CHAPTER 4

Analysis and evaluation of A Streetcar Named Desire

This play is a central one in the Williams oeuvre, having gained a strong following both among theatre-goers and film enthusiasts. The play is distinguished by a very direct appeal which has rendered it an accessible and challenging theatre and film experience - while at the same time this play has also been in the forefront of a heated debate on the topic of its moral tenor (cf. Preamble).

The play centres very powerfully on its main characters, who represent the various components of the thematic structure of the play very persuasively, thus this aspect will be addressed first.

In A Streetcar Named Desire there are three main dramatic characters, or dramatis personae. They are Stanley Kowalski, his wife Stella and her sister Blanche duBois. The play thus draws its essential life from these three characters, and the almost minute attention that is expended on these characters provides Williams with an opportunity to deal with a number of pet issues in this play, as in other plays.

There is a strong focus on the decadence of the American South in this play - as in many of his other plays. The world from which this work stems is that of the American South, both the romantic South and the decadent South. Williams himself is from the South and lived there for his first eight years - which by his own account he found heavenly. The same romance and wonder of the South which he experienced a character like Blanche duBois experiences. Through her character he tries to recapture the loss of romance and wonder that he feels the world suffers from, and this is responsible for the strong, sometimes sentimental nostalgia that is present in the play.

However, Williams also experienced the decadence of the South, and Blanche's character is a vehicle of this as well. Her inability to cope with reality and the fact that the crude forces of the present world sniff out the flame of romance are presented with painful acuity. The critic must realize and take into consideration that these notions of the South are what made
Williams write a play like this. People, like those dramatized in his plays, slip gradually but inexorably into the debilitating morass of decadence and the former splendour and glory of the old South are lost. Within the world of the play, Blanche duBois is the prime example of this.

Williams' characters display a sense of hopelessness, of hurtling into the great abyss. The almost palpable sense of waste and loss experienced by the characters constitute, to a large extent, their sense of the awareness of decadence - and the fact that it is, of course, irreversible.

The setting of the play is an important leitmotif for the understanding of the play, and Williams exploits the full dramatic potential of his locale, as will be pointed out again later in the discussion.

Once the world from which the play stems has been considered aesthetic aspects of the play must be taken into account, and a consideration of the key elements of the play will yield further information about this.

Where character is concerned (and this play, once the element of the setting has been considered, is arguably about character in a fairly deterministic manner), Williams does achieve something of a tour de force in his evocation of his main characters.

Stanley, Stella's husband and Blanche's brother-in-law, is the embodiment of energy, being forceful, ambitious and explicitly sexually orientated. Early on in the play Williams supplies the reader with a quite full description of Stanley - an important didascalic point, as the casting in the case of Stanley is crucial for the full evocation and hence impact of his raw, uncompromising sensuality.

He is of medium height, about five foot eight or nine, and strongly, compactly built. Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes. Since earliest manhood the center [sic] of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence, dependently, but with power and the pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens. Branching out from this complete and satisfying center are all the auxiliary channels of his life, such as heartiness with men, his appreciation of rough humour, his love of good drink and food and games, his car, his radio, everything that is his, that bears his emblem of the gaudy seed-bearer.
He sizes women up at a glance, with sexual classifications, crude images flashing into his mind and determining the way he smiles at them (Williams, 1967:283).

Williams clearly delineates Stanley's character. His raw power, animalism and constant search for sensual gratification are evident. He is described in terms of being the seed-bearer, a proud male bird, someone who classifies women in purely sexual terms. In the play this is clearly seen. The way in which he dominates his wife, beats her when he is drunk, rapes Blanche in the end - all these stem from the sexually chauvinist outlook he has on life.

He sees himself as the king of the household and does not like being resisted. In scene eight when Stella reprimands him about his greasy face and fingers and asks him to clear the table, he reacts violently.

(He hurls a plate to the floor.)

That's how I'll clear the table! (He seizes her arm) Don't ever talk that way to me! ... And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! (Williams, 1967:341).

All his violent words are reinforced by his display of power and force. When his wife stands up to him he beats her (scene three), and it is clear from Eunice's words later on that this often happens. He immediately ransacks Blanche's baggage in order to try and find any papers or documents pertaining to Belle Rêve (the old family plantation, now ironically still called Beautiful Dream), and cross-questions her relentlessly about the family's finances. At the table when Stella corrects him he breaks the crockery. He dominates his friends and he is the one who warns Mitch about Blanche's past and tells him to forget about her, which Mitch meekly does - with terrifying results.

The final display of his violent dominance is clear when he rapes Blanche, on the same night his wife is in the hospital having their first child. All he says and does is measured in terms of its force and sexual orientation. He mostly uses crude forces of violence, insensibility and vulgarity (Kazan in Jones, 1986:144).

When he tries to comfort his wife he does it in a sexual way, for he measures the "good times" in their marriage in sexual terms.
You remember the way it was? Them nights we had together? God, honey, it's gonna be sweet when we make noise in the night the way we used to and get the colored lights going with nobody's sister behind the curtains to hear us! (Williams, 1967:342).

The same type of response emerges when Stella cries about Blanche when the latter is taken to the asylum at the end of the play. Stanley tries to comfort her by approaching her sexually, opening her blouse and caressing her. All his actions, attitudes and ideas are embedded in a display of raw power, sexual orientation and satisfaction ostensibly employed by Williams to suggest an antidote to the vapid enervated qualities clearly attributable to the decadent South. Stanley, the fighter, retaliates when he brutishly perceives his treasured world to be under threat - by Blanche, for example, who, while providing for him an almost sick fascination, threatens the type of lifestyle that Stanley wants for himself and his family, therefore he reacts by brutally attacking her, first emotionally and then in the end physically (Kazan in Jones, 1986:147). To be physically in control is as far away from the weak and pitiful responses of some Southern characters as it is possible to be, and even though this might be a somewhat clumsy device on the part of Williams, the character of Stanley does stride across the stage as a great presence.

Blanche's behaviour and speech, obviously implemented by the playwright in an attempt to indicate that she is elevated above a character like Stanley, goad Stanley into excesses of violence the reason for which he probably can only faintly apprehend. She calls him a brute and ape-man - finely calculated to enrage him and goad him to his ultimate response. In scene ten Blanche elaborates on how rich in spirit she is as opposed to Stanley, and his amiable mood swiftly changes into a violent, destructive one. This is because her remarks sting, but mainly because of her having fostered a searing hatred for her because of her perceived (though in actual fact pathetic) snobbery as well as the threat she poses to the type of vigorous and untrammeled lifestyle he proposes (Kazan in Jones, 1986:147).

Stanley certainly has his "softer" moments, when he cries like a baby after hitting Stella, but the overall, cumulative impression and idea derived from his character and behaviour is that of a brute who defines his relationships by means of physical violence of various kinds. His need to dominate, and then to dominate in his way and on his terms, is the keynote to his character.
Williams is fairly explicit in his characterization of Stanley, for he gives countless clues and indications (at times almost coercive - guiding the response of the audience very explicitly) throughout the play that underline key aspects of Stanley's character.

Blanche, Stella's sister, is the symbol of the decadence of the glorious South. When she enters Williams gives, in the didascalia, a clear indication of how she must look.

She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and earrings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district.

She is about five years older than Stella. Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth (Williams, 1967:284-5).

Blanche is a typical example of Williams's Southern aristocrats - other examples come to life in a range of other plays. She is slipping into total degradation. She is an amalgam of contradictions - with a refined attitude and manners, but essentially and catastrophically also a sensualist who lies and tries to evade reality (Styan, 1968:214). She is clearly caught in an inner contradiction between failing to live up to her philosophy of being a beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit (Ehrenhuaft, 1985:107). As the remnant of a Southern aristocrat she attaches great importance to the manners and speech of the South and therefore pretending is important to her (Ehrenhuaft, 1985:69). In the play she maintains that a woman's charm is fifty percent illusion, and she facilely demonstrates this. She clings to the romantic past and finds nothing in the present reality to be a substitute for the idealized past (Bouwer, 1972:31-32).

It is clear that Blanche is an example of someone who has lost her grip on life and still lives in the aftermath of her former glory. She most strenuously, however, refuses to admit this and this is a key to her eventual disaster. The claustrophobic world that she inhabits is of her own making, but also inevitably suffocates her.
Her refusal to face reality is clear when she puts a shade over the globe in order that it should not throw such a bright and hard glare on her and thus expose her fading, delicate beauty. One of her escape mechanisms is that she tries with drink and gay talk and dreams of former glory, for example references to Shep Huntleigh, to cope with life.

She fails to accept responsibility for letting Belle Rêve slip from the family's grasp, as well as taking full responsibility for her indecent and immoral acts with other men and boys. Yet there is sympathy for Blanche. The loss of her husband, and the great love she had for him, made her turn to other men, lots of other men, to try and cope with life. This has made her a pathetic figure, totally dependent on the casual favours of other people and on alcohol.

Therefore she turns to Mitch, an average blue-collar worker, who is, with searing irony, her last hope for security. Here her past catches up with her again, and she loses Mitch as well and ends in the asylum, deranged and retaining none of the former splendour of the life she knew as a child. It is interesting to notice that Mitch in the end says that his main reason for leaving her is because of her lying, her pretending, the very thing she regards as that in life that keeps her going, is the thing that ultimately helps to orchestrate her downfall.

Her expensive clothing and love for jewels display her craving for the finest material things in life, but the real life situation communicates something else - a woman who has slipped into decadence, pathetic, helpless and dependent upon others to be a sounding board to her and to convince her in some way (even if through the brutish violence of Stanley) that she is in fact still alive.

Signs of Blanche's decadence are evident throughout the play. Her delicate beauty which must avoid strong light is a reflection of the fragility of her personal life which must avoid being exposed at all costs - her skin cannot take harsh light, her soul cannot face the light of day.

Her love for alcohol and her regular trips into the past to try and recreate the glory she has known, all help to reflect the grip that this terrifying
decadence has got of her. When Stanley rapes her in the penultimate scene, Blanche's world crashes.

This act vividly illustrates how her life goes spiralling down into lasting ruin. A question that is now suggested by the play is: just how much has society to do with Blanche's destruction? Stella says in so many words that Blanche used to be a very sensitive, sweet girl but people like Stanley, with their insensitivity, have helped to destroy her. Having to deal with people like Stanley has certainly helped to destroy Blanche. In this portrayal of Blanche, Williams brings a touch of ambiguity to the play, for while she is clearly in Williams' view the only character in the play who tries to bring a touch of magic to the world and never discards the fantasies that she craves (Styan, 1968:215), Williams also, rather equivocally, to my mind, as indicated above, tends to idealize Stanley's brand of brutish "survival of the fittest" as a possible response to the bleak picture represented by Southern decadence and embodied here in Blanche, but elsewhere just as strongly in Amanda in The Glass Menagerie.

In a way she represents a trusted, pathetic, confined bit of light and culture in this world that has been beaten into insensibility by the crude forces of violence, insensitivity and vulgarity which is represented by Stanley and which exist in the South, as in any other place in the world. Williams does well to handle the character of Blanche with the right degree of sympathy and judgement. He manages to create a character with immense balance and symmetry. Since much of the play's success hinges on the character of Blanche, Williams' ability to remain objective and honest about his main character strengthens the play considerably and lends it a stronger air of credibility. The ambivalence mentioned above adds to the sense that this is a complex issue, embodied in a complex character deserving of compassion.

Stella, Stanley's wife and Blanche's sister, is the character who stands in the middle between Stanley and Blanche. Williams describes her as follows:

A gentle young woman, about twenty-five, and of a background obviously quite different from her husband's (Williams, 1967:284).

Stella is more practical than Blanche, having the ability to cope better with reality than her sister. She very seldom speaks about the past and lives for
the present. She shows a great love for Stanley, even if he abuses her and suppresses her personality.

Stella is the one who pleads for understanding between Blanche and Stanley from the beginning (Ehrenhauft, 1985:115). This indicates that she tries to follow the golden mean between the two different worlds of Stanley and Blanche. She doesn't want to lose either, but does not realize that she has to choose one or the other, and her choice is eventually Stanley - she makes a conscious, single-stranded choice, and is therefore clearly not paralysed by the dilemma in which Blanche's ambivalence dumps her.

Blanche thinks that Stella must escape from all this. She sees Stanley as a barbarian, someone not fit for Stella, and someone who suppresses Stella's personality. Stella clearly does not share this view with Blanche.

Even after Stanley has assaulted her, and it is not for the first time, she goes back to him, and keeps on assuring Blanche that she does not want to leave him, or have things differently. Her love for Stanley is difficult to explain, but she does try to account for it - once again in terms of the sensual, and thus, it would seem, in terms of a vigour and vibrancy not present any longer in the declining characters as represented by Blanche.

But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark - that sort of make everything else seem - unimportant (Williams, 1967:318).

She is thrilled by Stanley's display of raw aggression and power and seems, if the dialogue above is taken into consideration, to be mesmerized and sexually aroused by his sensual power and vigour. She believes that he has drive and will get somewhere in life. She accepts his violent outbursts and domination and the fact that the sexual constitutes the inner core of his life. Her comment about her wedding night underlines this idea.

Why, on our wedding night - soon as we came in here - he snatched off one of my slippers and rushed about the place smashing the light-bulbs with it...
Blanche: And you-you let him? Didn't run, didn't scream?
Stella : I was - sort of - thrilled by it (Williams, 1967:314).

Her love for Blanche is also very strong and she really weeps for her sister when she is taken to the asylum. She seems to believe the best about her
sister and is very shocked when Stanley with grim relish gives her the starkly horrible details about Blanche's past. Her lack of insight leads to her failure to support her sister, however, for she doesn't believe Blanche's story that Stanley had raped her.

I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley (Williams, 1967:358).

So she chooses to believe in Stanley's primal innocence, and will carry on living with him and share in creating a family with him. The question that arises is: When will she get to know the truth (as perceived by Blanche) and will it not then destroy her as well? On balance of evidence, however, it is feasible to accept that Stella chooses to believe Stanley and share his type of lifestyle because she realizes that he has managed to cope better with reality than Blanche has - so she accepts in blind faith what Williams ambivalently agonizes about.

Her remark in the final scene that she will not go on living with Stanley if she should find out that he had in actual fact raped Blanche, indicates that she is blind to the truth and therefore just as blind to a certain reality as Blanche.

With the firm sense of the dominant decadent mode in the play as manifested in various ways in the main characters, a closer look at the actual dramatic events should enable one to arrive at a valid evaluation of the play within the framework proposed. While keeping in mind that the defeatist attitude displayed by Blanche, the coarse and raw sensuality of Stanley, the tame and unthinking submission of Stella to forces that might prove destructive but which she is taking refuge in because of the temporary gratification that it might offer, all attitudes which are essentially at variance with notions of what a Christian attitude might be, it is now necessary to look at the component parts of the play and to judge whether it adheres to the demands of coherence, balance, symmetry and truth - it must be demonstrated that this play has in fact become "an offering, that it is a human product, culturally determined and carrying within it the unmistakeable sense of a consecrated offering" (Seerveld, 1981:390). What must emerge is the essential worth of this play once it has been tested against the rule of truthful knowledge and has been seen to broaden the horizons of the present critic in the sense that facile condemnation should
make way for a more complex and responsible way of dealing with a problematic text.

The action of the play takes place in the spring, summer and early fall. The play has eleven scenes, no acts. These are indications of a steady build-up to a climax, and the vivid demonstration of the bitter contrast between the utter decadence and downfall of the former glory and splendour of the old South, as illustrated by Blanche's character.

The first six scenes take place during spring and summer. Blanche's final degradation is set into motion in scene seven, when Mitch, on whom her last hope for security and a stable life is pinned, stands her up, and at this stage the time is described as mid-September, early fall, leading up to the winter - a (perhaps somewhat tortuously) symbolic reflection of Blanche's life.

The eleven scenes all help to build up to the final confrontation, Stanley's rape of Blanche, and scene eleven sees the dénouement, when Blanche is sent to the asylum. The events in the play are given chronologically, although various flashbacks are used. The playwright has structured the temporal part of the play so carefully that the reader or viewer does not have any difficulty in dealing with time in this play. The taut structure allows the reader to watch, in fascination and horror, how all the events that lead up to Blanche's final and irreversible downfall in the last two scenes are presented methodically and calculatedly. Time marches on relentlessly, and each scene carries within it a sense of crescendo, a quite apt metaphor in view of the didascalic use of music in the build-up to the climax.

Blanche's frequent flashbacks indicate a desire to halt this deterioration, this process of decay, but it only underlines the fact that this process is irreversible and final. When Mitch turns her down because of her past, she lapses into the past and remembers Belle Rêve, about the family losing all their servants, their luxuries, their legacy. She remembers the soldiers whom she spent nights with, all haunting reminders of a life wasted, and now when Mitch, her last hope is lost, this cycle of destruction, embodied in her fall into decadence comes to a final, crushing end.
In the scene just after this one, she wears some of her old clothes and keeps on telling Stanley that Shep Huntleigh, a millionaire whom she claims to know, has invited her for a Caribbean cruise. She remembers about how when young they went swimming and in that way tries to recreate the comforting delusions of her earlier life. The painful facts of reality, of the present reality, are all the more confirmed by these lapses into the past by Blanche. Just before Stanley rapes her in the end he says:

We've had this date with each other from the beginning! (Williams, 1967:356).

This declaration by him indicates that Blanche's eventual and permanent destruction has always been on the cards. It is something that has been set, something that had to happen at a certain time, something predestined.

The auditive didascalia to a fascinating extent function as an omniscient narrator. The cathedral bells chiming in the last scene indicate physical time has lapsed and personal time has run out for Blanche (Bedford, 1988:32).

Throughout the play this is suggested by the temporal aspects of the play. The steady build-up to the final confrontation, Blanche's attempts through flashbacks to try and recreate the glory and joy she once knew but it is always shattered by the reality of the present, and Stanley's act of rape and his utterance about the predestination of it supports this and serves as the final grotesque act that sends Blanche's life into the downward spiral which cannot be reversed.

Williams gives some fairly specific details as to the fictional space in which this play takes place. It is in New Orleans, in a section named the *Elysian Fields*, a poor section. Blanche also comments that she took the streetcar *Desire* to *Cemeteries* and then landed at the *Elysian Fields*. These two names indicate the opposite forces in this play - desire and death. One of the other will dominate - with Stanley it is desire and this force overpowers Blanche, who because of her lack of it, is overpowered and eventually dies spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

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1 This name means *the heavenly fields*, a bitter irony.
Again it is a clear indication, or hint, by Williams about the main thrust of the play. He succeeds in also creating a space that communicates these main ideas (Roberts, 1972:41). This is a good example of a vital element of the play being done justice to - thus balance and symmetry are achieved.

The apartment Stanley and Stella live in is part of a building that has two different apartments, one on top of the other. Williams describes the outside of the apartment, indicating that its exterior is not too impressive, and on the inside there are three rooms: kitchen, bathroom and a bedroom. The porch and the pavement form the two other spaces for the action of the play.

From Williams' rather elaborate description of the exterior and interior of the apartments, the reader can gain some valuable information. Firstly, it is a poor section, with limited space and lighting. As such it is also a symbolic reflection of the psychological and emotional limitations that all the characters experience within the space of their lives (this is a device also used extensively in The Glass Menagerie).

Blanche complains about this to Mitch in scene six.

You see, there's no privacy here (Williams, 1967:332).

The rather vivid description of the space also helps to create an atmosphere of brooding and looming disaster and of a building tension that must lead to an eruption. Williams gives a clear description of this.

The atmosphere of the kitchen is now the same raw, lurid one of the disastrous poker night (Williams, 1967:356).

Certain spaces also convey certain emotions and feelings. Whenever Blanche is in the bathroom, beautifying herself, she is happy and gay, and she frequently comments that a hot bath relaxes her completely and prepares her for the day.

Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand new human being! (Williams, 1967:298).
When she waits for Mitch she also sings in the bath and constantly spends a lot of time in there, revitalizing herself as well as trying to escape from the present situation.  

Other spaces that figure prominently in the play, but are not actually seen by the audience, are Belle Rêve and the country that Blanche and Stella grew up in.

Blanche often speaks about it, trying to recreate it in order to try and regain some of the lost glory and happiness she had - the same with Dallas where her millionaire friend lives and where the ground spouts gold as she puts it.

The adjacent fictional spaces that are created do not suggest positiveness. When Blanche tells Mitch about her young husband who loved someone else and how it broke her heart, a fictional space of the locomotive passing close to the house is created by auditory means (noise) as well as visual means (headlight of the locomotive that glares into the room as it passes).

The thunderous noise that the passing locomotive creates drowns out Blanche's painful narration of her lost love the same as decadence, that seems to have started with the lost love of her husband, overpowers her present reality, again the idea of death and desire. This specific example is to me one of the best examples of Williams's ability to furnish the play with an immense internal richness, complexity and symmetry. By using techniques like these he succeeds in furnishing the play with a graphic, almost film-like quality, but certainly a very effective one.

The reader and audience experience the stifling, brooding space of the apartment that within it carries immanent violence and destruction. Other far-off fictional spaces that are created, by words by the characters, all seem to speak of better days, of former glory and splendour. The adjacent space of the train and the streetcar passing, is more threatening and helps to orchestrate the steady decline of the character and their lives.

Throughout the play the sounds of the city can be heard, the blue piano for example, that suggests a decadent nostalgia, so that this whole atmosphere

2 The motif of water as a cleansing agent at some levels would suggest a spiritual cleansing in terms also of religious notions of baptism and purification, but this is never worked out more fully.
of decadence that is caught in the city is transferred to the space of the apartment, and thus into the lives of the characters (Ehrenhauft, 1985:76). This helps to widen the scope of the play and lends to it a very universal quality.

In the final scene, when Blanche is taken to the asylum, the didascalia also indicate that jungle cries can be heard. This reference to the space of the jungle can be an enforcement of the idea that the society the characters find themselves in can be compared to a jungle, fierce, threatening where the survival of the fittest is the only thing that counts. Blanche obviously did not manage to survive in the jungle, because of her over-sensitivity and inability to cope with the present.

Stanley on the other hand does survive, because he is a fighter, a survivor, fierce, violent and confident. These are the type of people who will survive in the jungle of life. This ties in very nicely with the recurring idea that the world they live in does not lend itself to the sensitive people who seek to live life in that way, the more brutal people are the survivors.

The diction and dialogue of the play help to illuminate the characters more and give information to the audience and reader.

Stanley's forceful and powerful diction echoes his character. As the aggressor, the dominant and overbearing male protagonist, Stanley's diction and dialogue clearly display this.

For a start he speaks in loud tones, often bellowing. When he meets Blanche it is also clear that he is no sensitive communicator or refined speaker. His communication style is aggressive throughout even towards his wife at times. Towards his friends there's the same rowdiness, the same aggression. This can clearly be seen during the poker night and in the end when he manipulates Mitch into forgetting about Blanche.

This insensitivity and aggression are the main characteristics of Stanley's speech. In situations where he indicates his love for Stella, he seems only to be able to communicate it in sexual and sensual terms. This ties in with his idea of being the "gaudy seed-bearer" or "proud male bird".
In the penultimate scene when he celebrates the birth of his child, he says he'll wear his silk pyjamas, the ones he wore on his wedding night, for he always wears it on special occasions. These words echo his prime idea of being king of his place, as he does remark in scene eight.

It is impossible if Stanley's speech is studied to detect signs of sensitivity in his character. Ironically it is Blanche's words to Stella at the end of scene four that seem to best describe Stanley.

He acts like an animal, he has animal habits!...Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is-Stanley Kowalski- survivor of the stone age!...In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! That we have to make grow! And cling to, ... Don't-don't hang back with the brutes! (Williams, 1967:319).

Although Blanche tends to overreact and to dramatize at times, the essence of her words is true. Stanley's reliance on brute force, both physically and in his speech and attitude, and expression of love purely in sexual terms, is very clearly experienced at the beginning of scene eight. When Stella reprimands him about his table manners he reacts violently.

Don't ever talk to that way to me! 'Pig-Polack-disgusting-vulgar-greasy!'-them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here! ... And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! (Williams, 1967:341).

Just a few lines later his expression of love towards Stella enforces the idea of his strong sensual and sexual driving force.

You remember the way it was? Them nights we had together? God, honey, it's gonna be sweet when we can make noise in the night the way we used to and get the colored lights going with nobody's sister behind the curtains to hear us! (Williams, 1967:342).

Remarks like that, and the one below by Stanley, indicate his lack of sensitivity.

Blanche. I was fishing for a compliment, Stanley.
Stanley. I don't go in for that stuff (Williams, 1967:299).

From his speech it is clear that he is also from a totally different background than Stella and Blanche, a harsher one, where sheer survival figured far more strongly than refinement, learning or culture.
The constant loudness and aggression that Stanley's diction and dialogue generate will have a very definite and important effect on the audience. The actor who plays the character of Stanley must keep this in mind. His projection of Stanley's character will be crucial for it will determine if the audience experience him as an aggressive, powerful and forceful person. The director and the actor must therefore carefully consider how to handle the character of Stanley Kowalski.

Blanche's character is most probably the character who speaks most in the play. This is important to take into account for it already reveals something of her character. She is also the one who dwells the most on the past, constantly speaking about the past, trying to recreate the hope that she had in the past, in the present.

Furthermore she keeps talking about how there are still men who want her, like Shep Huntleigh, and how she could still enjoy a wonderful future.

From this type of dialogue it is clear that Blanche is a character who has very little left, very little physically and materially as well as spiritually, e.g. hope of happy, good life. Therefore Mitch is her last hope.

Yes- I want Mitch...very badly! Just think if it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem... (Williams, 1967:325).

She describes her decadence, her gradual deterioration, more graphically:

So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water-spout, and I met you. You said you needed somebody. Well I needed somebody too. I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle - a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide! (Williams, 1967:348).

As the play progresses Blanche's diction and dialogue become more and more nostalgic with cries of shattered dreams and ideals and of a hopeless future. This is a reflection of her personal state, the total decadence that has taken hold of her, that destroys her.

She is also the character who frequently relates her feelings in symbolic and figurative speech, another indication that she is unable to cope with the
present and tries to escape into a dream world in which there still is hope. The use of terms that are obviously above the understanding of the other characters, especially the locals like Stanley and Mitch, also indicates that Blanche does hail from a different, and more privileged background, which makes her final downfall when she is taken to the asylum, all the more poignant. Her manner of speaking is elevated above the rest, an indication that she is a southern aristocrat, therefore her fall is very tragic (Ehrenhauft, 1985:79).

At times Blanche's diction and dialogue do seem to be too much for the audience. Her constant longing for the past and the trap that she is caught in can serve to blunt the audience's sympathy for her, for her sentimentality and gloomy maunderings have the ability to tax the audience to possible irritation. It must be remembered that Blanche is over-sensitive and over-delicate, this seems to be some of her main flaws and reasons for her downfall, and therefore her diction will indicate this. The director and actress that plays Blanche must carefully consider how to counter this possible problem so that a delicate balance is reached between these two poles. Williams's plays do at times lean towards melodrama and sensationalism, which must be kept on a tight rein, for it is an inherent flaw the director and cast must take careful cognizance of.

The actress who portrays Blanche has to be both a sent and fallen angel, able to display and reflect that Blanche is someone who is so tragically caught in a hopeless situation from which she cannot escape as the last two scenes indicate, then she may be able to keep the audience's sympathy. On the other hand her decadence is something that she has to the largest extent brought upon herself and this the audience must also realize.

As Kolin and Wolter (1991:245) say, Blanche is seen in a negative light as seductress, but also in a positive light as one who recognizes her lost innocence and responds to it effusively - she yearns for the innocence she had when young, but which she has now relinquished.

This will lead to the audience, and readers, both wanting to criticize and change Blanche, to shelter her as well as to expose her (Styan, 1968:215).
Stella speaks less than Blanche and Stanley. Her speech is also unlike Stanley's and Blanche's diction, not as emotional or aggressive.

She shows a strong measure of joy and pride in Stanley in her speech. She admires him and constantly assures Blanche that she is happy, despite Stanley's aggressiveness and dominance.

Stanley's always smashed things... I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. Look at the mess in this room! And those empty bottles! They went through two cases last night!

He promised this morning that he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. Oh, well it is his pleasure, like mine is movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other's habits, I guess (Williams, 1967:315).

At other times she cries over his insensitivity, his brutality and his dominance. She even calls him a pig once, and seems to lament his lack of tenderness.

You didn't know Blanche when she was young. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting like she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change (Williams, 1967:344).

This is a direct indication that she has definite insight into Stanley's character, insight which doesn't provide her with very pleasant information, yet she stays with him, doesn't believe Blanche's story that Stanley had raped her, and has a family and future with him. This lack of insight and the misplaced gentleness are the main characteristics of her character and she displays these very clearly in her diction and dialogue. It again shows the power and force of desire, it keeps Stella with Stanley despite his behaviour and character.

A Street Named Desire is a play with an early point-of-attack. Early on in the play Blanche tells about Belle Reve, the family and why she has come to stay with Stella. From there the story builds up to its climax in the penultimate scene and the shattering dénouement in the last scene.

The decadence and corruption that overtake all the characters are evident from the beginning in the description of the setting and the information that
is found in the didascalia about the characters. The dramatic action concentrates on both the showing and telling of this decadence.

Williams tells the reader in the didascalia already that Blanche has "an uncertain manner", and Stella is "gentle" and also early on informs the reader about Stanley's aggressive, sexually orientated nature. So for the reader this information, which is given when the different characters are introduced, supplies him with an immediate idea as to the essential natures of the characters, and this is then confirmed through the dramatic action.

For the audience, who do not have this information at their disposal, the task is of course somewhat more difficult. Here the acting ability of the actors and the perception the audience form from this are important.

Blanche's character has an uncertain manner, ranging from joy to make-believe, playfulness, depression and hysteria. Her dramatic action involves constantly changing clothing, an indication of her inability to cope with reality, forever trying to escape into a new situation like a new set of clothing. Furthermore she is fond of touching other characters, especially men, e.g. Stanley, Mitch and even the young collector, and indication of need for male attention. Her constant avoidance of stark light and preference for dimly lit rooms is also noteworthy. This forms a dominant symbol in the play that helps us to understand Blanche's past and the present (Corrigan, 1987:28). Towards the end of the play Stanley tears down the paper lantern that Blanche has placed around the light, because of her need to avoid stark light. This is symbolic of the sordid reality of life that must be faced, the illusion, of Blanche as a Southern belle is shattered, and the reality of a lonely, desperate woman seeking human contact is revealed (Corrigan, 1987:33).

This gesture is a very good example of the internal complexity which Williams succeeds in creating in this play through a network of symbols which he manages to control very effectively.

Stanley is very much the opposite of Blanche, stalking like an animal which Williams refers to as "animal joy" that springs from his being.
This is distinguished from his actions, his uncouthness, his aggressive and insensitive and bombastic manners. His actions are all linked to either power and violence or sexual advances.

Stanley's role as Blanche's executioner, her destroyer, is evident very early on, in the first scene, when he enters with a packet of blood-stained meat which links him with the occupation of a butcher who violates her body, cuts her off from her sister, Stella, and her saviour, Mitch (Kolin & Wolter, 1991:242).

Stella varies from gloating over Stanley, like a "good wife" should, to pathetic protests against his violence and insensitivity.

Her gentleness in her handling of Stanley and Blanche is evident through her acceptance of Stanley's apology about his misbehaviour at the end of scene three, and also in the last scene when she cries bitterly when allowing the doctor to take Blanche away.

The fabula, the basic story-line of the play, is easy to follow, and the sjuzet (plot) which is the organization of the narration itself, can also be reconstructed rather easily by the audience and reader in view of the fact that, in spite of flashbacks, this is essentially a simple "story" which is strongly causally constructed and does not meander at all. Throughout the play there are various clues, some very direct, as to how the open spaces should be filled in. It is therefore in some ways a fairly "coercive" play in the sense that the playwright "directs" the reading. All the main characters' personalities are dealt with rather extensively in the didascalia and the reader is left with little uncertainty as to the nature of the characters. Other elements like the continual music in the background, the characters' dialogue and their actions all help to guide the reader to certain conclusions and ideas concerning the play.

For the audience the actors have to fix their attention (the audience's) on the most important dramatic actions concerning each character, which have been indicated, and the director will also have to make sure that an element like the background music receives its full credit as well as the lighting, another important aspect in Williams' plays.
This play thus has a relatively closed form, as virtually all the loose strands are tied. All the characters are victims of the decadence of their society and of the decisions they have made - which is underscored by the fact that Williams' view of character would seem to be strongly determinist.

Blanche is the most obvious victim, ending in an asylum. Stella is stuck with a life that is bound to end in destruction for she has married a man incapable of upholding a good marriage. Stanley's behaviour in the play deteriorates and his rape of Blanche is the ultimate outward manifestation of decadence, morally, socially and spiritually.

The extensive use of the didascalia in this play is noteworthy in support of what has been said above. The title of the play also seems to point towards the two important things in life, death and desire. Blanche comments on this at the end of scene nine.

Death -...The opposite is desire (Williams, 1967:349).

Desire is the streetcar that takes Blanche to Stella and Stanley, it is also the force that drives Blanche to destruction. For Blanche, and the other characters, there are only these two opposites, desire and death.

When introducing each character to the audience, Williams gives a very clear, precise and specific indication as to how the reader should evaluate the specific character. Earlier on this has been discussed, in the part dealing with the dramatis personae, but it is important once again to note that the characters' physical attributes, attitudes, and the main psychological characteristics are all given by the didascalia. This reinforces the idea that the reader is guided towards a certain train of thought concerning the characters.

The didascalia also give rather detailed descriptions concerning time and space in the play. In the opening scene the apartment is clearly described, Belle Rêve is later on described, the time during which the action takes place is also given. Williams often describes colours in the didascalia and even goes so far as to indicate the meanings these should have:

The poker players - Stanley, Steve, Mitch and Pablo - wear colored shirts, solid blues, a purple, a red-and-white check, a light green, and
they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and
direct and powerful as the primary colors (Williams, 1967:303).

From this information given through the didascalia it is obvious why
Williams uses these colours and he informs the reader directly. A similar
example is found in the first scene.

The sky ... almost a turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of
lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay
(Williams, 1967:283).

Music is another medium that Williams uses throughout. There is the "Blue
Piano" that expresses the spirit of the life in New Orleans (Williams,
1967:284). There are the drums and trumpet that feature very prominently
at the end of the rape scene.

The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly
(Williams, 1967:356).

This "hot trumpet" that dominates at the end of the rape scene is an
indication of desire, portrayed by Stanley, overpowering the sensitive
Blanche. The most prominent use of music is found with the various
references to the "Varsouviana", a polka. This polka is played whenever
Blanche recalls the past, when she speaks about Alan her husband who has
died, when she speaks about her life at Belle Rêve and Laurel as well as in
the final scene when she thinks Shep Huntleigh has come to fetch her, when
it is the doctor in fact. Bedford (1988:32) refers to it as an emotional
barometer and this is true.

The recurrence of the polka forms a leitmotif throughout the play and keeps
reminding the reader and the audience, especially the audience who
experience it auditorily, that Blanche lives in the past and still builds her life
around the past, unable to accept reality. This is another instance where
Williams uses the didascalia fully thereby making the play all the more
powerful and effective.

There are also various indications of animal reflections, beast-like instincts,
as well as lurid reflections against the walls like ghosts, in the scene when
Blanche is raped. All these indications refer to the violent, brutal, beast-like
force which overpowers the sensitivity (Ehrenhauft, 1985:109).
The fact that the didascalia indicate that Blanche is constantly either
dressing, bathing or drinking, never occupied with more than that, reminds
the reader and audience that she is a person who is unable to cope with life,
to constructively do something about her situation and escape the decay that
has invaded her life.

Stanley, on the other hand is mostly seen in work-clothes, his bowling outfit
or his silk pyjamas, enhancing the idea of the powerful, forceful male
protagonist, the king of the house. Stella is cast as the submissive wife,
cleaning the house, eagerly doting on her husband, unequivocally accepting
all his different moods, "pleasures" and trusting him fully.

Other important elements like the train that occasionally thunders by, seem
to indicate the decadence that is set on a set course to overpower the lives of
the characters.

The names of the characters and places are highly and ironically symbolic
as well. Belle Rêve, means beautiful dream, and is the estate where
Blanche and Stella grew up and therefore represents the past, and the latter
is just a beautiful dream, unattainable, although Blanche constantly reaches
for it (Roberts, 1972:42). Blanche duBois means the white of the woods,
white being pure, sensitive and woods forming a phallic connotation
(Roberts, 1972:42).

The apartment the Kowalskis live in is called the Elysian Fields, the
heavenly fields, irony. The streetcar is called desire, the main force in this
play and it rides to Cemeteries, desire and death, the latter being the other
force in the play, and the final destination of desire just as the streetcar
Desire actually rides to Cemeteries.

Williams uses music, colours, the vivid descriptions of the characters' actions, moods and driving forces in life and other very clear detail to create a very definite dramatic structure and convey certain ideas. These provide direct access to the private lives of the characters (Corrigan, 1987:28). Williams is in control of his symbolic devices which enable the audience to understand the emotional penumbra surrounding the characters and events, and to view the world from the limited and distorted perspective of Blanche (Corrigan, 1987:27). This control leads to the symbols being used very
effectively and helps to add a great deal of inner richness, unity and complexity to the plays - which are some of the most important aspects in a play. For the reader this also makes the reading process easier and allows for a relatively closed drama.

For the audience it is the same, but the director and the cast will determine to a large extent how the audience experience the play, for they will decide on a certain approach when dealing with the play, especially when considering the didascalia.

Corrigan (1987:37) sums it up accurately in saying that in this play by Williams we find a most successful revelation of human nature in its totality in which the realistic surface is disturbed as little as possible and only when necessary.

The imaginative insight that Williams displays in this play provides the critic with a very true and touching view of reality. Williams pleads for the reflection of the romantic light in this world to be guarded and broadened. The crude forces of vulgarity, power and aggression must be curbed. Together with this he also realizes that a character like Blanche duBois, a Southern aristocrat, needs to realize that romanticism alone will not make a way for anyone in this world - reality must be faced. Although his view is not Christian, a clear reflection on Christ or the Word, his view is true and valuable and for the Christian acceptable.

This play certainly succeeds as a dramatic work of art. When considering the world from which this work of art stems, the romantic yet decadent South, the critic will realize that Williams really succeeds in capturing the dilemma and pathos of this world, sympathizing with it but not totally condoning it.

The play displays a very good level of aesthetic merit. Balance, symmetry, internal richness and complexity are displayed and when Williams succeeds in remaining in control of his dramatic devices, as he does in this play, the end result is most gratifying. His imaginative insight, although limited, is understandable and acceptable. He manages to leave the reader or audience with many truths and astounding insights.
Taking this play as a yardstick, Williams can therefore certainly be regarded as one of the best modern playwrights.
CHAPTER 5

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

This play by Williams was written about eight years after Streetcar and has been, and still is, hailed by many as an outstanding play, dealing as it does with a number of already familiar issues and further exploring new issues as well.

Again Williams is concerned about the lack of sensitivity and understanding displayed by people. The play is noteworthy for the way in which the plight of the homosexual is made evident, together with Williams' concern for his characters who are clearly about to hurtle into the great abyss of despair - a plight often of their own making. It is very important for him that the audience and reader should feel the same empathy and concern for his characters as he does. There is the strong ambience in the play of homosexual concerns, which could be an overtly autobiographical note, especially if one keeps in mind what would be published openly in the Memoirs later.

His love and very deep concern with the American South is even more evident in this play. The whole play is set on a Mississippi delta plantation and the characters all stem from the South. They are Southern aristocrats, self-made millionaires, but unfortunately spiritually poor people. Notions centring on money, naked power and vulgar wealth are very evident - and come into direct conflict with the more genteel notions of gallantry and old Southern charm and romanticism. Williams's deep-set anger against the mendacity that corrupts a society, is vented in this play.

The main characters in the play are Brick and Maggie and to a lesser extent Big Daddy and Big Mama.

Brick's character is marked by total indifference, an example of someone who has completely given up the struggle for life. When Williams introduces him he characteristically supplies us with a guiding (coercive?) character note on Brick:

He is still slim and firm as a boy. His liquor hasn't started tearing him down outside. He has the additional charm of that cool air of detachment that people have who have given up the struggle. But now and then, when disturbed, something flashes behind it, like lightning in a fair sky, which shows that at some deeper level he is far from peaceful (Williams, 1962:2).
This detachment and abandonment of the struggle in life ostensibly occurred when Brick's friend Skipper died. He tells about it:

Skipper broke in two like a rotten stick - nobody ever turned so fast to a lush - or died of it so quick ... (Williams, 1962:67).

The reason Skipper died, Brick rather facilely concludes, is because people lied about his and Skipper's friendship. He maintains that it was a real, deep friendship without any sexual connotations, but Skipper was made to believe it was dirty, so it got to him and he died - Brick on the other hand took to liquor.

Mendacity is the system we live in. Liquor is one way out an' death's the other ... (Williams, 1962:69).

This mendacity, lying and liars, caused Brick to lose interest in life and the disgust born from this situation caused him to turn to alcohol. So he has to drink till he feels the "click" in his head.

The click I get in my head when I've had enough of this stuff to make me peaceful ... (Williams, 1962:11).

Brick uses liquor to deal with life, he uses it as a screen from behind which he lives.

Brick meets his father's hard, intent, grinning stare with a slow, vague smile that he offers all situations from behind the screen of liquor (Williams, 1962:38).

This type of situation now means that Brick is a pathetic, broken human being with no interest in life or the future. The system has certainly dealt him a crippling blow, a blow from which he can't, or does not want to recover. The only instances in the whole play when Brick's detachment is broken, or shows intense signs of involvement, are when Skipper is mentioned.

Brick's detachment is at last broken through (Williams, 1962:61).

This happens in the scene where Big Daddy forces Brick to talk about why he is drinking. All the relationships with the people around him have broken down since the death of Skipper, although there are indications that Brick has had very little real spiritual intimacy with anyone except Skipper.
The relationship with Skipper is the only relationship it seems that he has engaged in intimately and actively. Throughout the play he comments on this.

Why can't exceptional friendship, real, real, deep, deep friendship! between two men be respected as something clean and decent without being thought of as - (Williams, 1962:64).

Brick seems to have married Maggie for the sake of appearances, and he says as much, which renders him as guilty of the mendacity which he sees as the main problem infesting the society of which he is a part.

Both of us married into society, Big Daddy (Williams, 1962:41).

He also says that he and Maggie never shared in any spiritual or emotional intimacy, yet on the other hand he says that Maggie made it clear to him, during his last year at the university, that they must marry

- that summer, Maggie, she laid the law down to me, said, now or never, and so I married Maggie ... (Williams, 1962:66);

yet, only the friendship with Skipper, ironically, could reach the depth and intensity that any marital relationship is supposed to reach.

The relationship with Skipper can be seen as a crucially important and determining factor in the play, but the way in which Williams handles it is somewhat suspect - one is in fact reminded of Lawrence's view of the author putting his thumb in the scale pan in order to swing the reader, in order to weight the situation carefully but definitely in the direction that he (as author) wants it to go. This is essentially dishonest and has an unfortunate effect on the artistic integrity of the whole play (something that would increasingly happen in Williams' work, and not to the artistic advantage of his work).

The relationship between Brick and Skipper clearly emerges from textual evidence to more than platonic, and yet the play, on the other hand, goes on at length to discredit this fact. After a careful reading of the play one cannot help but feel that Brick's statements about his and Skipper's friendship do not always ring true.

The way the other characters refer to this friendship is equally ambivalent. Maggie, clearly in denial mode, calls it "ideal" and says that the only "dirtiness"
that emanated from the friendship, came from Skipper. She seems unable to discern that Skipper's death caused her husband to abandon all hope, like someone having lost a loved one.

Falk (1961:107) says that the dramatic point of the play occurs in the conversation between Brick and Big Daddy, when Brick's detachment is broken and he starts openly to speak about the reasons why he has started drinking and goes on to state that Williams deals with Brick's character as if he himself did not know the physical and moral condition of his hero or the reason for his collapse (Falk, 1961:107). This is a very acute observation, and I am fully inclined to go along with it - with all the troubling implications outlined above about the effect this eventually has on the play.

Williams speaks in terms of "if" and "maybe" and dodges the issue by saying that the play is about a common family crisis - which it is not. In this scene of open confession and confrontation the truth still dodges around verbal corners and refuses to meet the reader on firm, clear terms (Falk, 1961:112). Once again one is forcefully reminded of Lawrence's important criterion of the honesty of the playwright, determining his or her intention. Williams is not really honest about his "god-like, detached and cool" hero, he refuses to deal honestly and objectively with Brick as a character. Clurman (1976:504) says that the play remains centrally ambiguous much due to Williams's unwillingness to remain honest. A play's stature is enhanced greatly if it displays a lasting impression of truth, and here this play fails to do this. If the playwright fails to remain objective and truthful about his or her characters, then art is much, much poorer. The truth is important to everyone, Christian or non-Christian, and dodging or twisting of it, is unacceptable. Obviously this also upsets the balance and symmetry of the play.

A good indication of this dodging of the truth is echoed in the words of Brick when he tells about his friendship with Skipper:

He was a less than average student ... poured in his mind the dirty, false idea that what we were, him and me, was a frustrated case of that ole pair of sisters that lived in this room, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello! He, poor Skipper, went to bed with Maggie to prove it wasn't true, and when it didn't work out, he thought it was true! - Skipper broke in two like a rotten stick - (Williams, 1962:67).
Brick is even too scared, or embarrassed, to voice the word "homosexuality", as if it were something holy. The same inclination is evident in other parts of the play.

Big Daddy, on the other hand, bluntly says that Bricks drinks because he is disgusted with himself because he is homosexual, and drinks to cover up this disgust with himself. Apparently this is the truth, for Brick retaliates by telling Big Daddy the truth about his sickness, that the cancer is terminal. He follows that up by blandly and cruelly saying that they are friends and friends should be telling each other the truth.

Williams's seeming unwillingness to confront the character of Brick honestly discredits the play. Brick's total indifference, and the fact that the play seems to sympathize with this, helps to detract from the impact of the play. The system has caused him to lose interest in life, but it still doesn't relieve him from his responsibility and condone his behaviour.

Brick is a male reflection of Blanche, unable to cope with reality, but while Blanche's character is treated with the right amount of sympathy and judgement, Brick seems to be treated with an uncritical acceptance of his weaknesses, which really detracts from the sense one has of the honesty of the playwright. During his conversation with Big Daddy and his behaviour throughout the play the idea is created that this indifference and detachment are charming, understandable and even fitting.

Boxill (1987:113) calls Brick a favoured son, someone whom Williams endows with attributes of both his male and female personalities. He has a death-like security, which Williams refers to as the 'absolute protection and utter effortlessness' that 'the homesick little boy' in him has always wanted (Boxill, 1987:117). Unfortunately, then, Williams the playwright seems to fall in love too much with the character of Brick, as Maggie's words about Brick, in the last act clearly reveal:

Oh, you weak, beautiful people! - who give up. - What you want is someone to - ... - take hold of you. - Gently, gently, with love! (Williams, 1962:92).

The idea is given that the audience or the reader, must sympathize with this, and treat Brick just as gently as Williams, Big Mama and Maggie do. The latter
sees Brick as a "god-like" creature, and some of Williams's didascalia add to this impression, for

with everybody looking at Brick as everybody has always looked at Brick when he spoke or moved or appeared (Williams, 1962:75).

Norvick (1978:548) sums it up very accurately when he says that Williams wants us to love and honor [sic] his characters in this play just as much as he does.

Jackson (1965:130) is somewhat more positive and remarks that Brick seems to qualify as a tragic hero, as Williams's play wants to show the root of human suffering and play out humanity's crisis, giving the tortured consciousness concrete shape. Jackson (1965:63) goes on to say that Brick's flaw is too bad to name - homosexuality - and this impurity is greater than "hamartia", for it is an original sin, iniquity, and therefore he seeks healing (like the original tragic hero) but does not expect to find it because of this great iniquity. However, to my mind, Brick's stature as a tragic hero only exists in the mind of Maggie, and probably Williams, for in looking at his character with a somewhat more jaundiced eye one cannot escape the impression that he is a restless, alcoholic homosexual not honest enough to admit it or accept reality and therefore he gives in to alcohol. He is indeed, as Kaufmann (1976:16) indicates, mostly restricted to cynical taciturnity and bourbon-pouring, hardly a tragic hero. Jackson (1965:130) feels that Williams develops his theory of the nature of mankind and its illness through moral choice exerted by the characters through the character of Brick. Brick supposedly worships the god of youth, and never wants to admit that he grows older and has to deal with it.

This may be true, but he also fails to admit his homosexuality, and lives a life of mendacity worsened by the fact that he married a woman whom he didn't love as a smokescreen for his homosexuality. Now that this marriage, and consequently his life, is a mess, he takes to alcohol, and on top of it all he must now be treated as a tragic hero, seeking healing but unable to find it because of his iniquity.

Clearly, in the light of the model that has been set forth as part of the evaluation process of the play, one has to accept that Brick does not fully function as a character. His character is not fully explored, not dealt with "honestly" enough and the audience and reader are expected to add their blessing to this character
as facilely as Maggie and Williams do. This means that the element of righteousness - justice being done to each element - is not being achieved because the characters of Maggie and Brick are not allowed to develop to their fullest potential because of the limiting impositions of the (mendacious?) author.

Brick is not drawn as a character with flaws and in a way also responsible for his own state of mind and hopelessness. This robs the play of a lot of credibility, and upsets the balance and symmetry that are needed to allow a play to develop to its full parameters. Therefore, Jackson's statement (1965:130) that Williams seeks to illuminate the fact that man's salvation is dependent on his personal recognition of his condition, can be applied to A Streetcar named Desire, but not to Cat on a hot tin roof, simply because of the lack of this recognition.

Ganz (1976:130), of course, says that Williams does not openly punish Brick for not being honest about the fact that he is a homosexual, because this play was designed for commercial theater, which could explain why it dodges the issue. This may be the reason, or the fact that Williams was at the time a self-confessed homosexual, either way Ganz is very right when he says that Brick is not dealt with honestly, unlike Blanche (Ganz, 1976:130).

Clurman (1976:504) states that Williams seems in this play intent on tearing the mask of moral fraud and lying (mendacity) of middle-class "respectability". It is a pity he never does this with the character of Brick. The latter is allowed to keep on his mask of indifference and cool detachment and his acts of mendacity, the greatest one the failure to admit to his homosexuality, are justified and even glorified. Heilman (1973:25) says that although there are some notable recognitions from Brick's side, during his conversation with Big Daddy, they do not "hurt", which underlines the fact that there are still deeper levels of truth to be known. Williams seems unwilling to plumb these depths.

Williams falls prey to his own mendacity and if the model of Van Rensburg is taken into account then this play does not reach the heights of A Streetcar Named Desire. Williams's limited and limiting view of reality and seeming unwillingness to treat his characters with unsentimental honesty and truthfulness, bar him from constantly testing his horizons with the rule of
truthful knowledge. This impoverishes his play and materially lessens its impact.

When one turns to Maggie, the mood intensifies. The word that is used a lot in the play to characterize Maggie's behaviour, is cat - it is even used in the title. Williams does not explicitly delineate her character when he introduces her, as he does with all the other characters. It is gathered, however, that she is a beautiful, alluring woman. She goes on to explain that the reason she behaves in such a cat-like manner, is because she has to fight for everything in life, and has always done so.

Heilman (1973:24) indicates that her fight is not to discover herself or order herself but to escape from being a victim. She gives a rather elaborate and romanticized description as to how she was brought up in poverty, having to fight for everything. Then she remarks:

So that's why I'm like a cat on a hot tin roof! (Williams, 1962:25).

Maggie indicates a willingness to cling to life, to keep on fighting despite the fact that the dream of life is over.

My only point, the only point that I'm making, is life has got to be allowed to continue even after the dream of life is-all-over ... (Williams, 1962:27).

Here she shows an acceptance of reality and a willingness to do something about it. All she does is because of her belief that life must go on, and that she and Brick must make the best of what they have. Therefore like a cat she tenaciously hangs on to the shreds of the dream of life that is left, and now it seems to be money that is her driving force.

You've got to be old with money because to be old without it is just too awful, you've got to be one or the other, either young or with money (Williams, 1962:25).

She motivates herself to keep appearances up, to give the idea that everything between her and Brick is still all right, and to keep on doting on Big Daddy and Big Mamma to make sure of getting the greatest portion of the estate of the dying Big Daddy. Yet she achingly realizes that there is more to life than that.
Her love for Brick is also very, very strong, and it seems as if that had been her dream in life. His indifference and his clear inability to really reach emotional and spiritual intimacy with her, have largely robbed her of the dream of life, so she settles for second best, wealth and comfort.

Yet Margaret, or Maggie, realizes that all this lying, this poison and venom stemming from the hearts and minds of all the different characters, including herself, cause the bitterness, division and hatred in the lives of all the people. At times these flashes of insight are reached by her.

Poisons, poisons! venomous thoughts and words! In hearts and minds! - That's poisons! (Williams, 1962:84).

She also comments on the fact that understanding is what is needed. She herself fails to live up to it, however. She tries her level best to understand Brick and to love him, but his pathetic indifference causes her to fail. Therefore she pushes understanding into the background and chooses through aggressiveness and selfishness, to grab her chunk of the wealth of Big Daddy, and by this ensure a comfortable, although spiritually impoverished life.

Can she be blamed? Brick turns his back on her, her youth has slipped away, and although she can get other men, she loves Brick too much to leave him. On the other hand she has to think of the future, since he does not, so she must ensure their wealth. There is sympathy for Maggie, yet again there seems to be a failure to honestly assess her character.

She talks a lot during the play, describing her life and her love for Brick and her loss of it at quite great length. She constantly forces herself to live up to appearances, to try and impress Big Daddy and Big Mamma to ensure her future. Yet she fails to live up to her own idea of understanding and pure thoughts and words. She seems to succeed in the end, however, for she lures Brick into a trap to sleep with her and conceive a child, ensuring a descendant for Big Daddy and by that ensuring her own future.

The disturbing fact is that the play does not adequately seem to probe the character of Maggie and reflect and explore this ambivalence in her character. It is the same problem as with the character of Brick, although not quite as bad. She seems to come away from the play as the one to be sympathized with, but just as with Brick, there is that feeling left with the readers that they really
should share fully in the grief of Maggie and treat her and Brick with too much gentleness and too little honesty.

Maggie is far more honest towards herself and others than Brick. She admits that she believes that money will at least offer her some comfort and luxury since love and life have not done it. Therefore she tries her best to secure Big Daddy's fortune. There are some aspects of her character that are not fully and honestly enough exploited, however. What is not exploited is the fact that Maggie virtually forced Brick to marry her (he says so in scene two) and that she chose to select Brick as the person to shower all her love on, regardless of the fact that he has never shared the same idea with her.

For this we must have sympathy, but her inability to evaluate her relationship with Brick adequately, to channel her love in the right direction also reflects that she is just as responsible for the current situation as Brick is, and that the system or society is not the only culprit. Her failure to honestly assess her relationship with Brick, makes her just as much part of the system of mendacity as anyone else. The success of Maggie as a character is very important for this play, as Brick's character is simply too weak to "carry" the play. Williams believed that love is the only way to fight the lack of understanding and sensitivity, but felt that he had to make Maggie tough, using the resilient cat metaphor, in order to avoid sentimentality (Bigsby, 1984:87). Therefore Maggie keeps reminding us of the grace of the weak, beautiful people like Brick, yet this grace simply isn't on view (Hughes, 1976:503). The lack of this weakens Maggie's character and lessens the impact and effect that her character will have on the audience and reader. Through Maggie Williams desperately tries to convince and persuade the audience and reader to treat his "cavaliers", his heroes like Brick, with a touching delicacy and tenderness as Simon (1978:549) indicates. Unfortunately he expects too much delicacy and understanding and demand very little honesty and realism. Williams yet again falls into the trap of depending on too much romantic commonplace and not enough moral fibre (Gray, 1979:578).

Thus it is left to Maggie to sustain the play. She does feature better than Brick, she at least offers some resistance, some flashes of insight, compassion and will-power. Yet she is just as much a part of the system of mendacity. This in itself is not the main problem; but the fact that Williams fails to remain honest and objective, as far as possible, about her character causes her to lose her strength and impact as a character.
Her unbalanced love for Brick, which causes her to remain blind to his failures and incapabilities, and which elevates him to god-like stature, robs her character of honesty, propriety and leaves her as a character simply too weak to sustain the play. Williams wants the readers or audience to sympathize with Maggie, to fall just as much in love with her as he has, but he himself is the one who causes her alienation from the audience and readers. The fact remains that she still sees Brick as a "god-like" creature, whose indifference and the "simple expedient" of not loving enough to disturb his charming detachment, and his virile beauty, all crown him as a superior figure. Although he has now been weakened by alcohol, Maggie still sees him as the epitome of her life, she refuses to leave him and even dramatically announces that she has thought about sticking a bread knife straight in her heart if Brick doesn't make love to her anymore (Williams, 1962:9).

Maggie refuses to admit that Brick is a helpless, homosexual alcoholic, and the way in which she keeps on defending him, and keeps on gloating over his character, is just not convincing, but it is also not entirely in line with her character. The internal richness and complexity which characters like Blanche, Stella and Stanley display in a play like A Streetcar named Desire, are not to be found in the characters of Brick and Maggie, the main characters in this play. This means that Williams robs his play of credibility and he does not allow them to develop fully due to his unwillingness to treat them with the right mixture of sympathy and objectivity. The consequences of this for the play are far-reaching and the change in the quality of the play if Williams had done this, can only be imagined.

In A Streetcar Named Desire the same type of situation is dealt with, but the play seems to display more honesty and integrity towards its characters than Cat on a Hot Tin Roof does. The playwright maintains a greater distance and level of honesty towards his characters, which makes the play (Streetcar) far more powerful and persuasive.

Stella stays with Stanley despite his violent and self-centred character, but Stanley at least offers protection, strength and security, although it is mostly financially. Brick offers nothing, not love, sexual or emotional, not security or an acceptance of the situation and an attempt to deal with it as adequately as possible.
On top of that Maggie is a stronger character than Stella, the cat, remember, someone with beauty, intelligence and drive who hangs onto life despite the fact that the dream of life seems to be over for her. Her unbalanced, hopeless love and devotion towards Brick is not line with her character or honest enough. Big Mama shows the same type of devotion towards Big Daddy but her love is much more acceptable and understandable for Big Daddy gave her wealth, fidelity up till his sixty-fifth birthday at least and sexual love. She is also not as intelligent, sensitive and strong-minded as Maggie, yet the latter is satisfied, even excited, by far less. By doing this Maggie's character loses the great possibility it had to attain stature in the eyes of the audiences and critics as well as the possibility of internal richness in character development.

The question of moral choice again comes to mind. Maggie seems to choose the god of money, despite the limitations which Big Daddy so clearly points out, but also the god of Brick, whom she calls "god-like" and "superior". Her motivation for this is mysterious enough and the moral insight displayed by such a choice disastrous and disappointing.

Big Daddy is a towering and impressive if ultimately not fully-realized character. He is accurately introduced by Williams at the beginning of Act two, with a fierce, anxious look, moving carefully not to betray his weakness even, or especially to himself (Williams, 1962:31).

He is a self-made man, achieving all he has due to hard work and shrewd business skills. He speaks a lot about the past and his hard work and achievements. His imminent death has caused him to "re-evaluate" life and he has decided that he has to enjoy all the wealth he has achieved.

He is also disgusted with life, like Brick, and clearly states that he has lived a life of hypocrisy.

All the goddam hypocrisy that I lived with all these forty years that we've been livin' together! (Williams, 1962:40).

Later he bluntly states that he hates so many things in life, like Gooper, his eldest son, church and all the other social activities, but he keeps on doing it for the sake of appearance. In his long conversation with Brick he indicates a deep
love and concern for Brick, but in the end the conversation is like all the others they had. Brick sums it up:

> Communication is - awful hard between people an' - somehow between you and me, it just don't - (Williams, 1962:48).

This is due to the fact that Big Daddy, although loving Brick, loves himself too much. He has never been able to fully reach out to other people, not even his closest family, for he is too self-centred. His comments on what he will do when he fully recovers from his sick-bed clearly indicate this.

> Well, I got a few left in me, a few, and I'm going to pick me a good one to spend 'em on! I'm going to pick me a choice one, I don't care how much she costs, I'll smother her in - minks! Ha ha! I'll strip her naked and smother her in minks and choke her with diamonds! (Williams, 1962:51).

It all revolves around his own selfish desires and indulgences. He is a self-made millionaire who wants to enjoy the high-life at all costs and squeeze from life as much as he wants. On the other hand, he sees man as a human beast, as nothing other than someone trying to get as much as possible from life in any way possible.

> - the human animal is a beast that dies and if he has got money he buys and buys and buys and I think the reason he buys everything he can buy is that in the back of his mind he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life everlasting! (Williams, 1962:47).

Big Daddy seems to realize this fatal flaw in mankind, the hypocrisy that society is shrouded in, yet he is part and parcel of it himself. He fails to really plumb the depths of an honest, sacrificial relationship with anyone in his family. He hates his wife, loves one of his sons, but can't help him, hates the other son and thinks that life is all about greed and consumption. To a certain extent he displays good moral insight, being able to grasp that humans are to a large extent selfish beasts, but he lacks moral fibre completely and fails to live life according to sound moral judgement. Yet again, just like Maggie and Brick he is just as much part of the system of mendacity like anyone else. There are lots of things about Big Daddy that can be admired. He is a very hard worker, a go-getter, aggressive and mentally strong, yet he is just as big a liar as the rest of them, for he never allows for a real, honest confrontation with his character, thus displaying a lack of sensitivity and understanding, which Williams regards as so important.
Big Mama is most probably the most pathetic character in the whole play (maybe she is a type of an older Stella Kowalski). Her whole life centres around Big Daddy and she worships the ground he walks on, despite the fact that he ridicules and detests her. When he says as much her reaction is pathetic.

"Sweetheart? Sweetheart? Big Daddy? You didn't mean all those awful things you said to me? - I know you didn't. I know you didn't mean those things in your heart ..." (Williams, 1962:51).

His reaction?

"But she can't admit to herself that she makes me sick" (Williams, 1962:51).

Maybe she realizes it, or maybe she is too naïve, but even if she does realize Big Daddy's hate towards her, it is too painful to face. Therefore, in defence of his abuses and lack of love, she overacts, always trying to fool around, talks too much and also spends a lot of her energy and time on Brick, mainly because he is Big Daddy's favourite son.

All her judgements, opinions and ideas are based on what Big Daddy says. She does not like Gooper because he never liked Big Daddy. She adores Brick, because he is Big Daddy's favourite son and he has that same sense of indifference that Big Daddy has, only in another way. She blames Maggie for the failure of the marriage between her and Brick, because she doesn't sleep with Brick any more, an idea she most probably got from Big Daddy. So it goes on. Williams describes it very aptly:

"Is there? Something? Something that I? Don't - these know ... in these few words, this startled, very soft question, Big Mama reviews the history of forty-five years with Big Daddy, her great, almost embarrassingly true-hearted and simple-minded devotion to Big Daddy, ... Big Mama has a dignity at this moment: she almost stops being fat" (Williams, 1962:76).

This is the most apt description of the character of Big Mama. Is it viable? Honest? It is difficult to assess. Big Mama never realizes her true position in life, she naively believes that Big Daddy feels like she does, not as intensely as she does, but along the same lines. The truth never seems to reach her, but this causes her to be perceived as nothing more than a two-dimensional character (Kaufmann, 1976:504).
The problem with most of Williams's characters, certainly his two main characters Maggie and Brick, is that they lack honesty and integrity (not only in the sense that they as characters do not have these qualities, but in the sense that Williams did not bring these qualities to bear in the evocation of these characters), which obviously rob them of richness, scope and balance.

This means that the play fails to adequately reflect the human condition and its need for salvation, things which Williams was after in his plays. The impact of the play is lessened considerably by its lack in integrity, balance and symmetry. Some of the comments in Falk (1961:112-113) echo this idea very well:

I left it [the play] feeling that I had spent the evening with a group of corpses that had had very little to recommend them when they were alive. Villainy in the theater is a splendid, stimulating force, but this cold second-rateness seems to me the negation of drama.

Sex and death and money preoccupy Williams' characters; in the face of death, the sex is regulated to money ... What ruins it for me is my inability to care whether anyone in the company sinks or swims ... it is none of my business and I don't have to watch ... (Falk, 1961:112-113).

Ultimately the play lacks great stature because of its lack of integrity, which is mainly due to Williams' over-emphasis and grossly exaggerated usage of character and scene because of his infatuation with his characters. This leads to dishonesty and inadequate evaluation and development of the main characters. Bigsby (1984:93) refers to this as a case of a failure of moral judgement by Williams, something Arthur Miller also feels Williams is sometimes guilty of. Bigsby goes on to say that in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof it seems as if the moral logic of the play collides with the dramatic logic, and this is most clearly seen with Brick's character and his unmotivated refusal to face reality (Bigsby, 1984:93).

Falk (1961:111) suggests that this is so because Williams translates all experience of himself and his view of the world that reflects his own nausea.

His inability to keep a safe distance from his characters mars the play considerably. Williams is guilty of allowing the paranoia of his personal life to spill over into his dramatic work, thus lessening the value of his work. He once commented that his work is emotionally autobiographical, reflecting the emotional currents of his life (Anon, 1984:453), and in this play it is abundantly and sadly clear - it has an invidious effect on the play.
In the preface to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* Williams comments on the fact that creative work is so closely related to the personality of the writer. It is an assertion which is virtually a confession in that this play does indeed press closely to the centre of Williams's personal sensibility, too closely (Bigsby, 1984:85).

Minyard (1986:295) comments that Williams felt the need to make his characters great enough for tragedy, and his way of doing this was to endow them with a magnitude of feeling and greatness in passion. He believed that he could use his romantic insight and value to create this, but it seems that in the process he became too attached to them, and his romantic ideals strain and choke his characters.

Williams also often tends to concentrate on what is "theatrical" (but in a cheaper, commercial sense) rather than what is truthful, but this is because of his love for melodrama (Falk, 1961:174). It is indeed true in this play that in it Williams displays a limited perception of the human condition, which weakens this play (Simon, 1978:549).

Time is a crucially important aspect in this play - even though purely traditional conventions are used. The play consists of three acts with no lapse of time indicated.

This continuous action may help to indicate the rapid succession of events that help to construe the family crisis that Williams says in the play he wants to develop.

I'm trying to catch the true quality of experience in a group of people, that cloudy, flickering, evanescent-fiercely charged! - interplay of live human beings in the thundercloud of a common crisis (Williams, 1962:61).

This continuous and rapid occurrence of events, different actions and reactions that take place, gives the play an increased pace with the possible idea of heightening the tension, helping to expose the follies and flaws of the characters all the more.

The action of the play starts at dawn and continues until late the same evening when everyone retires. Other indications of time are few but some interesting
psychological time references also occur. The most important one most probably is contained in Brick's remark:

It just hasn't happened yet, Maggie.
What?
The click I get in my head when I've had enough of this stuff to make me peaceful ... (Williams, 1962:11).

This temporal indication has to do with Brick's inability to find peace and contentment in the present reality. He says that there are two ways to achieve this peace - that is either by death or alcohol, both conditions of unconsciousness or semi-consciousness. He reinforces the idea so prevalent in modern drama, and Williams especially uses this idea, that many events from the past have not been terminated and are still victimising the characters in the present (Bedford, 1988:12).

Brick's disgust with society stems mostly from his relationship with Skipper and how it turned out due to the mendacity of the society (according to him). The past keeps haunting him, the fact that whenever Skipper's name is mentioned he gets emotional firmly fixes this idea, and he only has alcohol to ease the memories.

Brick says again towards the end of the play that the click hasn't happened yet, and it never seems to - an indication that Brick is unable to find peace in this life filled with disgust, therefore he has given up the struggle and is set for the final degradation of decadence. For him time will bring no healing.

Maggie, on the other hand, is like a cat on a hot tin roof, trying to keep on as long as she can, and believes that although the dream of life is over, one must still go on. For her life is an endless stretch of waste, only occasionally interspersed by the comfort brought about by money and luxuries. For both of them time's importance has ceased.

For Big Daddy on the other hand, time is most probably the most valuable commodity. He gets a second chance, or so he thinks, and tries to impose a sense of the importance of life, and the fact that it is limited, to Brick. He wants as much of life as he can get, also because at the back of his mind there is the sense of knowing that as opposed to death, life is very short.
There are various references to the past, but unlike Streetcar, the references are mostly negative. Big Daddy speaks a lot about his life with Big Mama and his visit to Europe, which he sees as having been utterly worthless. He calls the past forty years of his life, years of "hypocrisy", and seems to want to change all that in the last few years he has left.

Brick retells the history about his friendship with Skipper, and although it seems as if this friendship has been the only worthwhile thing in his life according to him, the tone of these revelations is not very positive.

Maggie remembers her poverty-stricken youth, and the painful events surrounding the episode around Skipper. There doesn't seem to be a very strong indication of a better life in the past, nor any hope of one in the future.

Williams's characters are nearly all haunted by the past, entrapped by the present and set for a bleak future. For Brick there seems to be no future, Maggie's best hope for the future is the meagre consolation of possible riches, something that certainly does not bring about contentment, as Big Daddy and Big Mama so aptly illustrate. Big Daddy lives on borrowed time and Mae and Gooper's future is equally bleak. Time therefore seems to inflict severe punishment, emotionally and spiritually, on the characters - and very little comfort. As in most of Williams's plays events from the past have not yet been terminated and are still victimizing characters in the present (Bedford, 1988:12).

In A Streetcar Named Desire this can be seen with Blanche and in this play Brick seems to undergo the same type of experience. Whenever Skipper's name is mentioned Brick reacts emotionally, the only times he does so throughout the whole play. Williams clearly states this:

Brick's detachment is at last broken through (Williams, 1962:61).

This just happens when Skipper's name is mentioned, a clear indication that the past still haunts Brick and always will, therefore the future seems so bleak.

This play has the American South, Mississippi and the big plantation estates as milieu. The space is not very explicitly described, but the wealth of the family is clearly suggested. Williams also seems to try to imbue the play with an exotic hue in order to heighten the sense of romanticism, much like the glorious past of the South (Cohn, 1974:465). All the actions take place in the big house.
on the estate, while the outside space, like the lawn, is suggested at some places in the play.

At the start of the play Williams elaborately describes the most important space in the play, the bedroom which Brick and Maggie share. This is the same bedroom the original owners of the estate, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, a pair of bachelors suspected to be homosexuals, shared all their lives. Williams specifically states that the room must evoke some ghosts of the past of a relationship that involved a tenderness that was uncommon (Williams, 1962:xv).

Ironically this relationship seems to have been homosexual as well, strengthening the idea that Williams is in fact convinced that within homosexual relationships more understanding and tenderness seem to be enjoyed. This is a reflection of the idea of tenderness and sensitivity that are needed and must be bred to understand not only the characters in the play, but the society as a whole. This is of course one of Williams's main concerns in his playwriting as A Streetcar Named Desire so aptly indicates.

The lighting must offer grace and comfort to the characters and create a background which lends itself sympathetically to a play that deals with the extremities of emotion and the softness behind it - this was Williams' specific wish (Williams, 1962:xv). This is all done to help create the idea of tenderness and sensitivity which most of the characters seem to lack. The idea of these dramatic devices is to add to the impact of the play, add to the mood Williams wants to convey.

He gives attention to two other very important props present in the space of the bedroom: the double bed which forms a functional part of the set, according to Williams, and a tall set of the combination of a TV, hi-fi and liquor cabinet, Williams says this instrument offers a hiding place for the characters from which they do not have to face reality (Williams, 1962:xvi). The significance of these two props is great. The double bed seems to point towards sex as a key issue in the lives of the characters, mostly negatively, unfortunately. The set against the wall offers protection for the characters who all struggle to come to terms with truth. The way in which the director and the actors will utilize this piece of furniture to convey this idea will determine whether this prop achieves the goal that Williams aimed for.
Another remark by Williams about space that is noteworthy is that the set should be roofed by the sky: stars and moon suggested by traces of milky pallor, as if they were observed through a telescope lens out of focus (Williams, 1962:xvi). This haziness that must be created seems to point towards the ideal which is just like the sky out of reach of the characters. The tenderness that such a sky effects and brings to mind can be linked to the same tenderness that Williams feels that the light must create. Furthermore it enhances the idea of the unrealistic, the romantic, that Williams is so preoccupied with. For his characters he wishes this romance, this idealistic existence - it is just a pity that they are robbed of it and no one seems to equip them with dealing with reality. It seems as if Williams is searching for the truth but not as reality. Therefore he fails to be really honest about his characters, or face reality and the truth head on, and most of the characters do the same. He also seems set on clinging to the romantic, the ideal, another indication that he is not really searching for reality. By using space to evoke this romanticism Williams reflects a very good dramatic insight and ability. Sadly, in his pre-occupation with steering his characters in a very definite direction, one in which they do not develop naturally, he plunders the dramatic element of space of its effectiveness and impact, for he forces the issue.

Some spaces are always linked to certain characters: Brick is always found close to the liquor cabinet, which indicates his dependence on alcohol. His frequent appearances on the gallery indicate a disinterest in the proceedings and events that are taking place. In fact, Brick seems to go on the gallery just as soon as the conversation or action turns to the things that haunt him, when flashes of disturbance can occasionally be seen across his face. Brick also often sings the well-known song "Show me the way to go home", which seems to be an indication that he longs to be led home, spiritually not physically, he needs comfort and security.

Maggie is synonymous with the idea of a cat on a hot tin roof, a psychologically suggested space. This helps a lot in determining and suggesting her character, and helps to indicate how uncomfortable, unsure and unstable her position in life is, but she believes in hanging on to life desperately.

Negative spaces are also referred to, although not actually shown, like Europe and the church. The latter is represented by Reverend Tooker, who is constantly
speaking about how to improve the church building, but his references and Big Daddy's reference to the church clearly indicate the play's disgust with the hypocrisy and falseness of the church.

Again in this play we do not find such a rich and intricate suggestion and usage of space as is the case with Streetcar. The rich symbolic usage of space and psychological power displayws in Streetcar, is not found in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Falk (1961:181) indicates that Williams combines cliché and original speech through words that arouse emotional excitement and enhance understanding of character and emotion. This is certainly true. Williams thus handles speech in this play in a quite satisfactory way. He succeeds in conveying the impression of idiomatic language and combines cliché effectively (Falk, 1961:189). The diction and dialogue display a wide range of emotions and moods and help to delineate the characters more accurately and make them come to life.

There are some very powerful parts of dialogue, some parts that very accurately render the mood, fears and disappointments of the various characters. The conversation between Brick and Big Daddy at times reaches some very great heights and breaks new ground, especially before Brick relates his relationship with Skipper. This is the case most probably because the latter part lacks honesty and integrity. It must be stated again that when Williams manages to control his dramatic devices, and that is helped immensely by his avoidance of over-indulgence and lack of honesty, his plays certainly prove to be very good. If this is the not the case, however, the opposite is true.

Brick's dialogue and diction are clearly described very early on in the play:

   A tone of politely feigned interest, masking indifference, or worse, is characteristic of his speech (Williams, 1962:1).

The detachment and indifference are only broken whenever Skipper's name is mentioned, just another indication that his friendship with Skipper was more than just a deep, platonic friendship. The rest of Brick's speech is filled with dry, indifferent remarks. He also remarks that what he likes to hear the most is "solid quiet, perfect unbroken quiet". This is an indication of a withdrawal from life, reality and an unwillingness to face the facts. Brick is constantly waiting for the "click in his head" which gives him absolute peace and which is only
brought about by alcohol. His remark close to the end of the play is most probably one of the best indications of his frame of mind, his cowardice and lack of character:

I don't say anything. I guess there's nothing to say (Williams, 1962:91).

Jackson (1965:100) indicates that each character has his or her own sound, or style of diction and dialogue. Brick's is genuine music. This can be gathered from the fact that he is the one who speaks in the most mild-mannered, melodious tones and that he frequently sings peaceful songs, something none of the other characters actually do.

This strengthens the idea that Williams wants Brick to be sympathized with, he is to be seen as a genuine, tragic hero unable to save himself and must be pitied for it, while the opposite is true.

Maggie's style is that of a chanting priestess according to Jackson (1965:100). Williams does indicate that Maggie delivers her lines in the manner of a priest delivering a liturgical chant (Williams, 1962:1). This underlines her Southern heritage and must even suggest something of her "cattish" character. Most of Maggie's speech is characterized by a dramatic desperateness because of the fact that she realizes that her life is slipping away from her. Brick remarks on this:

Lately your voice always sounds like you'd been running upstairs to warn somebody that the house was on fire! (Williams, 1962:14).

This desperation and nervousness, like a cat on a hot tin roof, is a good indication of Maggie's state of mind. Unfortunately Williams' cheap sensationalism sometimes creeps into the dialogue, especially with the character of Maggie (Falk, 1961:184). This is due to the fact that he becomes too personally and intimately involved in the play and the character of Maggie.

Parts of Maggie's speech that are supposed to carry a very definite dramatic impact are blunted by the overdramatic and at times melodramatic and sentimental slant that her diction and dialogue adopt.

In the first act when she speaks to Brick about him and Skipper this can clearly be seen. The play certainly loses some of its momentum because of this. Williams tends to use rhetorical lines too often and it is seen especially with the
character of Maggie (Falk, 1961: 190). Maggie's diction can become very taxing to the audience as well because of the fact that she speaks so often, tries to explain everything and becomes too melodramatic and sentimental. With Blanche Williams manages to curb this, but he is unable to do this entirely successfully with Maggie.

The parts of Maggie's diction where she conveys her love and devotion for Brick add a lot to lessen the effectiveness of her diction. Describing Brick as "god-like", "superior" and the like invalidates her character and validity.

Big Daddy's diction is conveyed in harsh, loud tones. This is characteristic of many of Williams' characters and has a definite dramatic impact. Big Daddy manages to dominate the conversation while he is involved in it, yet through his dialogue and diction he is unable to truly relate to the people the closest to him. Brick complains that all the conversations between him and Big Daddy are in circles and they could never communicate.

Big Daddy has no qualms about speaking his mind, and together with some of his insulting, self-indulgent remarks there are some genuine fresh and original insights displayed by him, especially when he reflects on the condition of the human race - his own condition he fails to grasp however. Big Daddy does wreck his speech with too many four-letter vulgarities at times, and Falk (1961:111) is correct when stating that this profanity only seems to relieve Williams' own feelings rather than that of his characters. Coupled with his failure to gain stature as a great character because of Williams' lack of honesty and distance, means that Big Daddy is rendered as nothing more than a caricature.

Big Mama's diction style is described by Williams as huffing, puffing and breathless and she is linked to a charging rhino. She certainly likes speaking in bold, harsh and shrill tones - adding to the idea of utter chaos. She bellows, moans and cries at full pitch and this makes her very irritating and even embarrasses the characters and audience, which might have been Williams's idea.

The only time Big Mama can manage to get some sort of sympathy from the audience is when she pathetically tries to extract the real story about Big Daddy's sickness. This pathetic quality actually reveals her real spiritual state
because she never fully realizes that Big Daddy, whom she has built her life around, does not care for her, in fact despises her.

This play has an early point-of-attack, nearly the whole story is included and the important information that the audience and reader need to have is given fairly early and fairly clear.

Already in the first act Maggie sketches the whole situation concerning Big Daddy's fortune and impending death, the relationship between the different family members and the relationship between her and Brick.

The dramatic actions of the various characters are also very interesting and significant. Brick, the character who has given up the struggle in life, is constantly either drinking or preparing another drink. He believes that alcohol is the only way, except death, he can take to live with the disgust that he harbours about life and other people. A description in the didascalia indicates this very well.

Someone below calls up to him in a warm Negro voice, 'Hiya Mistuh Brick, how yuh feelin'?' Brick raises his liquor glass as if that answered the question (Williams, 1962:25).

To me this is an example of effective drama, of the playwright really using the dramatic elements to their fullest potential, unfortunately this happens too seldom in this play.

Brick has a crutch and cannot move about freely. This seems to be another indication of his spiritual state (Heilman, 1973:25) lacking freedom, independence and health. As he says, he is certainly a restless cripple, going through life lame and limping, having to lean on alcohol to help him through.

Brick is also constantly smiling and often singing. The smile especially is very significant, since it is mostly described as a wry, charming and detached smile (Williams, 1962:75), which strengthens the idea that Brick's detachment is supposed to be something charming, likeable and even admirable. His final remark is said with "charming sadness", just another indication of the blessing Williams puts to the dramatic action and development of the character of Brick (Falk, 1961:186).
Maggie's dramatic action, on the other hand, displays a grim determination, a sense of survival and urgency. She wants to save the situation and guarantee her and Brick's futures. She is one who is constantly talking, buying presents for Big Daddy, doing her best to make him feel loved and make him think Brick loves him. She tries to keep up appearances at all costs. She schemes and plans to get Brick to sleep with her and conceive a child, she indeed clings to life, or the part that is left for her.

In the conversation between Big Daddy and Brick there are also very good indications of dramatic action, or the lack of it, that portray certain ideas. Big Daddy forces Brick to tell him about his relationship with Skipper by taking the crutch from Brick so that he cannot move about. Yet their conversation again fails, as so often in the past, and Brick flees to the gallery as he always does when failing to cope with reality and life.

Big Daddy's dramatic action is, like his dialogue, forceful, but the constant realization of the pain in him, the cancer, inhibits some of his dramatic actions, just like his character has inhibited the relationship between him and the people around him.

Big Mama is likened to a charging rhino, which she indeed resembles, only without the spiritual strength of such a forceful animal. (Although one could also consider this description a rather cheap shot, and perhaps an unconsciously felt attempt by Williams to get at women.) The dramatic action throughout the play indicates a constant movement, noise and business, yet resulting in not that much. The idea of chaos and nervousness is well reflected, as well of lack of sensivity. The characters are constantly storming in or out of the room, slamming doors, shouting, running and crying. The only peaceful one is Brick. Maggie acts nervously and cattishly, Big Mama charges, huffs and puffs, Gooper and his family yell, cry and even hit one another:

For some reason she gives Goop a violent poke as she goes past him. He slaps at her hand without removing his eyes from his mother's face (Williams, 1962:77).

This violent interplay between two married people is a clear indication of the lack of tenderness, sensitivity and understanding between the characters. The same can be said in the relationship between Big Daddy and Big Mama and Brick and Maggie.
All this adds to give the idea of chaos, tension, confusion and lack of tenderness. The audience of the dramatic production will especially experience this and it will help them to understand and appreciate the play more. Unfortunately, like with most of the other features in the play, Williams tends to overdramatize and overplay his hand. Some of the dramatic actions of Maggie especially are too sentimental or melodramatic:

Margaret is alone, completely alone, and she feels it. She draws in her shoulders, raises her arms with fists clenched, shuts her eyes tight as a child about to be stabbed with a vaccination needle (Williams, 1962:20).

The didascalia remain perhaps the most powerful dramatic force of the play and Williams makes extensive use of all the different didascalic elements, maybe even too extensive. He introduces virtually all the characters through the didascalia, but he introduces them very precisely and clearly, leaving the audience with very little room to make up their own minds. This means the play doesn't leave the reader or audience with too many open spaces, and those that are left come virtually supplied with answers.

A good example of this is found at the dramatic point of the play when Brick's detachment is broken.

It may be the root of his collapse. Or maybe it is only a single manifestation of it, not even the most important. The bird that I hope to catch in this play is not the solution to one man's psychological problem. I'm trying to catch the true quality of experience in a group of people, that cloudy, flickering, evanescent - fiercely charged! - interplay of live human beings in the thundercloud of common crisis (Williams, 1962:61).

Throughout the play the didascalia furnish similar types of information, suggestions and reflections. The didascalia clearly supply the reader and audience with information how to read and understand the characters.

Big Daddy, who must have had something Brick has, who made himself loved so much by the 'simple expedient' of not loving enough to disturb his charming detachment (Williams, 1962:76).

Some information contained in the didascalia that is very important to the play is given more subtly:
a big double bed which staging should make a functional part of the set as often as suitable (Williams, 1962:xv).

This reference to the double bed is an indication of the importance of sex the play. Big Mama believes it is there where marriage is made or marred, that is why she thinks Maggie is responsible for the failure of the marriage between her and Brick. Maggie sees sex as very important, so much so that some critics have quoted her as the "oversexed" wife of Brick, and Big Daddy has no qualms about the importance he attaches to sex. The significance of the double bed then becomes all the more obvious.

The question remains: is it necessary, or preferable, that Williams should use the didascalia so often and intensely in his plays to guide (or coerce) the readers or audience to a fairly closed and set analysis of the play? It is difficult to say, but the idea is that Williams seems to be overdoing it somewhat, especially since in this play he has to use the didascalia at times to consciously guide the reader and audience to where he wants them to go, which is not necessarily the direction that the natural flow of the plot and character development want to take them. This is again due to his lack of honesty and integrity - and it mars the play significantly.

Williams uses the didascalia also to help indicate important dramatic detail through references to time and space. These have already been named, but Williams also adds music and colour to this. In the opening act the didascalia clearly speaks about the effect that light should have on the dramatic process, bringing also to mind the grace and comfort of light, the reassurance it gives, on a late and fair afternoon in summer, the way no matter what, even dread of death, is gently touched and soothed by it (Williams, 1962:xv).

Another example of the usage of colour and light is found in the same piece of didascalia, the set should be roofed by the sky; stars and moon suggested by traces of milky pallor, as if they were observed through a telescope lens out of focus (Williams, 1962:xvi).

Music is also used throughout the play but not as effectively as in A Streetcar Named Desire. When Maggie and Brick argue early on in the play, the children are heard singing "My Wild Irish Rose", and this can be a reflection on Maggie.
Brick is the character in the play who sings most often - a "peaceful song", an indication of the "peacefulness" he has reached after giving up hope. Near the end of the play Brick is clearly heard singing "Show me the way to go home", which can be an indication from Williams' side that Brick honestly seeks a home, not a physical one but a spiritual one, for he says this amidst the intense rivalry, malice and greed displayed by all the characters. How honest this search is remains to be seen.

The didascalia sometimes very cleverly reinforce the ideas displayed by the play and the characters. When Brick tells Big Daddy the truth about the malignant cancer in Big Daddy's body, after Big Daddy has told him the truth about his homosexual relationship with Skipper, the didascalia support this idea of lack of sensitivity and understanding.

Whoever has answered the hall phone let out a high, shrill laugh; the voice becomes audible saying: 'no, no, you got it all wrong! Upside down! Are you crazy?' (Williams, 1962:68).

This is reinforcement by the didascalia of the idea displayed in the play that this lack of sensitivity both by Brick and Big Daddy, but especially Brick, is all wrong, upside down, actually crazy.

The same idea is reinforced just a few lines later when Big Daddy realizes that everyone has been lying to him about the cancer. Just then one of the children runs in and grabs a fistful of crackers screaming: bang, bang, bang! This strengthens the idea that this mendacity and the lack of tenderness kill people spiritually.

The didascalia are also used to indicate the clothing, jewellery and other important features of the characters. This is done with Big Mama very effectively.

The large, irregular patterns, like the markings of some massive animal, the lustre of her diamonds and many pearls, the brilliants set in the silver frames of her glasses (Williams, 1962:33).

Her Big Mama's spiritual poverty, as opposed to her financial riches and her overdramatized lifestyle, is echoed by the didascalia.
Williams certainly uses the didascalia often and intensively, sometimes to great effect, other times with less success. The main reason for this is his inability to trust his readers to make their own judgements and conclusions, fanned by dishonesty concerning his characters because of the fact that he loves them too much to remain honest about them.

The critic should again take into consideration from which "world" this play stems. Typically of Williams it is the South and again he is concerned about the lack of sensitivity and understanding that most of the characters display. Brick is, according to Williams, the greatest victim of this, with Maggie next and Big Mama a very distant third. Unfortunately Williams fails to be objective and honest about them as well and he is guilty of placing his thumb firmly in the scale. Obviously this impairs the aesthetic merit of the play since it has the effect that justice is not being done to many of the dramatic elements. When Williams lapses into sentimentality and falls in love with his characters he steers the whole play in the direction he wishes, which in this play is not the natural direction into which the play develops. The space, dialogue and diction, character development, or lack of it, didascalia and everything else suffer because of this. There are some definite glimpses of Williams's very effective dramatic skills and abilities, but this is overshadowed by the glaring shortcomings due to his lack of control.

Williams's play *Cat on a hot tin roof* fails mainly due its lack of moral judgement. Ganz (1976:123) echoes this when he says that the play fails because Williams' moral vision becomes blurred. This is so because of Williams's inability to remain honest and truthful about his characters. Ganz (1976:130) says there is a tentativeness from Williams' side to condemn certain aspects of the character of Brick, mainly his homosexuality. He seems to deliberately guide the audience to a certain, closed reading of the play, this while the play seems to want to develop in a different direction. This glaring dichotomy is evident when dealing with the play, and the characters of Brick and Maggie display this most tellingly.

Williams does display some fine playwriting in this drama and at times succeeds in really allowing the play to have its splendid moments. Unfortunately his basic inability to evaluate his characters honestly and treat them with the right amount of critical sympathy undermines the play and causes
it to fail eventually. Williams's tendency to overdramatize and sentimentalize, due to his inability to remain honest, takes its toll on the play and discredits it.
CHAPTER 6

The Night of the Iguana

This play is the most recent of the three plays under discussion. It explores many of the ideas and thoughts that are featured in the other two plays. Of the three plays this one speaks most directly about God.

The world of this play is not the decadent South of the previous two plays, but all the main characters hail from America, and more specifically the South. Williams places his characters, fallen heroes and heroines in his eyes, in a different setting but with the same problems, the same conflicts and inner battles. The actual world behind the play, the intellectual and cultural world that helps to shape and form this play, is the same as in the other plays by Williams. In this play this world just seems to be all the more neurotic, sentimental and melodramatic. Williams's obsession with understanding, sensitivity and romanticism becomes so strong that it is unchecked in this play and the consequences of this are evident.

The main character Shannon is the best example of this. He is undoubtedly the central character, a defrocked priest who is now a tour leader. When Williams introduces him he does not give such an elaborate delineation of him as he does with Brick and especially Stanley. Williams does give us a good enough indication as to the nature of Shannon's character, however.

He is panting, sweating and wild-eyed. About thirty-five, Shannon, is 'black Irish'. His nervous state is terribly apparent; he is a young man who has cracked up before and is going to crack up again - perhaps repeatedly (Williams, 1961:8).

This wild-eyed, sweating image of Shannon is the one that remains intact almost throughout the play. It is clear that he is an unstable character searching for peace and meaning. Apart from repeatedly saying this, his actions and personal appearance convey the same idea.

Shannon has a "spook", as he calls it, that has moved in with him and it tortures him, emotionally and mentally, and causes him to crack up. The Costa Verde, the hotel where the play is set, is the only place where he can come and in some or other way deal with this spook, never discarding it,
just allowing his nervous state to come to a full-blown climax, and then he can carry on - that is, until the next visit to the Costa Verde.

Shannon had been a priest for a very short time, and was then defrocked because of his atheistic sermons and immoral sexual deeds with young women of his congregation. He still feels, however, that he belongs in the church and desperately wants to go back there.

I've just been hanging on till I could get in this hammock on this verandah over the rain-forest and the still-water beach; that's all that can pull me through this last tour in a condition to go back to my ... original ... vocation (Williams, 1961:20).

Shannon makes it clear that he is at "the end of his rope" and that he needs human goodness and understanding, and thinks he will be able to make a worthwhile and much-needed contribution to the church. Despite his brief and negative experience as a priest he feels that he has the right idea and belief about God and that the people need to hear this. On the other hand, he is unable to cope with reality himself, since he repeatedly "cracks up" and carries with him an immense guilt about his distant and recent past.

Maxine, the widow who has known him for years and who wants him to stay on with her, explains his present state in terms of a conversation she overheard between Shannon and her late husband, Fred. Shannon's mother caught him amusing himself, with himself, and she beat him on his backside saying that it made God angry and that He would punish Shannon even more if she didn't do it.

You said you loved God and Mama so you quit it to please them, but it was your secret pleasure and you harbored secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls (Williams, 1961:68).

The play centres around this gradual "going to pieces" of Shannon, as he puts it. He admits that he lives on a realistic as well as a fantastic level and that he is unable to cope with this "spook". Therefore he is constantly pacing and running about, swearing and uttering dramatic pieces of dialogue describing his frail mental state. This leads him to sleep with Charlotte, a young girl in his touring party, and makes him unable to adequately lead the tour party. Consequently he loses his job with Blake.
Tours, the latest in a fairly long line of employment, and is left with virtually nothing.

Maxine offers him Fred's position, both physically and mentally, but he refuses it. He comments that he does not want to rot, which is a clear indication that he feels he can still enjoy a higher and more fulfilling way of life. The idea of going back to the church is still uppermost in his mind and he stubbornly believes in it.

Williams seems to feel that Shannon's central problem, the reason why he is going to pieces, is the lack of human understanding and sensitivity. Early on in the play when Maxine asks him why he sleeps with young women, his answer is illuminating.

People need human contact, Maxine honey (Williams, 1961:17).

Hannah Jelkes seems to come to the rescue, however. She is the one who enables Shannon to "free" himself and beat the spook, as she has had to do it in her own life as well. She is the one who identifies Shannon's biggest need:

The oldest one in the world - the need to believe in something or in someone - almost anyone - almost anything ... something (Williams, 1961:86).

The something that he must believe in she offers just a few lines later after she has told him that she has found the "something". He asks if it is "something" (interestingly not "someone", the idea of God as a concept, thing is stressed) like God. Her answer is no but she offers the real solution:

Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it's just for one night only (Williams, 1961:86).

She follows it up by stating:

A little understanding exchanged between them, a wanting to help each other through nights like this (Williams, 1961:87).
Shannon's state has been brought about by a lack of human understanding and sensitivity, something Maggie and Stella call for in the other two plays that have been dealt with.

Shannon feels that God is unable or unwilling to give such understanding to people, so other people must do it. His idea of God clearly illustrates this.

It is going to storm tonight - a terrific electric storm. Then you will see the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon's conception of God Almighty paying a visit to the world He created. I want to go back to the church and preach the gospel of God as Lightning and Thunder ... (Williams, 1961:48).

This idea is strengthened by the introduction of the iguana. The animal is caught and tied up and Shannon links it (in somewhat tortuous symbolic fashion) to the characters of the play.

See? The iguana? At the end of its rope? Trying to go on past the end of his goddam rope? Like you! Like me! (Williams, 1961:99).

This same iguana is later cut loose by Shannon, freed, like he needs to be freed, but by him because God is unable or unwilling to do so.

Now Shannon is going to go down there with this machete and cut the damn lizard loose so it can run back to its bushes because God won't do it and we are going to play God here (Williams, 1961:102).

Hannah, who directly and indirectly frees Shannon, mentally and emotionally, also clearly states that she doesn't believe in God as the ultimate saviour but in human understanding and sensitivity as the saviour of people. In this she is perhaps too explicitly Williams' mouthpiece.

During the latter part of the second act when the storm, Shannon's idea of God, is raging, he stands on the verandah stretching his hands out in the rain as if asking or begging for God to free him. However, ironically, Hannah is the one who does it in the end, not God.

Ironically Shannon accuses the congregation, and most people, that they image God as a "senile delinquent", this while he is doing much the same, seeing God as someone big, wrathful, powerful but unwilling to save and free people, not much different from a senile delinquent.
Williams clearly seems to sympathize with and encourage the ideas of God displayed by Hannah and Shannon. The incident with the iguana is clear evidence of this. Just when Shannon frees the iguana, Nonno, Hannah's grandfather, manages to complete the poem which he has been struggling to do for nearly twenty years. This means that he has found peace and he therefore dies, which enables Hannah to be "freed" from trotting the world with him, caring for him and virtually begging people to buy her works of art and thus to pay their way.

So Shannon's "act of mercy" as he puts it, frees himself and Hannah. It enables Shannon to accept his situation, shrug off the "spook", and accept Maxine's offer to stay - but this time willingly. It also enables Hannah to be "freed" from the burden of looking after her grandfather. This all is brought about by human understanding and help - not initiated by God but by other humans.

A short, though vitally important interaction between Shannon and Maxine at the end of the play, underlines this idea. Shannon says he isn't able to make it alone back up the hill, but Maxine assures him she will help him.

I can make it down the hill, but not back up. I'll get you back up the hill (Williams, 1961:105).

Human understanding, building gates and bridges to help one another get through life seems to be the answer. It seems to the echo of the Doctor's words in The Rose Tattoo. The Doctor says that people find God in each other, and when they lose each other they lose God and they're lost (Heilman, 1973:139).

Bigsby (1984:18) says that Northrop Frye once said that romance in it most naive form is an endless form in which a central character, who never changes or develops, goes through one adventure after the other until the author collapses. He goes on to say that it is very tempting to use this description to summarise the work and life of Tennessee Williams. In most of his plays a single, fragile, vulnerable and defeated character wrestles with the fact of his, or her, defeat. At its best this neurosis has been turned into desperate courage and a kind of grace, at its worst, self-pity and melodrama (Bigsby,1984:18). Unfortunately in this play the latter happens
which obviously upsets the balance of the play and robs it of an inner richness and complexity. Shannon's melodramatic hysteries burdens the play rather than strengthening it.

Corrigan (1987:34) remarks that most of Williams's characters are lonely people seeking for the dream, the illusion of the past, and people in desperate need for human contact. Shannon certainly fits the bill. Like most of Williams's protagonists Shannon is ill-equipped to deal with reality. His own inner tensions are set to destroy him (Bigsby, 1984:13). He is running away from partly the demand to knuckle down and do a decent day's work and join in the glorious enterprise of getting rich (Bigsby, 1984:33).

Shannon is reaching out for a mythological or simply illusory world in which he will be able to evade not merely the brutal representatives of power but also the more destructive world of causality and mortality. In a very fundamental sense he is running away from himself and the passage of time (Bigsby, 1984:33).

Williams himself was like this. As he said: "My place in society ... has been in Bohemia. I love to visit the other side now and then, but on my social passport Bohemia is indelibly stamped, without regret on my part" (Bigsby, 1984:33).

This longing for a better world which the character creates through an illusory world is certainly understandable. Williams, however, is preoccupied with this and it clouds his judgement, leading him inexorably to the old folly of the writer putting his thumb in the scale and thus being guilty of dishonesty and lack of purity.

With Blanche we have this same problem, but the character of Blanche is treated with the right amount of sympathy and judgement. With Shannon Williams overindulges and fails to control or curb the emotions and actions of his character which leads to Shannon becoming a ranting, melodramatic and very taxing character. This makes him lose credibility with the audience and the readers.
Although Hannah isn't the central character in the play she is certainly the most important. She is the one who brings about deliverance and salvation for Shannon. She brings peace and tranquillity to Costa Verde, and everyone benefits from her saint-like endeavours. When Williams introduces her he clearly suggests her "saint-like" quality:

Hannah is remarkable-looking - ethereal, almost ghostly. She suggests a Gothic cathedral image of a medieval saint, but animated. She could be thirty, she could be forty: she is totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking - almost timeless (Williams, 1961:16).

Note the characteristics Williams furnishes her with: saint-like, ethereal-like and timeless, all characteristics belonging to a transcendental, heavenly figure. This idea of Hannah being a saint is strengthened throughout the play (once again coercively?). When Shannon sees Hannah for the first time, Williams comments that he looks at her "dazed[ly]".

In the act where Shannon "goes to pieces" and Hannah eventually delivers him by allowing him to deliver himself, Williams describes her as:

she looks, again, like a medieval sculpture of a saint (Williams, 1961:76).

Her spiritual and emotional superiority to a character like Maxine is clearly stated. During an exchange between her and Maxine about Shannon, Williams states:

She is dominating Maxine in this exchange (Williams, 1961:61).

This is the pattern of the play. She also had a "spook", she tells Shannon, but she was strong enough to beat it, to accept whatever situation she could improve. She calls this her philosophy in life and sticks to it. Therefore she endures Nonno with his delirious acts and speeches, she cares for him, looking after him and ensuring that his heart's desires are met as far as possible. She accepts her life as a spinster, deprived of sharing her life with anyone else, physically as well as spiritually.

She is the one who is able to accept every situation and use it to her own benefit. Yet she never seems selfish or insensitive. Indeed, she is the character who displays the understanding and sensitivity of all the characters, yet she remains truthful and realistic. It is therefore that she is
able to lead Shannon to real insight so that he can "free" himself. In the process she is also "freed" and Maxine is made happy. Her grandfather is able to finally go to rest and everyone is happy. She comments that Shannon needs to lead his congregation, if he ever goes back, to the still waters of life because that is what people need so badly. In the play she manages to do this and therefore her saintly status is reinforced.

She remains composed throughout Shannon's hysterical outburst and "going to pieces". She realizes what he needs and sees to it that he receives it. In her exchanges with Shannon she reveals amazing insight, understanding and sensitivity. The best part is that she is able to use this to really help other people, unselfishly. When Shannon offers that they travel together she doesn't accept his offer, not because it is inconvenient but because she seems to feel that the best for him will be to accept Maxine's offer - she is thus totally unselfish and displays immense intuitive wisdom - or so Williams would fondly have us believe.

She never acts nervously, violently or unbalancedly. On the contrary, her actions are marked by maturity, insight and composure. Although the heat, symbolized by the tropical heat and humidity, gets to her physically, it never seems to affect her emotionally and spiritually. The burden of caring for Nonno is apparent but she handles it with grace and determination, unlike Shannon or Maxine. She makes the most of her life and her arrival at Costa Verde ensures that salvation and deliverance come to the place.

Her tranquility comes from a beauty of soul and an ability to lead so many beside still waters, holding fast to the eternal present (Boxill, 1987:142). All the other characters seem to be in contrast with her, from the wild-eyed Shannon to the cartoon-like Germans who seem to be merely grotesque caricatures.

Any director of this play would carefully have to consider exactly how this character of Hannah will appear - having to be saint-like and timeless. This is the very clear wish of Williams.

Throughout the play Williams enforces these ideas. Hannah's physical actions, her words, the saint-like image that she is dealt with, all give the idea that she is the ultimate saviour and deliverer of the play. This
saintliness of Hannah, her super-naturalness, is stressed to such an extent that the idea is irresistible that Hannah is another example of Williams' failure to remain objective. His failure to control his characters, or own personal emotions, means that righteousness, each element attaining to its fullest potential, is not achieved.

When Maxine is introduced Williams immediately gives us an idea as to her nature.

She is a stout, swarthy woman in her middle forties - affable and rapaciously lusty (Williams, 1961:7).

Later in the play there is a scene where Maxine divides her attention between the tall, lean figure of Shannon and the wriggling bodies of the Mexican boys lying on their stomachs half under the verandah, and Williams comments:

[as] if she were mentally comparing two opposite attractions to her simple, sensual nature (Williams, 1961:50).

This sums up Maxine's nature fairly accurately. She wants Shannon to stay with her, regardless of the fact that he doesn't want to stay there. She feels she can offer him accommodation, companionship and sex, and he can return the favour.

When her husband still lived she already had casual Mexican lovers because she and her husband didn't have sex for such a long time. Maxine is satisfied to settle for less than perfect, far less, but has accepted this fact and wants Shannon to do the same. Yet she is not able to make him realize this. Hannah is the one who finally does it.

The way in which she and Maxine respectively handle Shannon clearly illustrates the difference between them. This is the reason why Shannon calls Hannah a lady and Maxine a "bitch". Maxine is not able to compete with Hannah since she evaluates everything from within her simple, sensual nature while Hannah reflects a better understanding and insight into human nature. Maxine, like everyone else, also displays a need for respect, companionship and human understanding, but unlike Shannon she has settled for the "realistic level", accepting that second or third-best is also in order - if that is clearly all that one is going to get.
Therefore she has Mexican lovers since her husband didn't give her sex and Shannon also doesn't want to and she needs it. To Maxine running her hotel and having Shannon (for she needs human contact) will quite simply be enough.

The setting of the play in an exotic climate is an important contributory factor. It is in Mexico, on the edge of a jungle amidst hot, humid conditions. In the introductory didascalia Williams indicates this,

while at the sides we see the foliage of the encroaching jungle (Williams, 1961:6).

The idea of the encroaching jungle, the damp, misty rain forest and the humidity that brings with it the sweat and heat are stressed throughout the play. These factors set the scene for the pressure, anxiety and decay that are at work in this play.

All the characters are affected by the heat and humidity, Shannon most of all. When he arrives he is sweating, panting, nervous and wild-eyed. He has to struggle up the hill through the foliage to reach the verandah, and at the end of the play he clearly states that he will make it downhill but not up again, a clear indication of his need of human understanding and help reflected through the space of the play as well.

When Shannon reflects on his "gradual decay and going to pieces", as he puts it, he comments that all his travels have taken him through tropical countries.

It has always been tropical countries I took ladies through. Does that, does that -huh? - signify something, I wonder? Maybe. Fast decay is a thing of hot climates, steamy, hot, wet climates, and I run back to them like a ... (Williams, 1961:101).

This process of decay, or cracking up of Shannon, as Williams also puts it, is echoed by the space in which the play takes place. Despite this Shannon feels that on the verandah in the hammock in this very same hot, steamy climate he can find peace, therefore he always returns.

I've just been hanging on till I could get in this hammock on this verandah over the rain-forest and the still-water beach; that's all that
His search for peace, contentment and serenity is then also ended on the very same verandah in the very same hammock, when Hannah leads him to an acceptance of his situation and thus beating the "spook". Shannon thought that he would find this peace in the church, therefore he wants to return as minister, but Hannah makes him realize that he is wrong. At the beginning of Act Three, after speaking to Hannah, Shannon feverishly writes a letter to the Bishop asking him permission to return to the church. He has realized he needed peace, she made him realize, but at that stage he still thinks he'll find it in the church. Later when he is tied up in the hammock, thus forced, and not willingly being there, he realizes that he must accept his situation and also Maxine's offer. This brings the peace he had longed for. Throughout the play Shannon is associated with the hammock and it is no wonder that it is the space where he eventually finds his peace.

The Costa Verde Hotel is described as a rusted, dilapidated hotel, a reflection of the lives of the characters. It is far from perfect, in fact far from the best, but in the end it is the best that Shannon can do. He has to accept it and he does, eventually. Maxine's comment, at the end of the play, on how she plans to upgrade the hotel in the next ten years, offers a glimmer of hope that Shannon's life will, like the hotel, also experience better times in the future.

An important space that is linked to Hannah, and which becomes significant in the play, is the House of the Dying in Shanghai. There, Hannah narrates, she experienced peace and radiance. She goes on to say that looking into those dying people's eyes is the most beautiful thing that she has ever seen. With this she seems to suggest that these people accept their situation, they accept the little comforts still available to them, like dying peacefully and with your family around you, and this makes it so beautiful.

This peace and contentment she found there helped her to beat the "spook" she had in her life, and in the end it is the same for Shannon, and this makes this space so important. Again it is Hannah's insight that leads Shannon to this view.
Lastly Hannah also finds lasting peace when her grandfather dies, and she is able to have a normal life again. Hannah as the saint-like figure in this play is now able to quit rushing around the world accompanying and caring for her grandfather, irrespective of her own needs and wishes. Like a saint she has crossed the world helping and saving others, her grandfather, Shannon, Maxine and even the Australian salesman, and now she can finally rest.

The action in this play takes place during one night. The first two acts take place before the storm and the last one after it. This is an indication that the storm plays a significant symbolic role in the play. The peace and tranquillity after the storm seem to reflect the same peace and tranquillity that the characters find.

The time of year seems to be in summer with its hot, humid atmosphere. In the introductory didascalia Williams also states that the action of the play takes place during 1940 when the Puerto Barrios, the region where the play takes place, was still undeveloped and not as glamorous as it later became, which adds to the sense of primitivity and rottenness that is evident in the play.

The moment Hannah arrives at the hotel there seems to be a change, although subtle, in Shannon. Maxine comments on this later on in the play, for

> there sure was a vibration between you and Shannon the moment you got here (Williams, 1961:62).

She is the one who brings about the change in the play with her arrival. From that point on there is a steady build-up, first to Shannon's crack-up and then his eventual deliverance. For Shannon seeks to run away from himself and the relentless passage of time (Bigsby, 1984:33), like most of Williams' characters - time's ruthless onslaught must be avoided, but Shannon cannot to this, not until Hannah "frees" him from it. Throughout this Hannah offers her quiet assistance, her steady supply of insight and assistance. She is the one who waits for the correct time to untie Shannon, physically and spiritually. When he asks her to do this beforehand she refuses, well knowing he must first beat his "spook".
I'd like to untie you, but let me wait till you've passed through your present disturbance. You're still indulging yourself in... your Passion play performance (Williams, 1961:81).

Just a few lines later Shannon again urges her to untie him but she answers gently that it will be soon. She goes on to explain to Shannon that the only way to beat the "spook" is by enduring until it is finally beat.

Just by, just by... enduring. Endurance is something that spooks and blue devils respect (Williams, 1961:87).

This reflects Hannah's philosophy, to accept and endure any situation you cannot improve. She must also endure her grandfather's weak state, his deliriousness. Both for her and Shannon this specific "night of the iguana" brings deliverance.

The moment Shannon unties himself, realizing human understanding and help is what is needed, he frees the iguana and with this frees himself, frees Hannah (for Nonno can finish his poem and die in peace), and even frees Maxine. So this night, in which the iguana is freed, becomes a very important temporal aspect, for it is the night that offers deliverance, peace and serenity.

For this to happen there first had to be a steady build-up of the hot, humid conditions leading to a storm and after the storm the peace. For the characters these same things had to happen, in that order, but in a psychological and spiritual way. Hannah echoes this idea at the end of the play when Nonno finishes his poem.

Yes, finally finished... Yes, we waited so long (Williams, 1961:103).

For them all the peace seem to elude them so long, now with the realization that displaying human understanding and sensitivity, their salvation and deliverance have finally come.

This play is marked by constant physical effort and exhaustion. At the beginning of the play Shannon struggles up the hill to reach the hotel, sweating and exhausted. This seem to be his physical state for most of the play. Hannah has to push her grandfather all the way up the hill in his wheelchair. Then she constantly has to scurry around and try and persuade...
people to buy her paintings, and in between she has to ensure Nonno's, her grandfather, safety when he falls out of his wheelchair or has a serious ailment.

Shannon acts nervously and dramatically for most of the play. He storms about the verandah, shouting and going through various dramatic antics.

These antics (Williams calls it hysterics) tend to be overdone somewhat, another example of Williams' love for the sentimental. Shannon has intense conflicts with his tour party, Charlotte, the young girl whom he slept with and even wrestles with Jake Lotta, the person whom his company sent to discharge him and take control of his tour party.

Then he goes hysterical and has to be forcefully tied up in the hammock. All these dramatic actions help to create the idea of unrest, disorder and a lack of peace. The fact that it takes place amidst the heat, humidity and energy-sapping temperature and atmosphere of the jungle, also helps to reinforce the idea of exhaustion, decay and regression.

There are numerous important dramatic actions in the play that bear some significance. The storm, that Shannon likens to God, is a very important dramatic action that takes place. Williams compares the storm to a white bird.

The storm, with its white convulsions of light, is like a giant white birds attacking the hilltop of Costa Verde (Williams, 1961:65).

This reinforces the idea of God as a god of thunder, lightning and thus punishment. During this storm Shannon stands on the edge of the verandah and stretches his hands out into the rain,

- stretches them out through the rain's silver sheet as if he were reaching for something outside and beyond himself (Williams, 1961:65).

This is a clear reference to Shannon's search for God, and since he believes God is in and like the storm he reaches out for Him. The storm then extinguishes the power of the hotel, another very significant dramatic action.
The idea of God as a vengeful, spiteful and unsympathetic being is never rectified in the play. Bigsby (1984:17) comments that Williams's greatest fear was of confinement, and maybe this helps to explain a great deal about his ideas of God. Be it as it may, in The Night of the Iguana God is not dealt with fittingly. If it is taken into account that Combrink (1989:7) says that ultimately the work of art has to be judged within the framework of the Christian faith, then the consequences of the effect of beliefs like these can only be imagined.

Corrigan (1978:546) contests the notion that Shannon displays a truly Christian outlook. Even though, like Christ, he goes through a cycle of sins-suffering-atonement-redemption, the parallel is drawn too uneasily and facilely. Shannon always wanted atonement, and he finally receives it, ironically and troublingly, from Hannah. This sounds very good, but the only hitch is that this atonement and redemption is not received from Christ, but from Hannah, and thus nullifies the redemptive and reconciliatory work of Christ.

She seems to reach out to Shannon, unlike God, to whom Shannon must reach out and he doesn't seem to get very much assistance from Him. When the employee from Blake Tours comes to discharge Shannon, Hannah's dramatic actions are significant, for

the other hand touches the netting at the cubicle door as if she were checking an impulse to rush to Shannon's defence (Williams, 1961:74).

Hannah is the one who sits by Shannon when he is tied up in the hammock. She consoles him, yet also manages subtly to direct his attention to his real problems and helps him beat them. Maxine, on the other hand, just calls the doctor who must give Shannon an injection to subdue him. She does not have the ability to console him, to deliver him. This is also seen in a scene just before the storm when Maxine and Shannon disagree and start thrusting the ice cart viciously at each other. Hannah obviously is never seen doing anything violent or insensitive.

Shannon begs Hannah to untie him, but she refuses since she knows he hasn't beaten the "spook" yet. She chooses to make him some sedative tea, tells him to relax and gently succeeds in leading him to deliverance.
Despite the fact that she is gentle the idea is never created that she is vapid or allows Shannon to dominate her. The opposite is true, for she is the strong character of the play. Shannon manages to untie himself, physically, a reflection of his deliverance spiritually as well because of the help and guidance of Hannah.

These actions, together with the untying of the iguana, seem to be the most important dramatic actions of the play.

The whole play centres around the idea of being tied up, caught in situations that are not wished for or called for, similar to the iguana. Deliverance and salvation lie in accepting the situation and enduring and in that way managing. This can only be done with the help of other humans, sharing their understanding, help and insight. Thus when Shannon cuts the iguana loose he displays this type of behaviour, an act of grace as he calls it, that Hannah has showed towards him by helping him to untie himself, spiritually and physically. Therefore the moment Shannon does this, Nonno is able to finish his poem and die peacefully, Hannah is freed from the growing burden of having to care for herself and her grandfather, and Shannon can enjoy his own salvation. This dramatic action thus does signify the deliverance and salvation of almost all the characters, certainly all the main characters.

This play displays some typical characteristics of Williams' playwriting. There are some very powerful, effective parts of dialogue. Some parts of the dialogue really succeed in capturing the essence of the character or the dramatic moment. There are parts where Williams manages to truly effectively use the dialogue and diction. Shannon's accusations about the idea that many people have of God are very striking.

Yeah, he is this angry, petulant old man. I mean He's represented like a bad-tempered childish, old, old, sick, peevish man - I mean like a sort of old man in a nursing-home that's putting together a jigsaw puzzle and can't put it together and gets furious at it and kicks over the table ... all our theologies do it - accuse God of being a cruel, senile delinquent, blaming the world and brutally punishing all He created for his own faults in construction ... (Williams, 1961:47).

Williams, does, however unfortunately tend to overemphasize and does not seem to trust the audience or reader to draw their own conclusions, he has to feed it to them (Styan, 1968:216).
Shannon is the character who talks the most by far, and his rambling tends to become taxing at times. His dialogue is marked by an inability to face the truth and reality. He is always offering an excuse and the "spook" gets the blame for most of his follies and mishaps. Shannon's sense of the theatrical is evident throughout the play and reflects his idea that life must also be lived on the fantastic level.

Shannon's dialogue is filled with ranting speeches, words filled with despair and forceful if hollow accusations. It is an indication of a definite slide into sentimentality, a common flaw of Williams (Bigsby, 1984:6). The cry of the pure of heart seems to give way to the wailing of the self-pitying (Bigsby, 1984:110).

The pathos, the mounting desperation is clear. When Hannah, towards the middle of the last act, starts to speak to Shannon, he becomes more relaxed and gradually she manages to pacify him and eventually save him. At the end of the play the didascalia state that a marimba band plays a song which is called "Words of Women" (perhaps a little obviously symbolic), and this is very significant since that is what brings salvation and hope for the characters.

Hannah's dialogue speaks of a controlled, mature person who knows about life and has a very clear insight. Never during the whole play does she raise her voice, show signs of decay, hysteria or hopelessness. She becomes exhausted, does show signs of fatigue and displays a need for rest and even peace, but her equilibrium is never disturbed, unlike Shannon's. Shannon says that she is a lady, and by that he does not mean just well-mannered, he means she is a person of great stature, maturity and sensitivity. Some of her comments to Shannon seem to reflect this.

Just been so much involved with a struggle in yourself that you haven't noticed when people wanted to help you, the little they can? I know people torture each other many times like devils, but sometimes they do see and know each other, you know, and then, if they're decent, they do want to help each other all that they can (Williams, 1961:64).

So the play reflects Shannon's desperation as opposed to Hannah's maturity and contentment. In the end she manages to save him from his desperate
position and he can help her as well. The dialogue seems to strengthen the idea that Hannah is an incarnated saint helping the desperate and hopeless people of the world because God cannot and will not do it, as Shannon so clearly states at the end of the play.

Williams uses the didascalia as elaborately in this play as he does in the other plays. It gives us a wealth of information as to the characters' natures, moods and history. Again the didascalia are at times very suggestive, and even prescriptive, as to how the play should be read or interpreted. The characters' different gestures, actions and body movements are all suggested by the didascalia.

There are some very interesting and important features in the didascalia that need to be mentioned. Firstly the storm, which represents God, fills a central role here. The storm, with its ferocity, thunder and power seems to be set on destroying, or venting its anger on the characters, much like God. A line from the didascalia, just before the start of the storm at the end of act two, sums this up effectively.

Shannon and Nonno turn and face the storm, like brave men facing a firing squad (Williams, 1961:65).

God is certainly not willing or able to help Shannon and the old man who both need deliverance. He makes them feel like helpless men facing the firing squad. He is revealed through a storm, which strengthens the idea that He is indeed a God of wrath and vengeance. Ironically that which Shannon accuses his former congregation of, a false idea about being senile, spiteful and a bully, is very much the same thing he believes about God.

These ideas of his are reinforced at the end of the play when Hannah helps him, not God, and he remarks that he cut loose the iguana as an act of mercy, since God doesn't want to cut him loose, as he (Shannon) did with the iguana. The idea is clear: God doesn't want to help people and He is not able to do so, so other human beings must "play God" as Shannon puts it to bring peace and salvation. Deprived of a real god, man becomes his own deity, at times cruel, but capable of responding to the desperation of the trapped being (Bigsby, 1984:107).
The use of the harsh and piercing jungle sounds throughout the play is also very interesting. The jungle stands for brutality and harshness, as opposed to sensitivity and understanding. In the first act when Shannon decides to leave the tour party at their own mercy because he is at the point of cracking up the didascalia reinforce this idea of brutality and lack of understanding destroying him, through the usage of jungle cries.

Harsh bird cries sound in the rain forest (Williams, 1961:25).

Often when Shannon's frail emotional and spiritual state is mentioned and displayed by his actions and words, the jungle sounds can be heard. When he and Maxine have the argument and thrust the ice cart violently at each other, the didascalia state:

Birds scream in the rain forest (Williams, 1961:59).

When Hannah is steadily, but gently, leading Shannon to contentment when he goes crazy and is tied up in the hammock, he refers to the jungle again.

The spook is in the rain forest. (He suddenly hurls his coconut shell with great violence off the verandah creating a commotion among the jungle birds) (Williams, 1961:88).

The jungle cries represent the "spook" which haunts Shannon, and this "spook" thrives on brutality and insensitivity, lack of human understanding.

The use of the hot, humid jungle-like background ties in with this idea of decadence and rottenness. The vegetation and atmosphere contribute to echo the idea of heat and increasing corruptibility. Another important feature the lush, steamy atmosphere conveys is the very sensual nature of man as reflected through especially Maxine and the Mexican boys, who are her casual lovers as well as regular visitors at the cantina where the prostitutes are.

The Mexican boy reappears, sucking a juicy peeled mango - its juice running down his chin on to his throat (Williams, 1961:30).

Sensuality is an important force in this play as can be seen through the actions of Maxine, the Mexican boys and Shannon, it seems to be part of
the atmosphere, the environment, inescapable, except for someone as saintly as Hannah.

Music also features in the play. A very significant example of that is at the end of act one when the music from the cantina can be heard playing a song called "The Words of Women", which becomes very important since it is the words of a woman that rescue Shannon and set him free.

The wind is also constantly mentioned - it seems mostly in favourable terms. During the time that Hannah helps Shannon to beat the spook, while they are sitting on the verandah, the wind gently blows over them.

The most important reference to clothes seems to be when Shannon puts his clerical garb on midway through his emotional and psychological breakdown as a gesture that he is ready and very willing to return to the church, where he thinks he will find his salvation. The big cross that he carries and later tries to rip off his neck, is also an indication of this, which all points to the idea that the church and God are not able to help him, they only hurt him, the cross cuts him quite viciously.

Light is also used fairly extensively in the play. Hannah remarks that while struggling with her own "spook" she eventually and gradually saw light at the far end of the tunnel, a grey light. Shannon asks whether it never turned gold, and she remarks that it stayed white throughout, another remark that underlines her philosophy that life never seems to be that rewarding, yet it must be acceptable and endured, never a golden light at the end of the tunnel but at least a white one.

This is another indication that decay is dominant and the question is whether the individual will concede total victory to this decay, or whether a momentary dignity in resistance or in courageous confrontation with the absurd can be discovered, as Hannah has done and which she also shares with Shannon (Bigsby, 1984:109).

Williams uses the didascalia very aptly at times and manages to really use them to add to the impact and ideas that the characters and dialogue convey. Overindulgence in this blunts this effect, however, as is the case at the beginning of act three.
Shannon is working feverishly on the letter to the Bishop, ... is shiny with perspiration ... muttering to himself as he writes and sometimes suddenly drawing a loud deep breath and simultaneously throwing back his head to stare up wildly at the night sky. Hannah ... looking steadily over it at Shannon, like a guardian angel (Williams, 1961:66).

After experiencing Shannon's wild antics and emotional outbursts just in the previous scenes, such elaborate and dramatized didascalia strain the audience and blunt the play. This seems to be Williams's old folly, not trusting his audience to make their own assumptions - he must perforce thrust it under their noses.

In this play, as in Cat on a hot tin roof, Williams tends to show an unbalanced affinity for some of his characters. The latter are left with hope and evidence of an agreeable future all brought about by Hannah. She does nothing wrong, and during the whole play she is represented as something of a godly figure. Judging from the Christian framework the idea that she virtually becomes "God" to the characters is offensive and unacceptable. Christians also believe in "building bridges" to help on another through life, but with God's help, someone Hannah does not believe in. Adler (1973:141) states that in this play Williams conceives God as anthropomorphic, made in man's own image and likeness, which is devoid of the truth, since then man would be God. Voss (1984:375) reinforces this idea by saying that in the end for Williams' character somebody and or something has to mean God to them, and in this play, for everyone Hannah becomes God.

Aesthetically this play seems to be the weakest of the three discussed. Again it deals with the decadence of the world, of Williams' Southern characters, their desperate struggle to live in this world, and not merely stay alive. It seems as if they have, through their own fallibility but also very largely due to the corrupt, brutal society, been handed the wrong end of the stick. Shannon is about to go to pieces, totally unable to control his emotions and fears. Williams has sympathy for this, but more than sympathy, he falls in love with his characters. This causes the play to lose its credibility, for the dramatic elements of the play are taxed with the melodramatic wailing of a character like Shannon. Therefore the dialogue and diction are unbalanced as well as the character development. All the elements suffer from this.
Added to that a character like Hannah is introduced. She is a "god", she indeed becomes it to the characters. Williams has to occupy her as well, so the dramatic structure of his play is put under even more strain. His failure to control the symbolism, the character development, the tone of the play and all the rest, leads to poor theatre.

Signs of Williams' inability to control his own emotions, feelings and ideas to allow the characters to develop fully and unrestrictively are amply visible. Simon (1978:549) refers to Williams's heavy-handed symbolism, and this is very clear with all the characters. From the Germans, who trot about in their absurd apparel to the wild-eyed, dramatic Shannon, who rants and raves, Williams supplies the audience with a large amount of heavy symbolism. The Germans are good examples of the totally unrealistic, grotesque effect Williams endowed the play with, which stretches from Shannon, the main character, to the Germans, who are peripheral characters. They appear to be totally unrealistic, unearthly beings dressed the most bizarre clothing and doing the most ludicrous things and are in no way tied to any characters. This tends to become too much for the audience and the readers, it is just that bit too heavy, too involved and this is because Williams's paranoia is too apparent in his playwriting. The border between concern with his work of art and crowding it, is crossed in this play, very much like in Cat on a hot tin roof.

He is intent on dictating the action and leading the audience or reader to a very definite conclusion as to the effect of the play. Unfortunately he does not convince them, and his melodrama, overdramatization and lack of moral judgement due to his basic dishonesty about his characters blunt this play.

When one judges this play from the Christian perspective it also fails. Hannah becomes "god", and the real God is unable or unwilling to help people, which is blasphemous and not the truth. What God can't do Hannah can, Williams seems to be saying, and we all know the legitimacy of such a statement. It is not so much the attribution of godlike qualities to Hannah that is problematic, but rather the uncritical, non-ironic, fond acceptance by the playwright which is problematic, and which seriously impugns the truth quality of the play.
CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

When dealing with literature one is dealing with life. When dealing with life one is axiomatically dealing with man, and equally clearly dealing with God.

He is the beginning and the end, and He created man. So from His lips and His thoughts everything about life and living will spring, from literature to salvation. For the Christian this is his or her lifestyle, shaped out of their belief. For the non-Christian it is not the same.

God created man in His image, the only creature He did this with. With this God tied Man to Him forever. He created man with a body but as a spirit being, made for Him, and only eternally satisfied in Him. Then God placed man on this earth, to govern, to rule and to enjoy. God made man able to fully enjoy His creation but also to be fully responsible.

Man chose to believe the lies of the devil and gave away his privileged position of authority, responsibility and enjoyment. This action, commonly known as the fall, brought about sin, death and eventually destruction. Once again God stepped in and sent His Son to save the earth, to place man in the right standing with God again, in a loving relationship to the heavenly Father.

Man still had the wonderful ability to create, shape and cultivate this earth, physically as well as spiritually. God sent His Word and His spirit to guide man and enable him to fully appreciate and enjoy this life in union with Him. This makes Etchells (1972:104) say that being a Christian means becoming more and more uniquely the self one was intended to be.

Cultivation of this world includes art. The latter is a gift from God, a gift that His Son appreciated and used as well as His disciples. The Bible is full of parables, stories, symbols, metaphors, comparisons and proverbs, a clear indication that God gave art as a gift to mankind, as way of understanding the world and man better. This gift should be used to bring
glory to God and man. This gift should be enjoyed, fostered, appreciated and encouraged, for God saw it fit to give it to us.

Literature's usefulness, or worth, as part of art, is beyond doubt. Literature reflects man's quest for meaning, purpose, identity and displays an effort to bring unity to the fragmented existence through symbol and metaphor (Huizenga, 1981:75). How rich, varied and plainly wonderful are good works of art - art that glorifies life, or probes the depths of existence of meaning, or art that displays beauty.

The Christian's approach to art should encompass all these aspects, these realizations. The Christian has access to all truth, the right philosophical perspective and a fulfilment of the individual personality. Through the Christian approach art can achieve its rightful place, purpose and position in life, for as Walsh (1981:308) states, the Christian has the best pair of eyes, eyes trained in humility to see clearly and encompass the widest horizons.

The Christian approach also grasps the essential truth that for this approach to function properly and achieve its goal, the approach must constantly be tested, refined and updated (Van Rensburg, 1981:48). The testing of the Christian's prejudices, ideas and beliefs against the rule of truthful knowledge, enables him or her to appreciate the truth and evaluate everything within the larger whole (Van Rensburg, 1981:45). Christians know that criticism is needed, that there is nothing to be afraid of, for they know the truth and it sets them free, it does not bind and gag them. Christian readers, writers and critics do not have to be afraid or ashamed of the Christian life and its beliefs, no, on the contrary, they need to appreciate it and spread the good news of the freedom and life in Christ which extends to all walks of life. Equally, and very importantly, true Christians do not take refuge in cheap moralism and didacticism - the Christian when confronted with a work which is potentially offensive because of what it contains has the sacred duty of studying the work carefully in the light of the tenets discussed in this study, and so coming to a true and reasoned assessment, which will set him free from false assumptions and allow his access to the full truth.

Roper (1979:7) gives a very useful definition of a work of art that helps to understand this key issue even better. A work of art is an object that has
been culturally formed by man so that it embodies an aesthetically coherent symbolic objectification of an imaginative insight into certain meaning aspects of some features of reality.

The fact that a work of art is culturally formed immediately gives us an indication that it stems from a certain "world", a "world" behind the work that displays certain beliefs, conventions and ideas.

Furthermore the aesthetic coherence of a work of art is determined by various norms like fittingness, internal richness and complexity. The Christian does not shy away from this, or disregards it, he or she realizes that it is just as part of the work of art and just as necessary as anything else. Being a Christian does not mean that a critic fanatically clings to his or her doctrinal beliefs and only uses those as criteria. A true Christian criterion uses the tools of his or trade, in this case the notions of literary criticism at his or her disposal to evaluate the work of art.

Fortunately is does not end there, and herein lies the great strength and vision of the Christian approach. It realizes that these imaginative insights into the aspects of reality produced by an artist, are just as important, for art stems from the heart, the mind and tell-tales what lies at the heart of someone, and inevitably it is a consecrated offering bringing power and glory to someone or something (Seerveld, 1981:385). The Christian must judge this as well and determine whether it ultimately adheres to the Christian framework of faith (Combrink, 1989:7).

All through the ages, from Plato down to modern literary critics, all over the world in all languages, literary artists have called for truth. The Christian joins this call, but does more, he or she offers truth, evaluates truth and by this endows art with eternal worth.

So the Christian critic evaluates the work of art using this powerful and truthful combination of aesthetic value and truth. A work of art must display a balance, symmetry and fittingness. It must display durability - a lasting quality of truth - validity (a world view that adheres to the truth) and be open to the sweep of reality. Other aspects like the fulfilment of each function (honour), justice being done to every element (righteousness), an honest intention by the artist (purity) and an inner beauty (loveliness) must
all be evaluated within the work of art. These aspects, or lack thereof, will allow the emanation of a certain spirit from every work of art, and this is what the critic judges. By doing this all he or she places the reader or audience in possession of a work of art, and helps them to know what to look for, listen for, and read for.

If the Christian critic does this and constantly seeks to broaden his or her horizons through the continual trying of their ideas against the rule of truthful knowledge as discovered in the light of the Scriptures and contact with life, literary criticism will have its rightful place in God's creation (Van Rensburg, 1981:45). The latter is a place of esteem and honour and offers a position from which to enjoy God's creation and to truly cultivate this earth spiritually.

When dealing with drama specifically a semiotic reading strategy seems to be the most useful since it keeps in mind that ostension underlies the production of any text or play. Ostension is the interaction between the written text and the production of the text and it allows the critic, reader and audience to realize that a play is written to produce and that literary criticism must take this into account.

The value of this approach can only be determined by actually applying it. Three of the plays of Tennessee Williams were used, since Williams, apart from the fact that he is one of the most prominent playwrights of the century, produced some plays which have proved for various reasons to be problematic to readers or audiences.

Bigsby (1984:4) says that Erich Fromm's quotation that man can fulfil himself only if he remains in touch with the fundamental facets of his existence (and drama in itself is a primary attempt to 'get in touch with the essence of reality by artistic creation') can be attributed to the work of Tennessee Williams. For Williams was the romantic in an unromantic world. He pleaded for sensitivity and understanding as opposed to brutality and power. He chose the old South, where he spent his early, carefree childhood days, as milieu for his tales of the glorious, romantic days of old, now being threatened by the brutal onslaught of modern society.
In his Memoirs he remarks that at the age of fourteen he discovered writing as an escape from the world of reality in which he felt acutely uncomfortable (Boxill, 1987:9). Williams' greatest fear certainly was that he, and the world which he valued, had long been regulated to the past, declared irrelevant by a society disinclined to value the poet, homosexual or the dreamer except as licensed clown (Bigsby, 1984:132).

So much of his writing seems to come from his personality and experience, a romantic vision of the untutored artist pouring out his sincere feelings, born out of an entirely personal experience into a dramatic form that was nurtured by himself (Minyard, 1986:288).

Williams’s main characters are individuals in a neurotic recoil and who refuse to resist the forces to which Williams seems to grant an implacable character. The characters are ahistorical, resisting the flow of time experience. They respond to pain and anguish and reality in a childlike way and the audience and reader are asked to sympathize with them, recognize the loss in their defeat and, accept its inevitability and acquiesce in it (Bigsby, 1984:12). The audience and reader are asked to collaborate in the regrettable need to lay aside dreams and to compromise on visions with seems to be adolescent in origin or insane in the light of reality (Bigsby, 1984:12).

Williams paved the way for what many have described as the "plastic theatre" (Boxill, 1987:23). In his theatre, which has some very definite and persistent cinematic effects, the conventions of stage realism are undermined (Boxill, 1987:23).

Williams tries to make full use of all his resources - music, lighting, scenery, costumes, sound and action. Boxill (1987:23) describes it very aptly when he says that to see a Tennessee Williams play is to be present at a drama of encounters among essentially naturalistic characters within a frankly evocative setting where reality is interfused with the stuff of dreams.

Williams' settings are elaborately described with the exactness of a photographer, but never as realistically. The ideal, the dream and the non-realistic are always present as can be seen in the opening scene of Cat on a
Hot Tin Roof and the last scene in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, among others. Time is seen as an aspect of decay (Boxill, 1987:27), an eternal enemy which always haunts the characters (Bedford, 1988:32). His dialogue is often lyrical, dramatic and too often tends to falter into sentimentality and sensationalism. Yet he produced some brilliant and powerful pieces of dialogue, in which he creates an idiom that is rhythmic, imagistic and genuine (Boxill, 1987:25) - that is, when he manages to keep a tight rein on his sentimentality and maintained a proper artistis distance.

The dramatic action echoes the inner turmoil of the characters but is also overdone at times. Williams' didascalia are loaded with meaning and charged with emotion. He uses music, lighting, costumes and props to its fullest extent and in a play like *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where he manages to keep a firm grip on all his symbolic images and ideas this usage of the didascalia proves to be very good. Unfortunately the opposite is also true. The first play that is dealt with is *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This play, arguably Williams' best, deals with the decadence of the American South, the waning of the romantic, idealistic past. The main character who is the vehicle of this destruction is Stanley Kowalski, who is married to Stella and who is Blanche's brother-in-law. He is typical of a certain brash kind of American, robust, materialistic and excited by animal drives. He is coarse, insensitive and egoistic, but he'll survive in the modern era, unlike Blanche.

The latter is a typical example of the faded Southern belle, having very little left in life. Her once glorious past and beauty are all diminishing, the family riches have dwindled as well as her morals. Despite this the audience always feels sympathy for Blanche, insensitivity and lack of understanding having done a great deal to affect her character. The early death of her homosexual husband dealt her a crippling blow, spiritually, one from which she has never recovered. She desperately tries to secure some sort of a future with Mitch, an average blue-collar worker, but once he finds out of her past, via Stanley, he also discards her.

Blanche's destruction is always on the cards and it is inevitable that Stanley is the one who enacts it. Blanche's feeble attempts to bring some "magic" to the lives of people must be admired. She is the one who seems to realize the necessity for sensitivity and understanding. She does not seem to live up to these ideals, but like Stella says it is people like Stanley that caused
her to be like this. At least she has this insight, unlike any other character in
the play, and the audience will surely see her both as a sent and fallen angel
that is tragically caught in a hopeless situation from which she cannot
escape, but one that she has brought upon herself to a great extent.

Stanley, on the other hand, is realistic, being able to cope with reality, sure
of what he wants and how to get it. He is sure to survive in this world, but
he is stripped of sensitivity, understanding and even honest caring.
Williams manages to portray Stanley effectively as the "gaudy seed-bearer"
or "proud male bird", brutal but effective. His wife, Stella, chooses to stay
with Stanley, despite his rape of Blanche, she refuses to accept it. Her
future seems ultimately tragic, stripped of sensitivity, understanding and
care.

Williams manages to give a most successful revelation of human nature in its
totality in which he distorts the realistic surface as little as possible and only
when necessary (Corrigan, 1987:37).

Adler (1985:441) sees this as one of the most fascinating and effective plays
in modern drama. Williams pleads for the integration of the values of the
Old South and that of the New South (Adler, 1985:442). Blanche fails to
make this integration, although she sees the need for it. Stanley disregards
the values of the old South and Stella joins him, because she stays with him.

Williams makes this play work because he remains in control of his
symbolic decives, emotions and he remains honest about his characters. He
uses the diction excellently, displaying powerful lyrical verse. His setting is
emotionally charged and the play is filled with irony, but it is not overdone.
The didascalia come to justice under Williams' guidance. He uses music,
lighting, props and other stage effects very well. He succeeds in portraying
his characters honestly, he does not fall in love with Blanche, most probably
the character he can identify with the most, but paints her objectively yet
with enough understanding and sympathy. He manages to reveal human
nature very effectively and this gives the play some excellent moral fibre
and substance. The audience is drawn to the characters, seeing something
universally true and appealing in their lives and suffering.
When Williams succeeds in keeping his conflicting impulses in check and judging his characters with perception, he is a moralist of force, a playwright of distinction (Ganz, 1976:137). In his best work he manages to contain his note of self-pity with rigorous honesty towards the desperate self-deceptions of his characters, and the fundamental evasions which may be implied by his art (Bigsby, 1984:5). This, together with its stylistic force and excellence, makes *A Streetcar Named Desire* certainly his best play.

*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* also won Williams some coveted prizes and was written eight years after *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Williams very much pleads for the same understanding and sensitivity as in his previous plays. It is good to keep in mind that Williams saw this play as his best. He remarks that is the play that comes closest to being a work of art and a work of craft (Minyard, 1986:293) - this might explain his (dishonest) treatment of his characters in this specific play. The Mississippi is the setting for this play that deals with a rich family beset by problems.

Big Daddy, the old man, is dying from cancer but does not know it and no one wants to tell him. His favourite son, Brick, an ex-football professional, is a restless alcoholic who started drinking after the death of his homosexual friend, Skipper. His wife Maggie realizes that the inheritance of the Pollitt fortune will all come to Brick but a son from Brick's side of the family is Big Daddy and Big Mama's last wish. Unfortunately Brick has given up on life. Maggie desperately tries to persuade him to sleep with her to conceive a child for she realizes that it will secure the future for them - that is, a future of wealth, not spiritual fulfilment. She loves Brick very much but he does not respond to her love at all. This is due to the fact that Skipper turned to alcohol because of his homosexuality and his perception of society's mendacity. Both Brick the character and Williams, the overly fond creator of the character, fail to admit their homosexuality and Brick blames the system of lying and liars, mendacity, for his total lack of concern or purpose.

Big Daddy in vain tries to get the truth from Brick and make him realize that he still has a full life ahead of him. Maggie also fails in this regard but seems to be the only one in the plays who really tries to salvage something from the miserable future that lies ahead of them.
Unfortunately Maggie does not convince as a character mainly due to Williams' lack of honesty when dealing with her. She is pictured as the cat, but proves to be far from it. Her blind and at times unqualified love for Brick weakens her character. She expects the audience and reader to join her in this love for the "weak, beautiful people", to treat them with the same amount of sympathy and understanding as she does. Boxill (1987:115) is right when he says that there is serious doubt whether Maggie can keep Brick from drinking himself "into" the grave like his friend Skipper did. Jackson (1965:130) claims that man's salvation is dependent on his personal recognition of his condition and that this is the case with Brick. Ganz (1976:129) says that Williams' realized that Brick is guilty but could not punish him, or deal objectively with him, as he wished, since the play was designed for commercial theater.

That might well be the cause for his lack of honesty, or the fact that Williams being a homosexual himself, always took the part of homosexuals in his plays and failed to remain objective about them. The truth dodges around verbal corners and refuses to meet the reader on firm, clear terms (Falk, 1961:107).

Williams's collapse of the control of the melodramatic, his growth of self-pity which placed his own plight too nakedly at the centre of attention, eventually destroyed the honesty and perspective that enabled him to make *A Streetcar Named Desire* such a great dramatic success. This means that various aspects of the play suffer.

The production of the play is supposed to stress the dreamlike quality of the play (Boxill, 1987:118). The setting with its stars, shadows and shifting clouds creates a magical space. This is clearly a longing for the ideal, the romantic non-acceptance of reality, much like most of his characters. All the scenes were "painted with light", sunset colours in the first act and pale moonlight in the third act (Boxill, 1987:118). This melodramatic and sentimental mood is very often carried over to the dialogue and diction of the characters, for example Maggie whose chanting speeches carry an inordinate number of clichés and are uttered very often with a total lack of control which becomes irksome. The scene in which Big Daddy and Brick have a "heart-to-heart" talk at times succeeds in reaching some great
dramatic heights only to plunge to mediocrity because of its sentimentality and dishonesty.

This abundance of romanticism causes a lack of moral fibre (Gray, 1979:578). Williams does not keep his symbolic deceives in check and overcompensates for the characters of Brick and Maggie because of the lack of honesty. This means he has to "guide" (coerce?) the reader and audience to a set, or closed, reading of the play, a reading that is actually not in line with the way the play will develop if it is allowed to. Therefore such elaborate instructions in the didascalia are given, as where Williams clearly states that this play is about a family crisis, which it is not.

His lack of moral judgement, as quoted by Arthur Miller (Bigsby, 1984:93), is especially seen with the character of Brick, and to a lesser extent, Maggie. Williams felt that in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* he reached beyond himself in creating a kind of crude eloquence of expression in Big Daddy that he hasn't managed in any of his other characters (Minyard, 1986:294). This notion of magnitude and character that Williams felt he achieved through Big Daddy, is an idea that is difficult to agree with. To most, Big Daddy doesn't ever reach this great magnitude, and what about the real main characters, Brick and Maggie? There's a complete lack of magnitude when dealing with them, but Williams's almost obsessive preoccupation with the characters is clear. The play ultimately fails dramatically but also fails to adhere to the framework of the Christian faith, because of its lack of honesty and objectivity.

The third and last play that's discussed, is *The Night of the Iguana*. This play is about a defrocked priest, Shannon, who is unable to come to grips with life and reality and occasionally "cracks up". He stays over at the Costa Verde Hotel which is owned by an old friend of his, Maxine. There he meets Hannah, a New England spinster, who eventually succeeds in leading him to spiritual freedom and an ability to deal with life. The play tends to indulge in sentimentalism and over-dramatization. Shannon, as the priest, treats the audience to various emotional outbursts and ranting speeches. Hannah on the other hand, is a heavenly figure (*saint-like* is how Williams describes her - but the harsh fact of the matter is that is becomes almost embarrassingly maudlin and sentimental) who has absolute peace and tranquillity despite her adverse conditions. She patiently guides Shannon to
freedom, and eventually when Shannon "plays God" and frees the iguana, he is also freed.

Hannah is the one who echoes Williams's idea of understanding that builds bridges between people and the much-needed quality of being able to endure. She is the epitome of peace and tranquillity and is fully able to deal with reality. This is unlike any of the other characters in the other two plays that have been discussed. Unfortunately Williams's preoccupation with his characters again robs his play of credibility. As with Brick, he elevates Hannah to a position of a god-like figure. Her dramatic actions, her peaceful movements and actions amid chaos and decay, as opposed to the frantic, aggressive actions of the other characters, already elevate her to a higher position. Her diction does the same. Amid the tropical setting of heat, humidity and decay Hannah remains cool, untouched - and unconvincing.

It is clear from the setting, dialogue and the didascalia that Williams wants to indicate to the audience and the reader that the decay of this world, spiritually, has caused Shannon to come to the end of his rope, like the tied iguana. This turns to hysteria, sentimentalism and over-dramatization. Bigsby (1984:18) remarks that in many of Williams's plays we find a naïve romanticism in which the main character never changes or develops but goes through endless adventures. This neurosis at its worst turns to self-pity and melodrama, and with this play this is true.

Shannon's dramatic, theatrical actions, words and gestures seems set to carry on forever, that is until Hannah steps in. Shannon clearly states, and the play echoes this, that God is unwilling or unable to help him. He is a god of thunder and lightning who punishes and condemns His people instead of understanding and loving them. Hannah tells Shannon that his problem is the biggest and most common one of all mankind - the need to believe in someone or something. She does believe in something, the latter being human understanding and help. She clearly states that she does not believe in God. She then "frees" Shannon, because God can't and will not. He frees the iguana, and these acts of mercy brings peace and contentment to everyone.

The Christian reader would of course respond to this with a sense of anathema, and would instinctively want to reject it - but would have no
justification in doing this if the whole play were to adhere to the norms of balance and fittingness expounded earlier. However, in this case, the intention of the playwright is clearly "dishonest" in that he indulges in certain notions by way of a character that does not convince, and so sacrifices the integrity of the play. The notions centring on Hannah are therefore not rejected because they might be offensive to a Christian as such but rather because they represent a failure of the artistic imagination and therefore compromise the play.

Williams is a playwright of note. He brought to the theatre a new, and in many ways very good, way of doing things. His intense, almost photographic perception of drama paved the way for a new and exciting avenue for drama development. In the play where he succeeds in curbing the idealistic and the romantic he succeeds in producing some very powerful drama.

He really succeeds in drawing the audience to the play, and in A Streetcar Named Desire he reveals the human condition very accurately and produces some really fine drama.

In a play like Cat on a Hot Tin Roof it is clear that the honesty he sought for was seldom achieved, and this mars the play. His lack of honesty and his clear (and dishonest) infatuation with his characters robs his plays of credibility and power. With The Night of the Iguana this is very must the same. It seems that Williams is guilty of placing his own plight too nakedly at the centre of attention, and this nausea with his own ideas, fears and world, eventually cripples his plays - precisely because the plays do not meet the criteria for being good drama in terms of generally accepted notions of what constitutes good drama (general literary and theatrical criteria) but more damningly the plays fail at times precisely because they lack, within the larger framework provided for the Christian approach, to live up to the norms of fittingness, internal richness and complexity, and the balance and symmetry that would make them literary artefacts reflecting the glory of creation and thus failing in the calling to serve through providing access to all truth.

Thus, in a final assessment, while it would seem that a number of critics like Falk and Bigsby approximate (intuitively?) much the same sort of
judgment as the one arrived at by the Christian critic, the value of a study such as this lies in its examining, making explicit and giving voice to the striving of the Christian in all things - life and art - to serve the greater glory of the Kingdom of God on earth.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix A

The horizon of expectations model of PCJ van Rensburg (1981:44)

"All perception inevitably involves prejudice or bias - prejudice concerning the content and the structure of the perceivable."

"His receptivity to the given clues in the play and his willingness to strive after new horizons will help him to discover the degree of correctness or justification of his prejudices."

"The perceptive playgoer usually approaches the play from the foundational underlay of his own lifeview, but gradually he is transferred to the point of view of the play. In this way his horizon is extended. In the process of his viewpoint shifting to include that of the the play his own horizon is extended. Ultimately the playgoer has a wider vision than he would ordinarily have had. He then sees that which was initially known to him within a larger framework or in more just proportion. He has tested his prejudices" (1981:44).

In the diagram, the ideal is proposed that one should shift from perspective to perspective and view the play (or other literary artefact) from all possible perspectives (from X, from Y, from A to B to C) - then only will he,
metaphorically speaking, realize that the perspective is not only of mountain peaks, but also of plateaux. "It is only when, shifting gradually from Y to B to C and to D that he will gradually uncover a fuller truth. Then only can he look back and see his previous horizons amalgamated and necessarily experience and evaluate everything within a larger whole" (1981:45). This is then essentially what the (Christian) playgoer should do, thus testing his bias (his worldview) and attempting always to access the (fullest possible) truth.