’s sister has arrived. Stanley, being the brutish, rough man that he is, becomes suspicious of Blanche immediately. Stanley knows where Stella and Blanche come from. He begins to investigate right away. Why has Blanche suddenly shown up in New Orleans? Stanley has many acquaintances that are able to give him substantial information. He keeps most of it to himself until close to the end of the play. He stands back and watches as Blanche continues to deteriorate through the entire play. The first confrontation between Stanley and Blanche happens soon after Blanche’s arrival. Stanley goes through Blanche’s things trying to find what has happened to Belle Reve. Blanche agrees to “lay all the cards” on the table. Stanley is not convinced.

Stanley: Where’s the papers? In the trunk?

Blanche: Everything I own is in that trunk.

What in the name of heaven are you thinking of? What’s in the back of that little boy’s mind of yours? That I am absconding with something,

attempting some kind of treachery on my sister? I keep my papers mostly in this tin box.

Stanley: What's them underneath?

Blanche: Those are love letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy.

Give those back!

Stanley: I'll have a look at them first.

Blanche: The touch of your hand insults them.

Stanley: Don't pull that stuff.

Blanche: Now that you've touched them I'll burn them! (T. Williams 41-42).

Right away Blanche reveals that she intends to charm Stanley into submission to her. Stanley however is not the kind of man to be charmed. He warns Blanche that he does intend to get to the bottom of this. Blanche will be found out. Falk writes that Stanley is the most frustrated because he dreamed of owning the place in the country and now knows those plans are no longer in the cards.

He suspects that she has squandered the property....She vaguely suggests that the plantation was lost on mortgages; she tells about family history which is part of her heritage. In highly exaggerated language she tells how the plantation was eaten away by spendthrift grandfathers and uncles and fathers and brothers. Williams loved so much these exaggerations. Blanche's sexy by-play at the beginning of this scene rouses Stan's suspicion about his sister-in-law and gives him an early clue for his mode of revenge (Falk 83).



Stan has no pity for Blanche. He intends to find out what has happened. He sees through Blanche. He does not care what has happened to her, he is only concerned with the “Napoleonic Code,” which gives him the right to everything that belongs to Stella.

The next clash between the two happens on the night of the first poker game. The ladies return home from a night out. In this scene Mitch comes into play. Mitch does work with Stanley but is nothing like him. It is inferred that Mitch reminds Blanche of the Allan boy that she was once married to and lost. Mitch is gentle and kind. He is truly interested in Blanche for her beauty, kindness, intelligence and not what she may or may not have. This scene ends badly when Stella tries to send the poker players home. Stanley strikes her and the two women leave. This invokes Stanley’s famous moment of shouting “Stella” over and over up the stairs into Eunice’s apartment. Upon Stella’s return Stanley shows a very soft side as he presses his head into her rounded belly. Blanche comes home the next morning pleading with Stella to leave Stanley. It is here that Blanche decides to contact one of her beaux, Shep Huntleigh, now a rich married oil man. The repetition of this name continues until the end of the play.

As Blanche’s stay in New Orleans grows longer, more is revealed about her and her situation. Stanley continues to dig for information about Blanche. More becomes apparent about Blanche and her struggle. Leonard Berkman writes in his essay, “The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois,” that Blanche has been searching for intimacy in any avenue she can find it.

First in attending to the state of her struggle for intimacy at the outset of *Streetcar’s* action, it is necessary to note the extent of her experience with intimacy up to the time of her arrival in New Orleans. Of Blanche’s relationships

with her family while her parents were alive, Williams has Blanche and Stella make scarcely a comment (Berkman 36).

Berkman goes on to write about the relationship between Stella and Blanche being strained and points out the fact that the sisters have not made one attempt to see each other and have only exchanged untruthful letters ever since Stella left Mississippi to marry Stan.

Perhaps Blanche's most devastating experience that truly changed her was her ill-fated marriage to Allan Grey. Upon his death, Blanche began her many intimacies with strangers. Berkman writes that:

Blanche's most fundamental regret as we see her in New Orleans is not that she happened to marry a homosexual. Blanche's concern is more directly that, when made aware of her husband's homosexuality, she brought on the boy's suicide by her unqualified expressions of disgust. In Blanche's refusal to shirk the responsibility that the conventional society of her time and place would have eagerly excused, she is doing more when she talks of her past to Mitch than simply telling him her life's story. Hoping of intimacy with Mitch, she is rising to the height that intimacy demands (Berkman 37).

Mitch is ready to marry Blanche until Stanley tells him about her past while still residing in Mississippi. As if the deck was not stacked against Blanche in the first place, the death of Allen has led her to basic prostitution in the hotel Tarantula Arms, which Blanche refers to as a "big spider" where she "brought her victims." Blanche does admit to Mitch that she had many intimacies with strangers and that was all she was able to fill her empty heart with. She goes on to reveal her relationship with one of her seventeen year

old students which caused her to lose her teaching position at the school. This instance is replayed at the end of scene five when a baby-faced paper boy comes to collect pay for *The Evening Star*. Blanche slowly tries to seduce him, much like one could imagine she did with her schoolboy. She goes to great lengths to get the boy to stay longer, asking him for a light and then the time. She tries to prolong their chat with talk of the New Orleans rain. The moment gets uncomfortable when she inquires about the cherry soda he had in the drugstore to get out of the rain. Blanche then insists on a kiss from him. She sends him away quickly so not to take advantage of him. He stumbles away not truly understanding her motivations.

On Mitch's last visit to Blanche he confronts her about her past. He has no respect left for her and intends to see her for what she really is. He wants to see her in the literal sense as well. He tears the Chinese lantern off the bare light bulb in order to see her in the light. In this scene, Blanche makes her confessions to Mitch. Mitch doesn't require a confession from Blanche. It is Blanche that feels the need to tell him everything. It can be inferred that Mitch is only there to get from Blanche "what he has been waiting for all summer," that is the intimacy with Blanche that she too is longing for, however, she requires love as well, something that Mitch is no longer willing to give. Mitch calls her dirty and demands what is due to him. In this scene Blanche pleads with Mitch to marry her. Blanche tries to explain to him that she was only trying to help Allan. She felt that he was calling out for help, which she could not give. "All I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of!..I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or myself" (T. Williams 95).

Mitch's rejection of Blanche practically drives her over the edge. It is in the next scene that brings Blanche to her psychological end. Stanley returns from the hospital to find Blanche in a drunken stupor talking to herself in a "worn out Mardi Gras outfit." Blanche has completely shut out reality. She cannot cope with the fact that Mitch has rejected her. Stanley in this instance has Blanche just where he wants her. Bert Cardullo writes in his article "Drama of Intimacy and Tragedy of Incomprehension,"

Williams carefully structures scene ten so as to make the rape seem incidental, the result more of Stanley's sudden and uncontrollable drunken lust than of his calculation and deliberate cruelty. Stanley does not rape Blanche because he knows her nervous breakdown and expulsion for his home will result. Rather, he does so because he has been physically attracted to her from the start and has been encouraged by her on at least one occasion, and is able to fuel his desires with knowledge of her checkered past in Laurel (Cardullo 80).

Cardullo also explains that Stanley doesn't care about and doesn't even acknowledge that there will be any consequences to his actions since he has purchased a bus ticket for Blanche to leave the following Tuesday. Also, given Blanche's state of mind at the time of the rape, it is doubtful that she will even remember it. Stanley goes on to tease Blanche by making comments such as "You want to rough house?" and "Maybe you wouldn't be so bad to interfere with." Stanley's rape of Blanche ensues soon after. She does try to defend herself with a broken liquor bottle, but Stanley's strength is too much for her at this point in her drunkenness.

Cardullo writes about Blanche's struggle and explains how her real struggle is and has always been within.

Blanche's struggle throughout *Streetcar* is surely more with herself than with Stanley. Her conflict with him may be inevitable from the moment she enters his home, given their opposing views of life and each's claim to Stella. The inevitability of her doom however, springs not from the character of this conflict but from her rejection of Allan Grey on the dance floor of the Moon Lake Casino many years before. Stanley's rape of Blanche thus comes to appear the ironic physical incarnation of a defeat whose seeds she herself inadvertently cultivated with 'intimacies with strangers' after her young husband's suicide, unable or unwilling to seek consolation, 'protection,' elsewhere. Such rape must not be defined categorically as his vengeful victory in the struggle to keep her from ruining his marriage and altering his unsettling way of life (Cardullo 80).

I agree with Cardullo that there was bound to be conflict between Blanche and Stanley over the affection of Stella. Stella is all that Blanche has left. She arrives in New Orleans to find that Stella is no longer available for her to claim. She moves her affection to Mitch who denies her as well. Leonard Berkman writes that:

She refuses from the beginning to forgive herself for denying Allan the compassion that would have saved and perhaps changed him, or at any rate made his burden easier to bear. She struggles at the end in his memory to achieve intimacy with Mitch-the only true intimacy within her grasp- which alone can restore her grace through its inherent linking of sex with compassion (Berkman 254).

Blanche wins at nothing. She has been beaten by a memory of a man who was really never hers to begin with. She has been denied by her sister. The man that she has tried to

love has turned his back on her and her brother-in-law has brutishly raped her and is going to send her away. Blanche is in such a state of shock about her fate with Stanley she is practically incoherent at the end of the play. Blanche is persuaded that she will be leaving to join Shep Huntleigh in Dallas, a contact that was never made. Cardullo explained this beautifully, if it can be beautiful, when he wrote:

Ironically, Blanche's doom appears inevitable, yet her fate is essentially pathetic: she will never achieve true lasting intimacy with another human being; at the same time, her tragedy is made to occur incidentally: Stanley rapes her and she leaves for an asylum, albeit with some measure of dignity, never having ceased to accuse him. Blanche herself, representative of 'the decadence of a self-conscious civilization,' is now lucid, now understandable (Cardullo 15).

The final picture of Blanche is that of her being escorted away by the kind doctor that she believes to be some admirer who will take her to the beautiful country to remain the Southern Belle that she was in her youth at Belle Reve. Stella cries in Stanley's lap while they are sitting on the same bed that Stanley raped Blanche. Williams captures true revulsion in this final scene. It is over. She has lost.

## Maggie

### The Denied Wench

Maggie is a sad, denied woman from the beginning of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* until the bitter end. Immediately it is obvious that nothing is going Maggie's way. Maggie is an opposite of the two Williams' women previously discussed, Blanche and Amanda. It is interesting to note that both of the previous women were brought up with money and then lost it. Maggie however grew up with nothing but has come into money. The major difference being that she is not a genteel Southern woman. Signi Falk insinuates that she is a wench.

Maggie the Cat is of the stronger sex...she does not talk like a southern gentlewoman but like a mid-twentieth-century modern without inhibitions. Deeply in love with her husband in spite of his distaste for her, she feels certain that he will again see her as other men do (Falk 103).

Maggie is direct to the point of being blunt. She is an outsider in the family that she has married into. She is not heir to any fortunes and does not have a long line of gentlemen callers to recite. Maggie announces what it is that she wants and makes sure that her husband is aware of her desires. She is a truthful character, more truthful than any other of William's female characters, even if she isn't completely truthful to her husband's family. She does not hide her feelings or take other's feelings into consideration. Maggie is able to unflinchingly confront truths about herself. She confesses to her husband,

Brick, I'm not good. I don't know why people have to pretend to be good, nobody's good. The rich or well-to-do can afford to respect moral patterns, but I could never afford to, yeah, but—I'm honest! Give me credit for that, will you please? (T. Williams 45).

Susan Neal Mayberry writes in her *A Study of Illusion and the Grotesque in Tennessee Williams Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, that,

This it is only Maggie the Cat who is capable of dealing with the complexity of truth. She is, in fact, the only truly honest character in the play, the single character able to recognize and see through appearance not only to the reality of others but also to her own. She is the first to acknowledge Big Daddy's cancer and the ultimate his death will have on other members of the family. She realizes that truth sometimes incorporates a lie, that the old man much not know of his disease, for "Nobody says, 'You're dying.' You have to fool them. They have to fool themselves." She understands fully those motivations behind Mae and Gooper's visit and performance, noting "They're cutting you {Brick} out of your Father's estate..." (Mayberry 363).

Maggie is beautiful and has a beautiful body. She is everything most men would want. Upon witnessing her you would wonder why her husband is not desperate to make love to her at all hours of the day. Bernadette Clemens writes in her article, "Desire and Decay: Female Survivorship in Faulkner and Williams,"



Maggie is proud of her ability to turn heads of male onlookers. The sexual pull she exerts on other men is a weapon she wields to convince her estranged husband Brick that she is still attractive. Maggie both apologizes for and defends her sexuality. She abhors what she sees as conventional southern motherhood embodied in her fecund sister-in-law, Mae (Clemens 75).

Maggie is burdened with a husband who denies her the love she desperately craves. This is a marriage made for money, not love. Nearly from the inception of the play, Maggie talks of how Brick may live with her but, she is very lonely, almost as if she lives alone. Maggie even remarks how Big Daddy, Brick's father looks on her with lust, "way he always drops his eyes down my body when I'm talkin' to him, drops his eyes to my boobs an' licks his old chops! Ha ha" (T. Williams 19). Maggie stares at herself in the mirror and asks Brick if he doesn't notice how "high her body stays" and how nothing on her has "fallen a fraction." Why then, does Maggie's husband not feel the same? John S. Bak writes in his article, "Sneakin' and Spyin' from Broadway to the Beltway: Cold War masculinity, Brick, and Homosexual Existentialism," that Brick is used by Williams to exhibit subliminal homosexual behavior:

Freely choosing abstinence, silence, and alcohol as active means to counter the gross attempts of his anxious wife, his prying father, and his pragmatic brother to package him materially as the wayward stud, the prodigal son, or the effete drunkard- all indirect epithets of his homosexuality- Brick becomes the archetypal existentialist hero (Bak 229).

The most burdensome dilemma for Maggie through the entire story is that Brick refuses to have sex with her. He has literally stopped sleeping with her and, it is suggested doesn't even share her bed but sleeps in a chair or on the sofa in their shared bedroom. She is desperately trying to have a child with Brick in order to be remembered in Big Daddy's will. Big Daddy, Brick's father is quickly dying of cancer, even though he has been fooled into thinking that he is not dying. He has yet to leave his spectacular cotton plantation to either of his sons or their families. Maggie needs an heir in order to maintain her fortune. When she reminds Brick of this in the opening act, he tells her to take a lover and she refuses:

Brick: Do it! fo' God's sake, do it...

Margaret: Do what?

Brick: Take a lover!

Margaret: I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just see you! Why don't you get ugly Brick, why don't you please get fat or ugly or something so I could stand it? (T. Williams31).

Maggie then tries to close and lock the bedroom door insinuating that she wants to make love to Brick. Brick is quick to shut her down. He tells her to not make a fool of herself. She retorts that she doesn't mind making a fool over herself for Brick. She continues to do so throughout the remainder of the play. Maggie will go to any length to get what she wants. She even lowers herself to speaking like a small child to try to arouse Brick's interest.

Maggie was brought up poor. She is determined not to go back there again. Throughout the play Maggie reminds Brick of her harsh upbringing and how terrible it

was for her growing up poor. She admits to Brick that the dress that she married him in had belonged to her grandmother. She declared to Brick that she had to “suck up to people I couldn’t stand because they had money and I was poor as Job’s turkey.”

Maggie realizes that her desire for money is because she was so deprived as a child. She resents that she has been “so God damn disgustingly poor.” She tells him that “you can be young without money but you can’t be old without it.” She is desperate for security. A child, with Brick is the only way. Maggie is threatened by Brick’s brother Gooper and his wife, Mae who already have five children with another on the way. Even though Brick is the chosen son of Big Daddy, the plantation won’t be left to him without a son to carry on the family’s name. If Maggie isn’t successful at producing a child, the plantation will be in Mae and Gooper’s hands. Big Mamma, who has blamed Maggie for no grandchild from the beginning, will have nothing to say about her favorite son getting anything once she and Big Daddy are gone. It is Mae and Gooper’s hope to do away with Maggie and secure a place for Brick in “Rainbow Hill,” the refuge for alcoholics. Maggie even tells Brick that she knows he would be a perfect candidate for the sanatorium.

In the opening scene of the play Maggie shows her irritation with her brother and sister-in-law, Gooper and Mae. She leads the audience to believe that she is irritated with their “no-neck monsters” that are making too much noise. In reality she is writhing in fear that they may inherit the plantation instead of Brick and herself. Maggie’s desire for wealth has overpowered her. The only way she knows to ensure her place with this family is to produce a child, something that Brick is unwilling to accommodate her in. Brick, an ex-football star turned alcoholic, does not share the desire for the plantation,

“twenty –eight thousand acres of the richest land this side of the valley Nile,” with Maggie.

Maggie is forced to confront Brick about not only his drinking problem but another situation that has been haunting her since before she and Brick were married. Maggie recounts that she and Brick were married only after Maggie gave him an ultimatum. Brick admits that he never did love Maggie. To him a marriage to Maggie was more of a convenience that would allow him to continue to see Skipper, his homosexual friend and suggested lover, who has recently committed suicide with alcohol and drugs. Maggie recounts a double date in which she and Gladys Fitzgerald were simply there as decoys to prevent others from knowing that Brick and Skipper were actually on the date together. Brick never admits his homosexuality in the play. The play was written in 1955 and even though the playwright himself was homosexual, the topic was still taboo. Williams writes in his essay “The Timeless World of a Play,” that:

Whether or not we admit it to ourselves, we are all haunted by a truly awful sense of impermanence. I have always had a particular keen sense of this at New York cocktail parties, and perhaps that is why I drink the martinis almost as fast as I can snatch them from a tray. This sense is the febrile thing that hangs in the air. Horror of insincerity, of not meaning, overhangs these affairs like the cloud of cigarette smoke and the hectic chatter. The horror is the only thing, almost, that is left unsaid at such functions (T. Williams 60).

When confronted about being homosexual and an alcoholic by his father, Big Daddy, Brick becomes extremely angry and tells Big Daddy about a young man at Ole Miss who

was a pledge in his fraternity that “attempted to do an unnatural thing,” and was chased off the campus. Through the entirety of the conversation with Big Daddy, Brick maintains that he was not involved in an inappropriate relationship with Skipper. Big Daddy moves on to Brick’s alcohol problem and tells him he can’t understand why he is throwing his life away on the drink.

In the same way that Brick used Maggie to continue a relationship with Skipper, Maggie also used Brick. She saw the young strapping athlete as an escape from poverty. His good looks were nothing to scoff at either. Maggie even compares Brick to “those beautiful, ideal things they tell about in the Greek legends.” Maggie goes on to recount how poor she was as a girl. Maggie is determined not to go back to her former state:

Born poor, raised poor, expect to die poor unless I manage to get us something out of what Big Daddy leaves when he dies of cancer (T. Williams 45).

It is evident that Maggie loves Brick’s daddy’s money far more than she loves him. Perhaps that is the reason Brick is so broken up over the loss of Skipper. Skipper is the only one who actually loved Brick for who he was and not his money.

Through the entire play nothing that Maggie says or does penetrates Brick’s thick head. She confronts him about Skipper and even admits that she and Skipper once went to bed together so that they could both feel closer to Brick.

According to Brick, the emotional relationship between Skipper and Brick aroused Maggie's jealousy - she was a jealous intruder in their close friendship that monopolized much of her husband's life. Ill-advised, she tried to keep Skipper from coming between her and her husband. She was

with Skipper in a Chicago hotel room following a disastrous football game loss (Dirks 2).

Brick gets tired of Maggie's pleading and tells her to "go take a lover," but Maggie retorts that she can't see anyone else. Brick has not thought of it this way. It seemed so easy for Maggie to go to bed with Skipper. Brick, however, hasn't stopped to think that the only reason Maggie wanted Skipper was to feel closer to Brick and hopefully make him jealous at the same time. Brick continuously rambles on about being able to hear the "click in his head," that seems to make everything go away. Over and over Brick proclaims his attachment to alcohol, he admits his means of dealing with adult responsibilities by leaning on the dual crutches of "clicks" and "whiskey." Tim Dirks writes in a review of the movie:

Brick's refusal to reconcile with his estranged wife triggers Big Daddy's fears that his favorite son will produce no heir to inherit the Pollitt plantation and carry on the family name. By default, everything in the inheritance will pass on to Gooper's brood of offspring. Although Big Daddy loves his son, he doesn't want to turn his property over to Brick - in effect, he refuses to subsidize an alcoholic (Dirks 2).

Nothing affects Brick until Act III when Maggie uncharacteristically tells Big Mamma, Gooper, Mae and Brick that she is carrying Brick's child. Only then does Brick seem to somewhat "snap" out of his drunken daze thinking of his lost Skipper to acknowledge what is going on. Brick knows the truth but dares not say anything in front of the family. Brick acts as if he is unmoved, going to pour himself another drink.

Privately however when the rest of the family rushes out to check on Big Daddy who is now experiencing pain, Maggie thanks Brick for not telling her secret.

Margaret: Thank you for—keeping still...

Brick: Ok Maggie

Margaret: It was gallant of you to save my face!

Brick: --It hasn't happened yet. (T. Williams 121).

Here Brick insists that Maggie take his pillow to a chair and then to the sofa "where he sleeps." Maggie takes charge here and refuses.

Margaret: Brick, I used to think that you were stronger than me and I didn't want to be overpowered by you. But now, since you've taken to liquor --you know what? I guess it's bad, but now I'm stronger than you and I can love you more truly! I really have been to the doctor and I know what to do and --Brick? --this is my time by the calendar to conceive! (T. Williams 122).

Brick understands her but insists that he is not in love with her, only in love with his liquor. Maggie has beaten him though. She has locked up his liquor and says that she refuses to give it back until Brick has satisfied her desires.

The couple is making headway by the end of the play. It looks as though Brick will indulge Maggie this one time. She has promised him that if he does take her to bed, she will return his liquor and get drunk with him. The liquor is probably Brick's only incentive since he cares nothing for a child and nothing for the plantation ownership, which is still pending.

In reality, after the curtain is lowered, Big Daddy dies, leaving Big Mamma to make the difficult choice as to who to leave the plantation to. Knowing in her heart that Brick will not be responsible, she gives the majority of it to Gopper and Mae, leaving a small portion to Maggie and Brick. They continue to live together in silence, even after the birth of their child. Maggie would finally leave him if it wasn't for the child. She can't bring herself to be without him though. She also doesn't want to leave the comfort of the life to which she has become accustomed.

Maggie is written in a way to make the audience the most sympathetic to her. In the Broadway version of Act III, (which slightly differs from the customarily preformed script) Maggie makes her last appeal to Brick for his love however she makes it clear that she will not give up on him.

Oh you weak beautiful people who give up with such grace. What you need is someone to take hold of you—gently with love, and hand your life back to you, like something gold you let go of —and I can! I'm determined to do it—and nothing's more determined than a cat on a hot tin roof—is there? Is there, baby? (T. Williams 158).



### Conclusion

Three women, all have tragic endings: Amanda with the son she adores who has left her alone with a daughter who could never hope to live up to her expectations; Blanche, perhaps the most tragic, tricked into an asylum when all she wants is to be loved; Maggie, who is desperate to not let her past repeat itself. All of their paths, though not alike have lead them to heartbreaking endings. Whether it be falling in love with a man, who was in love with long distance, or stepping off of a streetcar in Elysian Fields, or marrying a man for his money, not for his love, these ladies have all come to the same destiny. Then, what of our playwright? Did the sun ever shine upon his face? Tragically, much like for the women he writes about, the answer is “no.” Williams wrote to a friend in 1950 “I am more alone and more lost than I ever was, and know hundreds more people” (T. Williams 112).

The domination of the strong over the weak is a recurring theme in all scripts of Williams’, not just the ones in the previous chapters. Although Williams enjoyed great success in his lifetime, he was burdened with a life that never fulfilled him. Signi Falk wrote in the conclusion of his criticism of Williams:

Tennessee Williams has become a name; and for the general public as well as for many among the professionals, he is the greatest poet-dramatist to have appeared on the American scene since Eugene O’Neill. Through his unabashed use of the stage and modern techniques, he has opened immense new possibilities. He has demonstrated again the dramatic excitement inherent in the use of old theatrical devices. His best work remains an insight into character and motivation, an understanding of the

lack of communication between people, an awareness of the appalling emptiness and cruelty in the hearts of many well-fed Americans (Falk 189).

Williams too led a life that brought him into contact with those that Falk speaks of. Tennessee suffered a childhood with peers and a father who didn't understand him. He felt a great love for his sister Rose and felt that he had let her down when she was sent to a sanatorium and underwent a lobotomy. Williams wrote a poem about his feelings after this took place. This was his only statement to the media on what happened to his sister:

Grand, God be with you  
 A cord breaking.  
 1000 miles away.  
 Rose. Her head cut open  
 A knife thrust in her brain.  
 Me. Here. Smoking.  
 My father, mean as a  
 Devil, snoring-1000 miles  
 Away.

Tennessee also suffered from loss of love. Although he had many lovers in his life, he always felt as though he was alone. He led a nomadic life and never considered any place a "home." He divided his time between New York, Nantucket, Key West, and New Orleans. His adult life was filled with illness, addiction and nervous breakdowns. He was terrified of the thought of ever becoming insane. He used pills and alcohol to kill the pains in his heart and soul.

In his *Memoirs* (1975), Williams wrote about his intimate personal life. His longest relationship was with Frank Merlo, who died of lung cancer in the early 60's. Williams never fully recovered from this loss. He grew into a greater depression and his works slipped into an abyss. The awards grew less and smaller. In 1972, Williams took a role in his own play, *Small Craft Warnings*, in order to lure and crowd and prolong the run on Broadway.

It is easy to understand why Williams wrote the characters that he did. He had a great attachment to the female, his grandmother, his mother and Rose. Later he would transfer these emotions to Merlo but, he never forgot the women who had such an impact on his life. Williams was such a true writer because of the experiences he had. He poured his soul into the creation of these women.

Much like our Amanda, Blanche, and Maggie, Williams' end was tragic. On February 25, 1983, he was found in his two-room suite at the Elysee Hotel in New York. He had choked on a plastic bottle cap. Presumably he was attempting to open it to take the barbiturates inside. Williams is buried beside his beloved mother in Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis.

Williams' brother, Dankin wrote in his book, *Tennessee Williams, An Intimate Biography*:

He imitated no one, he seemed not even to hear the strident babel of Broadway, yet somehow his quiet voice rose piping clear about all the shouts and cries and choruses. When a lonely crippled girl blew out the candles that lit her menagerie of glass, and the curtain fell on the gentlest and most beautiful play on Broadway, there was an explosion of applause

that shook the Rialto, and it would never be the same again. (D. Williams 333).

The day after his death, February 26, 1983, the *New York Times* published a laudatory editorial under the headlines; “Remembered Magic,”

No one who ever saw it forgot it: a woman with a broken heart and mind taking the arm of the man who is to escort her to an asylum and saying with exquisite courtesy, ‘Whoever you are-I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.’

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