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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND D.H. LAWRENCE

OUT OF TOUCH
A
STUDY OF THE LITERARY RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE WORK
OF
D.H. LAWRENCE AND TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

by
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Why are we born like animals
We who stem from God and man,
Whose souls are longing to be clothed
In other than this blood and filth.
Must God's image cut its teeth?

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ABSTRACT

The work of D.H. Lawrence had an admitted influence on the work of Tennessee Williams. This thesis explores the implications of the relationship existing between these two literary figures. An emphasis has been placed on those works of Williams admitting of the direct influence of Lawrence. By way of conclusion a whole chapter has been devoted to Orpheus Descending and its ur-version Battle of Angels; these works, considered together, are particularly illuminating in their treatment of Williams' major thematic preoccupations.

The central argument of the thesis is concerned with Tennessee Williams' theological determinism. This determinism is at odds with Lawrence's perception of the same notion. The tension between the theological orientation of the two writers causes Williams to interpret Lawrence in a characteristic manner. An examination of the way in which Williams characteristically incorporates Lawrencean elements in his work provides a model for exploration of the thematic content of his whole canon.

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For Jim, Wendy and Amanda
in lieu of many hours.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
ABBREVIATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE Comparison: A consideration of the metaphysical outlook of D.H. Lawrence and Tennessee Williams.	7
CHAPTER TWO Exploration: A consideration of how Tennessee Williams incorporates the Lawrencean element in his work.	35
CHAPTER THREE Assessment: <u>Orpheus with Battle:</u> The Lawrencean element in context	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	94

ABBREVIATIONS

Tennessee Williams

CTR, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; Cr, Camino Real; MTW, Memoirs;
NI, The Night of the Iguana; OWB, Orpheus Descending with Battle
of Angels; RFP, I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix; RT, The
Rose Tattoo; SLS, Suddenly Last Summer; YTM!, You Touched Me.

ABBREVIATIONS

D.H. Lawrence

BM, The Blind Man; F, The Fox; LCL, Lady Chatterley's Lover;

LDHL, The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley;

MWD, The Man Who Died; Ph, Phoenix; PhII, Phoenix II;

YTM, You Touched Me.

INTRODUCTION

That Tennessee Williams, an artist revered for his contribution to the American theatre, and the English novelist D.H. Lawrence can be said to share a literary relationship may not, at first, be manifestly obvious. But it will be the purpose of this thesis to show that the American playwright owes no small debt to his own particular understanding of the English novelist. Certainly Williams did not incorporate Lawrencean ideas, in his work, in a way their creator would have appreciated; rather the playwright's debt to Lawrence in terms of his exploitation of some of the latter's themes, symbols, and character types became incongruously bound up in his own particular Weltanschauung, which, as we shall see, is not even remotely Lawrencean. As Eric Bentley notes, there are to be found in Williams' work "spurious elements . . . Sometimes it's his thought; one day a critic will explain what Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence."¹ A critic familiar with the Lawrence canon, and less familiar with the work of Williams, might be puzzled by Bentley's comment and reply, "very little". But if that same critic chooses to make a close examination of Williams' work he will have to admit that the playwright does sing "pseudo-Lawrencean hymns to life".² These hymns are often unconvincing, especially when viewed in light of the work of the writer who inspired them, but they are, nevertheless, hymns that Williams chooses to sing, and with great consistency, in many of his works.

Part of the literary relationship existing between Tennessee Williams and D.H. Lawrence may be ascribed to direct influence. Williams acknowledges his debt to Lawrence in his recently published Memoirs;

he mentions the novelist several times, admitting that "Lawrence was, indeed, a highly simpatico figure in [his] literary upbringing".³ However, it should be noted that Williams is careful to qualify the influence of D.H. Lawrence - and other literary figures⁴ - on his work. Tennessee Williams states, quite unequivocally, that although Lawrence was an important factor in his artistic development, his influence existed alongside, but always subordinated to, what he defines as his own "solitary bent-toward what I am not yet sure and probably never will be" (MTW, p. 41).

Williams' warning regarding the autonomy of his work should be heeded. Whilst writing this thesis I have learned that the critic who wishes to make a study of influence should proceed with caution. Literary genetics is a complicated thing and liable to get out of hand. An overly avid critic in search of evidence for influence should bear in mind that literature is not written in a vacuum. From general reading any writer naturally assimilates that which supports or expands his approach to his own art: the metaphysical outlook of one writer may complement or modify another's; elements of structure or style may be adapted; symbolism can be noted and used, quite unconsciously, with subtle variation in another's work. It is by this process that echoes of writers, both living and dead, find their way into any work of literature. And it is of such echoes that critics should be wary when searching for "hard" evidence of influence.

Warnings apart, however, we do have hard evidence for Lawrence's influence on Williams' work. Not only does the playwright admit the influence, he goes as far as to incorporate, quite consciously, elements of Lawrence's work within his own. Given the very different sensibilities

of the two writers, this situation affords a critic a rare opportunity: a comparison of Williams' work with Lawrence's allows a search-light to expose Williams' own peculiar "bent". Williams' often quite startling treatment of specific Lawrencean elements serves to throw into sharp relief many of the major preoccupations that haunt his canon.

Therefore, in this thesis I will try to argue how Williams incorporated one "spurious" element into his works by adapting his reading and particular understanding of Lawrence to his own purpose. That purpose I believe was to provide a rationale for some of the obsessions that dominate his work. Williams, it seems, saw Lawrence as a great writer who celebrates the body; and saw himself as that writer's disciple. The Lawrencean element in Williams' work, carefully considered, I have found invaluable in answering many of the questions that a study of the Williams canon raises. Why, for example, are so many of Williams' heroes and heroines maimed, either psychologically or physically? Why do so many of the relationships depicted by Williams attain a fragmentary community only to fail? Why does such terrible violence provide a backdrop to so many of his dramatic "worlds"? And finally, a related question important to the thrust of the argument of this thesis, why are Williams' plays saturated in guilt and his characters so often unable to transcend the norms of conventional morality without incurring dreadful punishments?

Before attempting to answer these questions, a few comments about methodology. A reader of this study may feel that a disproportionate amount of attention is paid to several of Williams' minor works, whilst, on the other hand, works ranked amongst Williams' finest are

somewhat neglected. This disproportion evolved quite naturally because much of the work reflecting direct influence, and therefore of importance to this study is, unfortunately, not representative of Williams' best effort. Thus, for example, a rather disappointing romantic comedy You Touched Me! receives a detailed analysis whilst several manifestly more substantial plays such as Suddenly Last Summer and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof receive only a peripheral consideration. There are reasons for this apparent imbalance. You Touched Me! is a work directly adapted from the Lawrence short story of the same title. And, furthermore, the adaptation uses some of the story line and almost all of the symbolism from Lawrence's much admired novella, The Fox. Thus it can be appreciated that a detailed analysis of Suddenly Last Summer and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof would be less essential to this study than an analysis of You Touched Me! I will demonstrate, however, that elements in the minor works considered in this thesis do shed light on the very same questions that are raised in the major works.

This thesis, then, may seem weighted in favour of its consideration of Williams' little known works. However, this factor is somewhat offset by a reason already suggested: there is in Williams' work, for the most part, a definite pattern of thematic and structural recapitulation. Similar ideas, characters, plot structure, even portions of dialogue recur with regularity even in works of differing merit. Although I have made little attempt to differentiate between works which received positive critical acclaim and those which did not, it is not my intention to detract from Williams' deserved reputation as a playwright of some stature. Indeed, I feel that what I have to say could provide a context

in which the plays I have neglected might be better understood. Anyway, Williams, his minor works notwithstanding, is already established as an important figure in the history of the American drama; no study could seriously question his contribution to the theatrical arts. One final point: it should be noted that the Williams canon has been treated as a homogeneous body of work; chronology, as this thesis will make clear, would seem to have little bearing on Williams' development as a dramatist.

NOTESINTRODUCTION

¹E. Bentley, The Dramatic Event: an American Chronicle (New York: Horizon Press, 1954), p. 107.

²Bentley, The Dramatic Event, p. 107.

³Tennessee Williams, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 41. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries.) Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

⁴There can be no doubt that Lawrence was only one of a larger network of influences upon Williams' work which includes Freud, Strindberg, and Chekhov as well as Eugene O'Neill and, especially, Hart Crane. All these figures, critics have argued and Williams has admitted, influenced his work in one way or another. To examine the complex ramifications of this network is far beyond the range of a thesis of this scope, but it could provide the base of a larger, and I believe, extremely fertile study. The interested reader is directed to the Memoirs, and to Beate Hein Bennet, "Williams and European Drama: Infernalists and Forgers of Modern Myths" in Jac Tharpe, ed., Tennessee Williams: A Tribute (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 1977), pp. 429-462, and Mary Ann Corrigan, "Beyond Verisimilitude: Echoes of Expressionism in Williams' Plays" also in Tharpe, Tennessee Williams, pp. 375-412.

CHAPTER ONE

Tennessee Williams is of the opinion that "so much of all creative work is closely related to the personality of the one who does it"¹ and, as Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore suggest in their introduction to Phoenix II, Lawrence's "major achievements . . . are . . . closely related to [his] passionately held beliefs".² Therefore, because of the close relationship of the thought of both writers to their art, and given their very different sensibilities this chapter will focus upon the areas of similarity and dissimilarity within each writer's general philosophical outlook. The intention of the discussion is to provide a context within which the literary relationship existing between the two writers may be better explored.

Both Lawrence and Williams believe that art should do more than provide delightful diversion: the novelist and the playwright make clear that their art is intended to serve society by seeking out ways to improve it. For Lawrence the revelatory nature of the novel form was to assume great importance. The form, in Lawrence's own words, should be for a reader both "cleansing and refreshing", because the novel when "properly handled"

can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel . . . can reveal the most secret places of life: for it is in the secret passional places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow.³

Similarly, Williams believes that art should not attempt to conform to "forms of controlled thought and feeling"⁴, it should, instead, serve society by being "a kind of irritant in the shell of [a] community"⁵. Like Lawrence, then, Williams felt that the artist had a moral obligation to "speak out against the dead current of prescribed ideas [which leave society] standing in the dead center of nowhere".⁶

Williams goes as far as to suggest that art should be a form of anarchy. Recognising the extremity of his view, he qualifies it; artistic anarchy is benevolent, it "is only anarchy in juxtaposition with organised society. It runs counter to the sort of orderliness on which organised society apparently must be based".⁷ These sorts of ideas echo Lawrence's as he expounds them in his essay "Art and Morality".⁸ In this essay Lawrence considers the didactic function of "true" art. He uses the image of a Kodak snapshot to capture the deadness of everyday living. This sort of visual representation of life offers no stimulus to help change the ills of society; a snapshot merely captures an image of the status-quo and reinforces in the observer the rightness of things as they appear. But "true" art, Lawrence, like Williams, believed to have the power to effect change. Society needs art; it is "utterly incapable of movement or change in itself" (Ph, p. 526).

A superficial assessment of Williams' and Lawrence's writings on the subject of the importance of design to the didactic function of art would suggest that in some ways their views are congruent. Lawrence believes that design in art is capable of achieving a "universal vision" (Ph, p. 523): "art is a recognition of the relation between various things, various elements in the creative flux. You can't invent a

design. You recognise it" (Ph, p. 525). Similarly, in "Person-to-Person", Williams suggests that his mastery of the dramatic form must increasingly perfect "the necessary trick of rising above the singular to the plural concern, from personal to general import", and that what he does for the "possible pleasure" of his audience arises from a "profound desire to give knowledge of a universal truth".⁹

Yet, if a more thorough consideration is given to Williams' writing about the nature of artistic design, a radical divergence of thought is revealed: whereas Lawrence, over and over, stresses the relatedness of the individual with society and nature, Williams recognizes "in the might of design" a "transcendent other dimension" (emphasis mine). This "other" dimension is lacking in Lawrence. Williams writes:

My own creed as a playwright is fairly close to that expressed by the painter in Shaw's play The Doctor's Dilemma: "I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquez and in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting and the message of art that has made these hands blessed. Amen."

How much art his hands were blessed with or how much mine are, I don't know, but that art is a blessing is certain, and I feel, as the painter did, that the message lies in those abstract beauties of form and color and line to which I would add light and motion.¹⁰

This divergence of thought is important, and, because it is basic to the thrust of the argument of this paper, it will be discussed below in greater detail.

Both writers, then, agreed that their art should serve society by exposing the deadness of bourgeois existence. That both were aware of the importance of design to the didactic function of their art is also true. But it is Lawrence's and Williams' appreciation of what constitutes

form in art that exposes an incompatible element of thought. In Lawrence phrases like "ebb and flow"; "creative flux"; "the fluidity of living change", have implications not only for his view of the function of artistic form, but also for his appreciation of the life process itself. On the other hand, Williams' comments on form are basic to his metaphysical outlook. For Williams the revelatory message of a work of art "lies in those abstract beauties of form . . . to which he would add light and motion".

The root cause of the difference in outlook between Lawrence and Williams lies in their consideration of the notion of the abstract. Williams' thought and, as we shall see, his works are intimately bound up with his perception of this notion, whereas, on the other hand, the same notion is anathema to Lawrence. The rest of this chapter will explore the complex ramifications of this divergence of thought. It will be shown that just as Lawrence's rejection of abstractionism was to forge his link with the Romantic tradition and help shape his thinking on the nature of the Christian God, so Williams' unquestioning acceptance of the same concept will be shown to shape his thinking on these same matters, and, likewise, to determine how he can be "placed" within the Romantic tradition. By implication the religious vision of both men, a result of their differing appreciation of the abstract, qualifies their thinking on the basic dualism of man's nature.

Without question both Lawrence and Williams have links with the Romantic tradition. Like other writers and theorists of the Romantic period, Lawrence and Williams grappled with the fin de siècle realisation of the presence of discord both within and without the individual. Faced with the appearance of seemingly irreconcilable conflict in the

external world, the Romantics turned to a study of the human consciousness in an attempt to give individual existence some sense of unity and harmony. Lawrence links with the Romantic tradition as a vitalist; his perception of conflict within the human psyche embraces the idea of a vital force which runs through all things individual and cosmic; microcosm and macrocosm are bound together by a dynamic force. In both his theoretical and imaginative writings Lawrence explores the nature of this dynamic interrelationship between man and the cosmos. The artist he considers to have the ability to recognise true design in the very flux of being; its articulation is revelatory, having implications for the redemption of the individual, and, ultimately, for society itself. However, the concept of the existence of an abstract world of absolutes, as critics have noted, has no place in Lawrence's vitalist romanticism: "a quest for permanence [is in his opinion] a mistaken striving after a chimera of absolutes. Rather, the world's very mutability is to constitute the organic matrix out of which man's immortality is to come."¹¹

A striving, chimerical or not, after absolutes is, however, basic to Williams' understanding of artistic design. In some ways Williams' concept of form in drama conforms to Aristotle's. Like Aristotle, Williams defined form as the imitation of reality.¹² This concept of form looks on the one hand to a static universe of absolutes, and, on the other, to a dynamic world of phenomenal existence. Williams' thought, however, diverges from Aristotle's in that it is complicated by his legacy from the Romantics. Whereas Aristotle played down the idea of inner determination, Romantics not only recognised

the existence of the individual consciousness, they attempted, through an exploration of the workings of man's psyche, to see it as the repository of ultimate meaning.

Perhaps the best way to clarify Williams' thought upon the notion of the abstract, and also to show how he "fits" into the Romantic tradition, is to consider his career-long preoccupation with Expressionism.

Williams' preoccupation with Expressionism is no doubt catalysed by his knowledge of, and admiration for the Swedish dramatist, August Strindberg (1849-1912). Not an easy concept to define, Expressionism does have links with the Romantic movement. Originally this school of art grew out of the increasing unease of the artist faced with the sociological, intellectual and spiritual upheavals of the late nineteenth century. An expressionist does not seek to represent the world objectively, rather inner experience is captured by representing the outside world as it appears to the artist, or, in the case of a dramatist, as it appears filtered through the vision of one of his characters.

With Romanticism, then, Expressionism shares a common interest in the individual psyche, but there is a difference. This difference focuses on the area of contrast in the thought of Lawrence and Williams under consideration: Lawrence's rejection of the notion of the absolute did not allow him to define reality in terms Williams would have accepted. Esther Merle Jackson, who explores Williams' idea of form, makes this clear:

if expressionist reality is partially romantic in kind, it represents a romanticism in which the image of reality has undergone further disintegration. Expressionism differs from romanticism in that it does not suggest that

there is within reality a principle of order. On the contrary, expressionism hopes to create, through art, forms which possess a greater unity than that apprehensible in reality itself.¹³

Williams would surely endorse Jackson's comment on his appreciation of form. In a similar spirit, though more poetically, he writes of the playwright's need to create drama that occurs in a "world outside of time". Williams believes that:

snatching the eternal out of ~~the~~ desperately fleeting is the great magic trick of human existence. As far as we know, as far as there exists any kind of empiric evidence, there is no way to beat the game of being against nonbeing, in which nonbeing is the predestined victor on realistic levels.¹⁴

Reality for Lawrence is most certainly not located in a world of nonbeing; his link with the Romantic tradition leads him to a very different sense of the location of reality than Williams. Whereas the central problem in the Williams canon is how to shape phenomenal experience in such a manner as to reveal absolute truths that possess a greater unity than that apprehensible in reality itself, Lawrence probed ever inwards into the human psyche, attempting to give a concrete form and a definition to the deeper non-rational, intuitive levels of man's consciousness. The method he struggled to perfect is alluded to in the famous and much quoted letter to Edward Garnett (June, 1914) concerning the allotropic states of the ego:

You musn't look in my novel for the old stable ego of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same radically unchanged element.¹⁵

That Lawrence perceived a deeper "inside" reality in things as well as in people can be adduced from his fiction. When Miriam in Sons and Lovers asks Paul why one of his sketches "seems so true" he answers:

"because there is scarcely any shadow in it; it's more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmery protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is dead crust. The shimmer is inside really."¹⁶

The thrust of Lawrence's thought on the nature of reality was to look ever inwards into both things and the human psyche. Williams on the other hand looked upwards, beyond the reality he perceived on earth. Lord Byron, his created character in Camino Real, speaks for Williams when, lamenting the cessation of celestial music, he says "at least I can look up at the Acropolis, I can stand at the foot of it, and look up at broken columns on the crest of a hill - if not purity, at least its recollection . . .".¹⁷ "The central problem of Williams' anti-realist dramaturgy would seem to be his struggle to reconstitute felt experience in such a manner as to reveal - or to create - absolute truth."¹⁸

Not suprisingly, Lawrence's rejection of the notion of the absolute has far reaching implications for his appreciation of the make-up of man's psyche. Both his theoretical and imaginative writings make many statements about man's inherent dualism. His thought about man's dual nature will be considered, here, by analysing some of his ideas as they are expounded theoretically in his essay "The Crown" (1915). In this essay Lawrence makes a personal proclamation of his own dual nature:

I know I am compounded of two waves, I who am temporal and mortal . . . I am framed in the struggle and embrace of two opposite waves of darkness and light. (PhII, p. 377)

Then when Lawrence turns his thought from the particular to the general, he writes of the whole of humankind:

fully equipped in flesh and spirit, fully built up of darkness, perfectly composed out of light, what are we but light and shadow lying together in opposition, or lion and unicorn fighting, the one to vanquish the other. This is our eternal life in these two eternities which nullify each other. (PhII, p. 370)

The tension within the human psyche, whether symbolically expressed in terms of dark and light, the eagle and the dove, the tiger and the lamb, or the lion and the unicorn is basic to the workings of man's psyche.

Because at the heart of the doctrine of vitalism is the principle of Force running through all things, Lawrence quite naturally gives his perception of the workings of man's psyche a dynamic character. Contending forces within the psyche depend upon the waging of an eternal war between thesis and antithesis: the warring forces are necessarily locked in a never-ending conflict. This conflict is never to be resolved; because if it were to be so it "would of necessity entail the cessation from existence of both opposites." (PhII, p. 366) Opposing forces that constitute man's psyche, no matter how they are symbolically represented, are "separable [only] for the sake of understanding, they are ultimately one, as the movement at the rim of a wheel, and the stillness at its centre are one."¹⁹ In other words Lawrence's form of dualism is implicitly dialectic. Each clash between thesis and antithesis

implies a new state of being allowing growth of the individual. Although conflict is a basic condition of being, the aim is to "come through" - to grow into a state nearer to a perfection that is ultimately unattainable. The lion and the unicorn, the tiger and the lamb, the eagle and the dove, dark and light are in eternal opposition because opposition is their very mode of being. The crown is important only because it is the prize for which the lion and the unicorn fight and which they never attain. Mankind like the lion and the unicorn must "go on fighting underneath the Crown, entirely oblivious of its supremacy." (PhII, p. 366)

Williams' thinking upon man's dual nature did not lead him to Lawrence's conclusions. Again the notion of the absolute determines Williams' outcome of thought. Williams, too, saw man "framed in the struggle and embrace of two opposite waves of darkness and light"; his constant use of black and white imagery attests to this. However, the conclusions he draws from the antithesis of dual impulses within man's psyche admit of no potential for growth: the aspect of dialectic is missing. It is Williams' acceptance of the notion of the abstract which determines his understanding of the nature of the conflict between the warring elements of the psyche. His attitude is that of a Christian theologian; never doubting the existence of God as an absolute cause,²⁰ he sees within the psyche forces of good and evil, spirit and flesh, eternally at war. Always the forces of evil, of the flesh, attempt to destroy all that is good in man's nature. Williams' vision thus has a traditional Christian orientation: man lives out his life subject to the authority of a God who destines post-lapsarian man to

entrapment within his dual impulse toward good and evil. The concept of psychomachia, however well disguised, generates the conflict of many of his plays.

Williams' work, Summer and Smoke (1948), for example, incorporates the theme of psychomachia quite schematically. The heroine - Williams is careful to work into the dialogue that her name is the Spanish word for soul - is directly juxtaposed to a figure of hot passionate summertime in the person of John Buchanan; John is an unsubtle representation of the flesh. In an equally unsubtle manner, even the set of the play reflects this juxtaposition of character. The office of John Buchanan, M.D. predominantly displays an anatomy chart which is counterpoised at centre-stage by a graceful stone-angel symbolising Eternity.

During the course of the play John Buchanan delivers to Alma an impromptu anatomy lecture. This lecture clearly links the symbolism of the set with man's dual impulses towards flesh and spirit which are embodied in the two antagonists. John "with crazy grinning intensity" addresses Alma:

Now listen here to this anatomy lecture: This upper story's the brain which is hungry for something called truth and doesn't get much but keeps on feeling hungry! This middle's the belly which is hungry for food. This point down here is the sex which is hungry for love because it is sometimes lonesome. I've fed all three, as much of all three as I could or as much as I wanted.²¹

Alma does not accept John's analysis of man's make-up; she points out that because John does not admit the existence of a soul he refers merely to the anatomy of a beast. During the play, however, Alma allows herself to admit of her flesh, and, acknowledging her repressed physical nature,

lets her excessive spirituality suffocate "in smoke from something on fire inside her" (SS, p. 116). Alma's newly released carnal nature does not win her John though, in spite of the fact that her desire for him does cause a physical awakening. The play ends as she picks up a travelling salesman. Presumably this sordid and transitory affair, or a series of them, will be the whole of Eternity Alma is to know on earth.

The ending of Summer and Smoke points up a curious but consistent paradox which appears, over and over, in Williams' work. Often his troubled heroes and heroines, who, in play after play, give in to the demands of their sexuality, seemingly, the only route to fulfilment on earth, end up, like Alma, as lonely desperate figures. Or worse, they suffer fates as horrible as the one meted out to Walter Burns, the hero of a sado-masochistic short story "Desire and the Black Masseur".²² This unfortunate hero gives in to desire by submitting his body to a gigantic masseur who at first beats Burns to give him masochistic pleasure, and then as the story veers towards the ridiculous, kills him and eats the whole of his body.

Paradox, actually, is at the core of Williams' literary imagination. Whilst such themes as prostitution and cannibalism haunt the Williams canon, he is traditionally Christian in orientation. It is my contention that this orientation explains why his heroes and heroines who give in to their sensual natures are often, curiously, punished for doing so. Attainment of Grace through sex - and Williams constantly paints up this route as a possible means to salvation - is hard for him to maintain dramatically. It would seem that this concept is antagonistic to Williams' sense of the religious. An insistent

overlay of traditional Christian feeling in his work leads him back inevitably to a very basic Christian tenet that demands subjugation of the body to the spirit. Often Williams' reflective, sensitive characters fail to escape into natural joy; his characters retain a sense of sin for indulging in fleshly pursuits. In The Night of the Iguana, Shannon, a defrocked priest with a penchant for young girls, is needled by Hannah Jelkes: "who wouldn't like to suffer and atone for the sins of himself and the world".²³ Significantly Shannon, himself, treats his partners abusively after a sexual contact. Most of Williams' characters, especially those of an artistic or philosophical bent, cannot accept their carnality. Paradoxically, for them, sex is a source of remorse as well as delight.

Critics such as Arthur Ganz, who calls Williams a "desperate moralist", have noted this paradox;²⁴ Ganz posits that Williams' desperate morality is primarily responsible for the way Williams chooses to interpret the writings of Lawrence. Ganz contends that Williams saw in Lawrence an equation between the natural (read sex instinct) and the good. For Williams, Lawrence provided "a rationale for the sexual obsessions that dominate his work".²⁵ This contention is supportable. The D.H. Lawrence of Williams' imagination is captured in the author's note that prefaces his one act play about the novelist:

Lawrence felt the mystery and power of sex, as the primal life urge, and was the life-long adversary of those who wanted to keep the subject locked away in the cellars of prudery. Much of his work is chaotic and distorted by tangent obsessions . . . but all in all his work is probably the greatest modern monument to the dark roots of creation.

T.W.
New Orleans, September, 1941²⁶

That Williams interprets the work of Lawrence in a very narrow way is not at issue. As Ganz notes "a disciple is not invariably the best advocate of his master's doctrine".²⁷

Williams, it would seem, whilst aware of how Lawrence celebrates consummation of the flesh, remains far too well indoctrinated by a Christian sense of sin to allow his indulgers in recommended sexual gratification to get away with it. Ganz, aware of this contradiction, notes:

Williams remains committed to the Romantic dictum inherent in his neo-Lawrencean point of view, that the natural equals the good, that the natural instincts welling up out of subconscious depths - and particularly the sexual instinct, whatever form it may take - are to be trusted absolutely. But Williams was far too strong a moralist, far too permeated with a sense of sin, to accept such an idea with equanimity.²⁸

And, it is true, it seems of little moment how sympathetically Williams portrays his martyr-like heroines, or how innocently his wandering artist figures are drawn; the moral impulse that makes him punish Val Xavier for giving in to the temptations of Lady Torrance also causes him to punish Blanche for her rejection of her homosexual husband. Ganz further notes that "because [Williams] was condemning what he most desired to pardon, in order to condemn at all he sometimes had to do so with ferocious violence"²⁹ hence the horrible fates meted out by Williams to Walter Burns and to Sebastian Venebles, the dead but omnipresent "hero" of Suddenly Last Summer. The terrible gothic quality of these two grotesque punishments comments on Williams' moral vision in a sinister and disturbing way. Like Val Xavier, Walter Burns is punished for obeying the tenet implicit in Williams' recommended doctrine

of sensuality because he indulges his desire. On the other hand, like Blanche, Sebastian is punished for rejecting the same recommended doctrine; both characters turn away from the needs of their fellow men. Blanche causes her husband's death by her rejection of him. Sebastian, in a more sinister way, turns in upon himself and away from the concerns of all his fellow men; in degree their punishments are made to fit the differing severity of their crimes: Williams' moral vision is not consistent.

This sort of ambivalence presents critics with a Chinese-box puzzle. The paradoxical nature of the fates of Burns and Sebastian Venebles becomes clearer, however, when one considers the contradictions inherent in Williams' dealings with the Lawrencean "primal life urge". It would seem that Williams' treatment of sensual themes is complicated by his perception of a Christian God. A thorough consideration of this complication helps to explain the nature of the seemingly indiscriminate and terrible violence to which many of his characters are exposed. John J. Fritscher, in a paper mainly concerned with a Freudian analysis of several of Williams' major works, discusses Williams' conception of God in a way that is pertinent to this discussion.³⁰ According to Fritscher, Williams' God is anthropomorphic: a projection not simply of man in general, but of Williams' own father in particular. In other words Williams' image of God becomes compounded with the father image of his early childhood. That Williams' early childhood was fraught with tension is well documented³¹; his father meted out portions of wrath and love to the young Williams with little rational discrimination. Thus Williams tended to see God, like his father, as randomly capable of being

both wrathful and loving. This dual perception is captured clearly by Brinda in Mama's Old Stucco House when she says to herself "God like other people has two kinds of hands, one hand with which to strike and another to soothe and caress with".³² Williams' ambivalent concept of divine and paternal authority is important; it provides a valid critical approach to almost all of his imaginative writing.

To explore this critical approach further one might consider Catherine Holly's statement in Suddenly Last Summer:

Somebody said or wrote once: "We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks!" (SLS, p. 40)

And Shannon, the defrocked priest turned dispossessed wanderer in The Night of the Iguana, explains a new line of work in words that echo Catherine's confusion; both characters are unsure about the nature of their God. Shannon explains to Hannah:

I entered my present line - tours of God's world conducted by a minister of God with a cross and a round collar to prove it. Collecting evidence . . . [to give credence to] my personal idea of God, not as a senile delinquent, but as a . . . (NI, pp. 60-61)

Shannon falters. Hannah suggests "incomplete sentence" as a fitting conclusion to his statement. Shannon makes no objection to her suggestion.

It would seem, then, that Williams, when he attempts to spell the word God is unsure about how to arrange the alphabet blocks at his disposal: there are, in his canon, two ways of spelling His name. As Fritscher suggests, one arrangement reads God of Love, and the other

God of Wrath.³³ The one arrangement refers to a New Testament God who offers a cycle of need - submission - communication - salvation, and the other to "an Old Testament God of Wrath ruling over a semi-Calvinistic cycle of guilt - submission - atonement - uncertainty".³⁴ This last version of God is surely the progenitor of the terrible violence that pervades Williams' work.

The New Testament God of Williams' ambivalent vision is not only a God fashioned in man's image, he is also a figure who advocates the doctrine of "love thy neighbor as thyself". Rare moments of communication offer to some of Williams' characters temporary salvation. Blanche DuBois experiences one of these rare moments when, after achieving her fragile moment of community with Mitch, she whispers, "sometimes - there's God - so quickly".³⁵ During these moments Williams allows a character to escape "the solitary confinement inside [his] own skin".³⁶ In Camino Real an extremely rare moment of communion is achieved; the hero, Kilroy (a modern version of Everyman), gains lasting transcendence. This lasting transcendence, achieved, significantly, outside of the realm of the sentient world, occurs when the resurrected hero joins Don Quixote (a representation of the archetypal lover) after death. During the course of the action Quixote's map has guided Kilroy to a parched fountain - "the spring of humanity gone dry".³⁷ After his resurrection, Kilroy, obviously now a surrogate Christ, becomes, like Jesus, an eternal force for good. The sentence imposed by the Old Testament God upon post-lapsarian man is lifted - salvation is a possibility. And as water rushes into the dry fountain, two characters embrace tenderly and Quixote murmurs " the violets in the mountains have broken the rocks." (CR, p.161)

This moment in the play is very powerful and poignant; it demonstrates one of Williams' great strengths - his lyricism. The power of human love as a road to salvation is almost always the inspiration that underpins his most memorable lines.

Unfortunately Williams' vision of the semi-Calvinistic, Old Testament God of Wrath, offering only an uncertainty of salvation, was destined to erode Williams' tenuous faith in the possibility of Salvation offered by the New Testament God of Love. In the very recent works temporary communities established between men become fewer and fewer in number. The "broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it's for one night only" (NI, p. 106) remain, more often than not, closed. In his most recent novel Moise and the World of Reason (1975) Williams is unable to affirm the existence of a caring God at all. The novel, obviously modelled in a Dantean mode, recounts the symbolic journey into darkness undertaken by several characters. These characters are the fragmented parts of a single identity, an identity which a reading of the Memoirs reveals to be that of Williams himself. As the narrator of the novel Williams makes only a bleak comment upon the uncertainty of human destiny. Mankind is destined to live in a universe apparently constructed without reason. The ending of the book captures this sense:

It isn't dark yet in the room but dimmer and dimmer
and all that I hear now are the footsteps of a
giant being, as hushed as they are gigantic,
footsteps of the Great Unknown One approaching
our world of reason or unreason, you name it as
you conceive it.³⁸

Tennessee Williams' efforts to resolve the ambivalence of his perception of a Christian God eventually lead him, at the end of his career, to a sense of an almost Hardy power at work in the Universe. Mankind is subject to a ubiquitous force that affords only an indifferent environment within whose confines the private histories of individuals with all their attendant strengths and weaknesses must rise or must fall.

Lawrence has a very different religious orientation from Williams. Lawrence's religious vision is clearly governed by his hatred of absolutist doctrines. In "A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover", his uneasiness with the absolutism of the tenets that underpin certain religious doctrines is clearly exposed. The thoroughgoing idealists Buddha, Plato and Jesus - "all three utter pessimists as regards life" (PhII, p. 511) - are vehemently condemned. These "idealists" Lawrence considered to teach "that the only happiness lay in abstracting oneself from life, the daily, yearly, seasonal life of birth and death and fruition, and living in the "immutable" or eternal spirit" (PhII, p. 511). Lawrence thought that to know the world in a Platonic or Christian sense "is to know the world when we know it apart from ourselves in the mean separateness of everything" (PhII, p. 512). Another way of knowing is recommended; one that is holistic in nature. For Lawrence the Christian faith is

lost in Protestantism finally, the togetherness with the universe, the togetherness of the body, the sex, the emotions, the passions, with the earth and sun and stars (PhII, p. 512).

Yet although Lawrence questioned the basic tenets of Christian doctrine, he did have definite opinions about the relative merits of the

Old and New Testaments. Like Williams, Lawrence differentiated between the two books, but whereas Williams' concern was with matter Lawrence's was with manner. The two books he considered as examples of the novel form. And as has already been noted, Lawrence regarded the novel as profoundly revelatory in terms of its moral and didactic function.

It might be useful to pursue further Lawrence's thought on the didacticism of his art. Lawrence believed that to start out with a didactic purpose before creating a work of art compromises the integrity of an artist.³⁹ A didactic purpose, if preconceived, provides a deadening approach to the creation of true art: it denies the possibility of "passional inspiration", rendering inert the dynamic of "the fluidity of living change". The profound revelatory function of art which "can inform and lead into new places" is compromised if the initial inspiration is a static purpose already present in the mind of the artist.

Even Tolstoy Lawrence considered to keep "lies" up his sleeve in the form of a didactic purpose. Tolstoy's lie was his "Christian socialism"; Flaubert's his "intellectual desperation". Thomas Hardy, a writer whom Lawrence admired and who had considerable influence on his work, is criticized: Hardy's lie was his inherent "pessimism" (PhII, p. 416). Lawrence considers that every artist in fashioning a work is faced with the choice between starting with "the deadness of a fixed purpose", or, on the other hand, allowing the dynamic "quickness" of "passional inspiration" to guide him. Lawrence does admit that "didactic bits" may turn out to be part and parcel of a novel but, in good art, only as the by-products of the artist's original inspiration. This concept of motivating inspiration is important to Lawrence: he believes that only when a

primary "passional inspiration" comes together with a secondary didactic purpose can art be truly revelatory.

Lawrence applied his thought on didacticism to the Bible. Of course Lawrence considered the Bible not as a work revealing sacred truths, but rather as an example of the novel form. The Bible, however, Lawrence did not consider to be a perfect example of the novel form. The books of the Old Testament, and Lawrence cites Genesis, Exodus, and Kings as examples, are acceptable; he considers them to have "proper" didactic function. Lawrence believed that the purpose of these writers was "so big it didn't quarrel with their passionate inspiration. The purpose and the inspiration were almost one" (PhII, p. 419). On the other hand Lawrence considered the books of the New Testament to be, most definitely, novels written with a primary didactic purpose. The pitfall that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John fall into is to indulge in too much "Sermon on the Mounting" (PhII, p. 418).

That Lawrence decided that it was the novel which was truly revelatory should come as no surprise. Just as the principle of dialectic is at the core of his conception of the workings of the human psyche so the same principle underlies his understanding of the revelatory nature of the novel. A novel, however, can only be revelatory when perfectly crafted; it must adhere to three essential criteria: quickness; organic interaction of its parts, and honourableness on the part of the author (PhII, p. 422-23). Lawrence would have most certainly quarrelled with Williams' "desperate morality" grown out of his theological determinism; he would have considered such an orientation a dead "fixed" purpose, and hence would have judged Williams dishonourable, because:

morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance. When a novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality. (Ph, p. 528)

And Lawrence would have found Williams guilty of yet another "deadly sin" that he believed some artists committed; Williams explores, over and over, through his art the nature of absolute "religion with its nailed down One God, [however spelled] who says Thou Shalt, Thou Shan't" (Ph, p. 528).

Lawrence's rejection of traditional Christian tenets leads him to believe that only the perfectly crafted novel is revelatory; his kind of novel reveals

the oldest Pan-mystery. God is the flame-life in all the universe; multifarious, multifarious flames, all colours and beauties and pains and sombrenesses . . . A man's manhood is to honour the flames in him, and to know that none of them is absolute (PhII, p. 426).

Lawrence's view of his art was inseparable from his view of life. The necessity of man to cope with the dynamic of flux as the very mode of his being is basic to Lawrence's metaphysical outlook. Lawrence had faith in man's ability to cope with relativism, in terms of his own personal growth, and also in terms of his relationships with others. If conflict within the psyche is recognised as potential for growth an individual can "recoil away from the things gone dead". The contradiction between opposing forces (thesis and antithesis) and their continual resolution (synthesis) allows man to grow nearer the supreme possibility of allowing the vital flame of his being to participate, if only for a moment, in the "greater flame life in all the universe".

This concept, as Brian John notes, provides a central theme in Lawrence's work, and "accounts for the recurrent motifs of sleep and arousal, of death and rebirth".⁴⁰ Lawrence's most famous image, the Phoenix, captures, succinctly, the dynamic of this dialectical process.

Lawrence's whole career was spent seeking out ways to achieve peace and harmony, not only within the individual, but, by implication, in society at large. The answer, he felt, was to be found within powers inherent in the human psyche. Wholeness of an individual, or of a relationship, is created by establishing a relationship between dual impulses in the psyche, not through a fusing but rather through a complementing of one by the other. Nowhere does Lawrence suggest that this undertaking is easy; indeed, his whole canon moves only erratically towards the articulation of this ideal. Lawrence's sense of complementarity as the means to achieve wholeness allows his characters to move outwards into contact with others. His work is suffused with a sense of hope that mankind, with effort, can "come through".

Unlike Lawrence then, who writes of what should and can be, Williams writes of what is and cannot be changed. Williams' theological determinism does not allow him to accept the viability of the Lawrencean route to wholeness and harmony. Although the playwright's religion is fraught with ambivalence and paradox, he nowhere doubts the existence of God as the primary and absolute cause of being. This vision allows no waning of the ancient soul/body duel, either in himself or in his characters. The rest of this study will demonstrate that Williams seizes upon the "sensual romantic" rationale he finds in Lawrence to ease the terrible guilt he suffers by indulging the Cavalier side or

of his nature. But his rationale will be shown to achieve only partial success.

CHAPTER ONE

¹Tennessee Williams, "Person to Person" reprinted as the preface to Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (New York: Signet, 1955), p. vii. This essay originally appeared in the New York Times Sunday Drama Section, 1955. More recently the essay appears in a volume of collected essays Where I Live, Selected Essays by Tennessee Williams, eds., Christine R. Day and Bob Woods (New York: New Directions, 1978), pp. 75-87.

²D.H. Lawrence, Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works by D.H. Lawrence, eds., Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. ix. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

³D.H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 104. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

⁴Tennessee Williams, "Something Wild . . ." reprinted as the preface to 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One Act Plays by Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. xi. This essay originally appeared in The New York Star in 1945. More recently the essay appears in a volume of collected essays Where I Live, Selected Essays by Tennessee Williams, eds., Christine R. Day and Bob Woods (New York: New Directions, 1978), pp. 7-14.

⁵Ibid., p. xii.

⁶Ibid., p. xii.

⁷Ibid., p. vii.

⁸D.H. Lawrence, Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence, ed., Edward D. McDonald (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 521-526. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

⁹Williams, "Person to Person", in Day and Woods, Where I Live, p. 77.

¹⁰Williams, "Afterword to Camino Real" in Day and Woods, Where I Live, p. 69. This essay dated June 1, 1953 was included in the first published version of Camino Real (New York: New Directions, 1953), pp. x-xi.

¹¹Brian John, Supreme Fictions: Studies in the Work of William Blake, Thomas Carlyle, W.B. Yeats, and D.H. Lawrence (Montreal: McGill University, 1974), p. 241.

¹²See Esther Merle Jackson, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 3-42 for a thorough consideration of Williams' links with Classical dramatic theory.

¹³Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁴Williams, "The Timeless World of the Play" in Day and Woods, Where I Live, pp. 52-53. This essay originally appeared in The New York Times, 1951. The essay was subsequently used as an introduction to the first published version of The Rose Tattoo (New York: New Directions, 1951).

¹⁵D.H. Lawrence, The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, ed., Aldous Huxley (London: Heinemann, 1956), pp. 198-199. All subsequent references to this work will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

¹⁶D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), p. 189.

¹⁷Tennessee Williams, Camino Real (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 78.

¹⁸Jackson, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams, p. 30.

¹⁹Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Marble and the Statue", in Ian Gregor and Meynard Mack, eds., Imagined Worlds: Essays in Honor of John Butt (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 390.

²⁰Tennessee Williams, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 197), p. 23. In this work Williams writes "Let me tell you this sworn truth. I have never doubted the existence of God". All subsequent references to this work will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²¹Tennessee Williams, "Summer and Smoke", in Tennessee Williams: Four Plays (New York: New Directions, 1976), p. 98. All subsequent references to two plays in this work Summer and Smoke and Suddenly Last Summer will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References

will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²²Tennessee Williams, "Desire and the Black Masseur", in Tennessee Williams, One Arm and Other Stories (New York: New Directions, 1948), pp. 93-97.

²³Tennessee Williams, "The Night of the Iguana", in Tennessee Williams, Three by Tennessee (New York: Signet, 1976), p. 99. All subsequent references to the three plays in this collection, Sweet Bird of Youth, The Rose Tattoo and The Night of the Iguana will be to the abbreviated titles (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parenthesis after the quoted material.

²⁴Arthur Ganz, "Tennessee Williams: A Desperate Morality", in Stephen S. Stanton, ed., Tennessee Williams, A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977), pp. 123-137. An earlier version of the essay, "The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams", was published in The American Scholar, 31 (Spring, 1962), pp. 273-94.

²⁵Ibid., p. 124.

²⁶Tennessee Williams, "I Rise in Flames, Cried the Phoenix: A Play in One Act About D.H. Lawrence", in Tennessee Williams, Dragon Country: A Book of Plays. All subsequent references to the play will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²⁷Ganz, "A Desperate Morality" in Stanton, Tennessee Williams, p. 124.

²⁸Ibid., p. 136.

²⁹Ibid., p. 136.

³⁰John J. Fritscher, "Some Attitudes and a Posture: Religious Metaphor and Ritual in Tennessee Williams' Query of the American God", in Modern Drama, 13, (September, 1970), pp. 201-215.

³¹Williams, Memoirs passim. Also Fritscher, "Religious Metaphor and Ritual" passim. A further interesting commentary on Williams' relationship with his father is to be found in the early chapters of Benjamin Nelson's, Tennessee Williams: The Man and his Work (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1961).

³²Tennessee Williams, "Mama's Old Stucco House", in Tennessee Williams, The Knightly Quest: A Novella and Four Short Stories (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 121.

³³Fritscher, "Religious metaphor and ritual", p. 204.

³⁴Ibid., p. 204.

³⁵Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (New York: Signet, 1974), p. 96. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

³⁶Tennessee Williams, "Person to Person" in Day and Woods, Where I Live, p. 76.

³⁷Williams, Camino Real, p. 25.

³⁸Tennessee Williams, Moise and the World of Reason (New York: Bantam, 1975), p. 214.

³⁹Lawrence discusses didacticism in art extensively in "The Novel", in Phoenix II, pp. 416-426.

⁴⁰John, Supreme Fictions, p. 242.

CHAPTER TWO

In the first chapter of this thesis it was argued that Tennessee Williams found considerable support for his vision of humanity in his acceptance of traditional Christian doctrine, and that, in spite of a certain ambivalence of thought about the nature of the Christian God, he nowhere doubted His existence as a primary and absolute cause of being. Because Williams' theological vision is so fraught with ambivalence, his dual perception of the nature of his God allows a vision of Man eternally damned to co-exist with a vision of Man able to be redeemed from original sin; his tortured heroes and heroines are trapped within their creator's paradoxical vision. At one and the same time they are doomed irrevocably by their past, yet they are moved to seek the salvation offered by the sacrifice made by the New Testament God of Love.

In light of the above argument this chapter will examine several of the less well known of Williams' works, including those admitting of the direct influence of D.H. Lawrence. The purpose of the examination will be to reveal why the characters presented by the playwright never fully possess that sense of otherness and complementarity in relation to one another that Lawrence's favoured characters struggle ever to achieve. Many of Williams' characters are maimed, either psychologically or physically and, unlike many of Lawrence's characters, find it impossible to escape more than momentarily from the prison of the self into the touch of otherness. By implication the argument will expose, especially through analysis of the Lawrence-inspired works, just how Williams perverted the

Lawrencean elements in his work to "his own peculiar bent", which is not even remotely Lawrencean.

Because the Williams' character finds himself in a post-lapsarian world, he is often marked by desperate attempts to escape its corruption. Most often, he vacillates frantically between two possible routes of escape - the one offered by Love and the other by artistic endeavour¹ (like Sir Philip Sidney, Tennessee Williams believed the poet to be close to God). The route offered by Love (usually represented by escape into sexuality) proves problematic for Williams to endorse wholeheartedly; his paradoxical theological vision causes him to doubt whether sexual activity is the right way to achieve transcendence. Even the route offered by aesthetic endeavour does not allow a Williams character to get off scot-free: both the Memoirs and the imaginative writings suggest that to become an artist can involve considerable sacrifice. Felice of Outcry may speak for Williams when he proclaims "all we have to do is remember that if we're not artists we're nothing"², but his cry must be weighed against the fates of Hart Crane and Rimbaud, who Williams considered to "have touched fire that burned them alive" (MTW, p. 250). Williams suggests that it is only through acts of "self-immolation" that the artist "can offer the entire truth of [himself] within the reasonable boundaries of a book" (MTW, p. 250).

Given Williams' view that the creation of a work of art involves considerable self-sacrifice on the part of its creator, it is no accident that many of his characters (and even his self-portrait in the Memoirs) are fashioned as surrogate evangelists very much according to the Gospel of St. John; itinerant evangelists may bring light in the form of their

art to a dark world, but like Christ they run the risk of being martyred by the society they attempt to save. That Williams, rather self-indulgently, sees himself in the role of artist-evangelist is made explicit in the Memoirs: he remarks that amongst the Scriptures is a piece of advice he particularly loves: "Let thy light shine among men that they see thy good works and glorify thy Father which is in heaven" (MTW, p. 231).

Even a superficial study of the Williams canon suggests that it is the quality of rootlessness possessed by evangelical artist figures, linked with a conviction that aesthetic endeavour will eventually cause suffering, that appeals most to Williams. A very early work "Cried the Fox" (Taos, 1939), dedicated to D.H. Lawrence, reveals these preoccupations in embryo. The poem, which exploits imagery from Lawrence's novella, "The Fox", reads:

CRIED THE FOX
for D.H.L.

I run, cried the fox, in circles
narrower, narrower still,
across the desperate hollow,
skirting the frantic hill

and shall till my brush hangs burning
flame at the hunter's door
continue this fatal returning
to places that failed me before!

Then, with his heart breaking nearly,
the lonely, passionate bark
of the fugitive fox rang out clearly
as bells in the frosty dark,

across the desperate hollow
skirting the frantic hill,
calling the pack to follow
a prey that escaped them still.³

Much of the poetry of Williams and Lawrence is thematically concerned with the dehumanising effect of industrial civilisation upon the individual. Many of their poems parallel the stultification of bourgeois life with a more positive way symbolised by the sensual world of nature - "birds, beasts, and flowers". Thus, although no explicit societal reference is made in the poem, considering the dedication, and knowing that Lawrence was victimised by an unsympathetic middle class, one tends naturally to identify "the pack" with the forces of conventional morality, and the fox as a favoured evangelical artist-hero struggling to make his message heard.⁴

The poem has an atmosphere of claustrophobia, and the sense of a fox running in "narrower" and more desperate circles is equally present in Lawrence's novella. In the novella, Lawrence, too, through the person of Henry Grenfel, comments on the inherently destructive nature of industrial society that ever impinges, insidiously, upon the free world of nature. Henry, even while hunting the fox, has this sudden intuition:

it seemed to him England was little and tight, he felt the landscape was constricted even in the dark, and that there were too many dogs in the night, making a noise like a fence of sound, like the network of English hedges netting the view. He felt the fox didn't have a chance . . . It seemed to him it would be the last of the foxes in this loudly barking, thick voiced England, tight with innumerable little houses.⁵

Considering the content of this extended passage it might well have been the one that inspired the Williams poem; the ambiance is so similar. What is different, however, is that in the poem, the voracious nature of society at large, "the pack" becomes the whole thematic focus. This is not so in the novella. Rather, in the Lawrence work, the fox functions

as a totem for March's internal intuitive faculty, and adds, through Grenfel's momentary identification with the animal, symbolic resonance to his pursuit of his human quarry.

Williams exploits the fox symbolism in his poem in a different way. It is consistent with his perception of the artist as evangelist that the fox, in spite of a killer pack in hot pursuit, is compelled to let his "passionate bark" ring out his message clearly. Of course, because the fox-artist hero is a Williams creation there is the inevitable suggestion of a maudlin romantic, condemned to endless running, who encourages eternal pursuit, and who, through thus advertising himself, invites his destruction, "flame at the hunter's door". Hedged in as he is by society, the artist, according to Williams, is unable to escape or determine his future.

It must be noted, however, that Williams was accurate in his perception of Lawrence as a victim of an unsympathetic public. That Lawrence felt himself driven into exile is true. But what Williams overlooks in his mentor is that he never allows his disillusion with contemporary societal trends to compromise his faith in the possibility of better times to come. In isolation, whether the isolation be imposed by societal pressures or by free choice, an individual made fugitive can summon up the necessary strength for a "rebirth" into society. "The dialectical tension [at the heart of the Lawrencean metaphysic] will swing in the goodness of time in more positive directions; life itself, which requires such a destruction and a dialectic remains sweet."⁶ This is in direct contrast to Williams' conception of a fugitive who seems unable to envision the possibility of a new dawn or rebirth.

In the Lawrence canon there are several figures that can be compared to Williams' fugitive artist heroes. Lou of St. Mawr, for example, chooses a voluntary exile. But perhaps the Lawrence hero who most begs comparison is the hero of "The Man Who Died"⁷. This character whilst not being an artist figure per se does bring the word to a society that crucifies him for his pains. The man who died clearly represents Lawrence's conception of Jesus of Nazareth, although Lawrence is always careful never to give him a name. Lawrence's hero differs from Jesus in that he is only made to suffer a spiritual death; he is taken down from the cross too soon, and after his "resurrection" wanders as a lonely alien through the countryside seeking a new meaning for his existence. After considering the society that crucified him he becomes "filled with the sickness of unspeakable disillusion"(MWD, p. 166). "The mania of cities" that comprise society he sees as a "strange entanglement of passions, and circumstances everywhere . . . always the dread insomnia of compulsion" (MWD, p. 181). He understands that the perspective of the peasants who befriend him grows out of fear: "he saw them as they were: limited, meagre in their life, without any splendour of gesture and courage. . . But they were what they were, slow inevitable parts of the natural world" (MWD, p. 169). He knew that their compassion grew only out of their fear of the natural nobility which gave him his authoritative bearing.

In the second part of "The Man Who Died" the fugitive evangelist finds new meaning for existence in the person of "a woman who served Isis". Both he and the woman experience a physical awakening, and playing Osiris to her Isis he leaves her fulfilled with his child. Later he is

compelled to turn fugitive once more as society, made manifest in the form of his woman's mother and her slaves, threatens to betray him to the Romans and their justice.

K.M. Sagar compares the hero of the Lawrencean work to the hero of the Williams' poem. Commenting on the "nervous St. Vitus' dance" of the Williams' work, he notes that there is in the hero of "The Man Who Died", "a restraint, an inwardness, an insouciance at the heart"⁸. Sagar's observation captures, exactly, the quiet ending of the Lawrence story. The Lawrencean hero does not make a "frantic" escape over a "desperate hollow"; rather he rows slowly on, into an unknown future; his boat he allows to move randomly with the current. The man who died is at peace with himself. The ending of the story is affirmative: it concludes with a surge of renewal and hope for the future⁹. Laughing to himself, the hero speaks out loud:

"I have sowed the seed of my life and my resurrection,
and put my touch forever upon the choice woman of this
day, and I carry her perfume in my flesh like essence
of roses. She is dear to me in the middle of my
being. But the gold and flowing serpent is coiling
up again to sleep at the root of my tree.

"So let the boat carry me, tomorrow is another day"

(MWD, p. 211).

At the end of the story Lawrence's hero is still responsible for the quality of his inner life: society can only cause him to alter the physical circumstances of it. Growth and change are an ever-present option for the Lawrencean character who is courageous enough to "accept the fluidity of living change" as the basic mode of his existence. In direct contrast, Williams' fox-artist figure, although compelled to

reveal the truth of the superiority of the sensual way of the natural over bourgeois civilisation, knows he is doomed to remain unheeded from the start. The figure in the Williams poem, like his creator, is too hedged about by the determinants that bound his world, which same determinants irrevocably shape and limit the possibilities of his growth. Change, it would seem, is an impossible dream, yet one the artist must go on dreaming. "The pack" will in the end silence the "benevolent anarchist" who threatens a sterile but otherwise safe existence.

Williams identified his mentor with a fox again. Lawrence, "a sly old fox", appears in the work "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix". The indifferent one act play was, Williams claims, inspired by a reading of the Huxley collection of Lawrence's letters. (MTW, p. 102). In 1946, whilst immersed in the letters, Williams visited Frieda at the Lawrence ranch in Taos, where he promised to write a play about her late husband. In spite of its lack of literary merit the play will be considered here because it reasserts the idea of Lawrence deliberately courting a desperate fate. In addition the play reveals that the playwright and the novelist did not share the same ideas on the possibility of complete union between a man and a woman. Particularly the play exposes Williams' very personal interpretation of Lawrence's theory of "blood consciousness".

Williams' insistence that to become an artist involves considerable sacrifice is hinted at in the author's note that prefaces the play:

Not long before Lawrence's death an exhibition was held of his paintings in London. Primitive in technique and boldly sensual in matter this exhibition created a little tempest. The pictures were seized by police and would have been burned if the authorities had not been restrained by an injunction (RFP, p. 56).

In the same paragraph Williams notes that Lady Chatterley's Lover "was likewise under a censor's ban as much of his work had been in the past". Art, it seems, leads to book burnings and near destruction of canvasses.

The theme of sacrifice introduced in the preface is developed in the body of the play. Under a heavy overlay of light, heat, and fire imagery, the Lawrence of Williams' conception is made to suffer like Hart Crane and Rimbaud, who had "touched fire that burned them alive". The body of the fictional Lawrence is "a house that's made out of tissue paper and caught on fire. The walls are transparent, they're all lit up with flame" (RFP, p. 67). Yet the evangelical artist must struggle ever to have his message heard; there will always be "light - Light - light!" and he (Lawrence) will be "Prophet of it" (RFP, p. 74). In anger that indeed his message may not be heard before his death, the anguished hero insists that if he ever finds his god he will "tear the heart out of his body and burn it before him" (RFP, p. 62). That he invites some of his suffering is made evident from Frieda's taunt "You can't stand Jesus Christ because he beat you to it. Oh, how you would have loved to suffer the original crucifixion!" (RFP, p. 62). Melodramatic, yes; but the play attests to Williams' habit of linking the idea of artistic endeavour with destruction. Once again, as in "Cried the Fox", Williams affirms the artist's seemingly untenable position in this world.

It is strange that Williams claims that the play was inspired by a reading of the Huxley collection of letters, in the playwright's opinion "the best picture of the man" (MTW, p. 102). That the letters did indeed inspire the work will be demonstrated below. In fact it will be shown that the letters provide a source for some of the dialogue.

A major theme at variance with "the picture of the man" provided by the Huxley collection of letters is that of the impossibility of sustained union between a man and a woman. In spite of a few shared moments of tenderness an insistent theme of misogyny suffuses the play. The relationship Williams portrays between Lawrence and Frieda is fraught with conflict. This conflict is blatantly developed by the use of images of dark and light. When the play opens Lawrence is sitting in bright sunlight, shoring up his remaining strength; he is even fed sunlight in the form of marmalade, "the month of August in a bottle" (RFP, p. 60). The "valkyrian" Frieda is accused of "sucking the fierce red sun from [Lawrence's] body all day and turning it into venom to spew in [his] face" (RFP, p. 61). Even the cat (predictably a female) is suspected of eating one of Lawrence's two pet goldfish. The survivor, Lawrence demands, should be placed on the window-sill in the sunlight, presumably to help ensure its survival. The elaborate conceit is completed when Frieda is identified with the cat: "You know what I think? I think you fed her the fish. It's like you to do such a thing. You're both so fat, so rapacious, so viciously healthy and hungry!" (RFP, p. 65).

Just as sunlight imagery serves to define Lawrence, so Williams uses the imagery of darkness to define Frieda. Images of darkness and death are linked with the female early in the play:

Women have such a fine intuition of death. They smell it coming before it's started even. I think it's women that actually let death in, they whisper and beckon and slip it the dark latchkey under their aprons (RFP, p. 63).

Imagery of light set against imagery of darkness linked with

the rapacious nature of women gain resonance as the play progresses.

When Bertha (a caricature of Dorothy Brett) visits the dying hero

Lawrence informs her that

they [women] take the male in their bodies but only because they secretly hope that he won't be able to get out again, that he'll be captured for good (RFP, p. 70).

Frieda apologises to Brett, explaining:

I tell you Brett, his ideas of sex are becoming right down cosmic! When the sun comes up in the morning - you know what he says. No, I won't repeat it. And when the sun's going down - Oh, well, you will hear him yourself (RFP, p. 71).

And, sure enough, Williams does not leave Brett (or the audience for that matter) in suspense for long. As the sun sets on the play, and as, simultaneously, the artist hero dies, he gasps:

The sun's - going down. He's seduced by the harlot of darkness . . . Now she has got him, they're copulating together and now she will start to destroy him. She's eating him up ... Oh (RFP, p. 74).

For the Lawrence in the play woman is the dark night which would sheathe his maleness. The only way he can be whole is to be solitary and self-sustaining. "I want to do it alone" he says of his own death. Even with its undertones of confused love and hate "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix" is about a person alone and intact. Lawrence wants to die alone not "huddled over" by dark Valkyrian women. He is going to do it alone. With "the rocks and the water and sunlight [on him]. No hands, no lips, no women!" (RFP, p. 64). It is a bleak picture that

Williams paints of the possibility of union between the male and female.

A letter that Lawrence wrote to Katherine Mansfield in response to a work by Jung, that Mansfield had sent him, is relevant to Williams' play. Lawrence comments on the work, warning Mansfield to "beware of it" because he believed the Jungian "mother-incest idea" can become an obsession. But, nonetheless, Lawrence believed there was some truth in the idea. He writes:

it seems to me . . . that at certain periods the man has a desire and a tendency to return unto the woman, makes her his goal and end, finds his justification in her. In this way he casts himself as it were into her womb, and she, the Magna Mater, receives him with gratification . . . I have done it, and now struggle with all my might to get out. In a way Frieda is the devouring mother. It is awfully hard, once the sex-relation has gone this way, to recover (LDHL, p. 43).

Obviously this quote from the Huxley collection of Lawrence's letters provided Williams with his source for the closing dialogue of "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix".

One must admit that the Mansfield letter might be interpreted by some as an indication of Lawrence's essential antagonism toward women. Considered by itself the letter could point up Lawrence as a thoroughgoing misogynist, but had Williams studied the letter in the larger context of the whole Huxley collection he could not have failed to absorb the content of many, many others striking a contrary note.¹⁰ And then he would have surely noted that in spite of the fact that several letters indicate the Lawrences' did have their share of marital discord, many others pay glowing tribute to the capacity of love to overcome the conflicts of married life. Written in the vein of "The Song of a Man Who has Come

Through" is this letter to Thomas D. Dunlap.

One must learn to love and go through a good deal of suffering to get to it, like any knight of the grail . . . do you think love is an accomplished thing, the day it is recognised? It isn't. To love you have to learn to understand the other, more than she understands herself, and to submit to her understanding of you. It is damnably difficult and painful, but it is the only thing which endures. You musn't think that your desire or your fundamental need is to make a career, or to fill your life with activity, or even to provide for your family materially. It isn't. Your most vital necessity in this life is that you should love your wife completely and implicitly and in entire nakedness of body and spirit. Then you will have peace and inner security, no matter how many things go wrong. And this peace and security will leave you free to act and produce your own work . . . You asked me once what my message was . . . this that I tell you is my message as far as I've got any (LDHL, p. 207).

Williams' ill-balanced portrayal of women as dark and devouring is certainly at variance with the tone of this letter. Also the apparent myopia of Williams' critical vision becomes downright blindness when one considers the preface to his play, a preface written by Frieda herself. In effect the preface is a refutation of the work it introduces. Although Lawrence's widow admitted the presence of an "eternal antagonism between man and woman", she felt "the greater reality was something else". Her life with Lawrence she describes "was life in its freedom, in its limitless possibilities that bound [them] together . . . A kind wind blew on [her] flame of life to make it burn brighter".¹¹

Just as Williams' appreciation of Lawrence's thought regarding the possibility of any kind of unity between the sexes is twisted towards "his own peculiar bent" so is his interpretation of the Lawrencean theory of blood consciousness.¹² This is made evident when, in "I Rise in Flame,

Cried the Phoenix", Williams creates dialogue derivative from his own appreciation of Lawrencean thought. Ignoring Lawrence's insistence upon the necessary co-existence of blood consciousness with the balancing force of the intellect, Williams gives his characters Brett and Frieda these lines.

BRETT: There's more to be known of a person than carnal knowledge.

FRIEDA: But carnal knowledge comes first.

BRETT: I disagree with you.

FRIEDA: And also with Lawrence then. He always insisted you couldn't know women until you had known their bodies.

BRETT: Frieda, I think it is you who kept him so much in his body . . .

FRIEDA: You would have plucked him out of his body. Where would he be? - In the air - Ahhh, your deep understanding and my stupidity always! . . . You just don't know, the meaning of Lawrence escapes you! In all his work he celebrates the body! How he despises the prudery of people that want to hide it (RFP, p. 68).

Seemingly the "meaning of Lawrence" has not only eluded the fictive Brett, but also her creator. Again Williams is guilty of gleaning from his reading of the letters only what he needs as a rationale to validate the obsessions that dominate his own work. In a letter to the real Dorothy Brett, yet another that Williams presumably overlooks, Lawrence makes clear his position; he writes "we are creatures of two halves, spiritual and sensual - and each half is as important as the other. Any relationship based on one half - say the delicate spiritual half alone - inevitably brings revulsion and betrayal. It is halfness, or partness, which causes Judas" (LDHL, p. 634).

Williams had not yet finished "reinterpreting" Lawrencean thought. You Touched Me!, a full length play copyrighted in 1942, is interesting to

analyse in respect to Lawrence's thought because it is, in fact, an adaptation of his short story of the same title - minus the exclamation mark.¹³ The play, written in collaboration with Donald Windham, attempts to invest the theme of human sexuality with cosmic significance. This important Lawrencean theme, however, is overwhelmed by the incorporation, in the play, of comic scenes of clashing temperament; by melodrama; by romantic sentimentality; by Williams' penchant for inflated invective, and finally by a lavish overlay of poorly integrated symbolism derived from Lawrence's novella "The Fox". The play does introduce two distortions of Lawrencean thought that have increasing consequence for Williams' later work. You Touched Me! reveals that Williams differs radically in his assessment of the importance of touch between individuals. And also, Williams' treatment of the delicate hypersensitive character is at variance with Lawrence's; the dramatist is sympathetic to such characters, whilst the novelist's attitude is invariably one of contempt.

Owing to the publication of the Windham letters in 1977¹⁴ the critic is now in a position to know exactly what Williams contributed to this early work. In March of 1942 Donald Windham had completed an outline and written several scenes of the play. Williams read over the material and considered it to have greater possibilities than Windham could realise alone; he offered to collaborate with him. By May of the same year the first version of the play was complete and Williams left for Macon, France. Whilst he was there, the idea of incorporating the symbolism of Lawrence's novella "The Fox" came to Williams. He wrote to Windham:

I wish you would read a story called "The Fox" in a D.H. Lawrence volume of short novels called The Captain's Doll. It is basically the same story as ours, the two women and man triangle - only these two women are not sisters but out and out "Lesbos", and the boy kills the rival one by chopping a tree to fall on her. And the symbol of a fox is used very effectively - the boy is like a fox raiding a hen-coop . . . it has some stuff in it we can use in the play, notably the fox (LDW, p. 29).

The Windham letters make clear that Williams was largely responsible for the final version of the play.¹⁵

In You Touched Me! Williams adapts Lawrence's ideas to his own purposes by equating the good with the recognition of one's sexual needs. The subtlety of characterisation around which Lawrence structured his story is debased to such a degree that the major characters in the Williams play can be broken down, non-arbitrarily, into those in favour of sexuality, and those that are not. Hadrian, the Captain, and, in the end, Matilda, are juxtaposed in a no-nonsense way, to the "congenitally frigid" Emmie and her impotent suitor the Reverend Guildford Melton. To underscore this already obvious split, the stage is also divided to establish visually the conflict between female gentility and male vigour. On the right is Captain Rockley's room sparsely fitted out with port-hole, Red Chinese Dragon Chair and Ship's Wheel. "These things evoke the memory of a freer existence than the gentility of the rest of the house" (YTM!, p. 4). The dining room provides a contrast; it is genteely cluttered with "what-nots", and a spinet. "Feminine ornaments, a multitude of them, are on shelves, and the colors of the room are gentle and pleasing". The drawing room "has grace and beauty as many things do which nevertheless are not in vital contact with the world" (YTM!, p. 1).

Williams transforms the younger sister of Lawrence's story into a frigid maiden aunt named Emmie. Matilda, the large-nosed maiden of thirty-two in the story is metamorphosed into a sheltered, fragile and breathtakingly beautiful maiden of twenty: "She might have stepped out of a lyric by Shakespeare or Cowper, or Spenser" (YTM!, p. 5). In the Lawrence story the protagonist has some of "the neatness, the reserve, the underground quality of the rat"¹⁶ - such a character is not intended to be flatly admirable - but in Williams' hands the rat-like quality is softened into "the look of a young animal of the woods", which attribute invests the character with "an alert inquisitive look" (YTM!, p. 12). The father in the story, a dying brick-maker, is changed into a clowning, bungling dipsomaniac sea-captain. The impotent Reverend is added, presumably, to give support to those ranged against sexuality. Williams, with such Harlequin Romance characters, effortlessly develops his play towards a predictable conclusion. The Captain aids the protagonist woo and awaken Matilda, and the two are happily united in spite of the vigilant efforts of Emmie and the Reverend to keep Matilda's virgin status intact.

The same fairy tale motif of the male arousing the unawakened sleeper underpins the Lawrence story, but the exploration of the theme proceeds at a much deeper level. The strange, complex exploration of the web of love and hatred, the probing of covert incest and misogyny within the family structure - the dying father "had a strange desire, quite unreasonable, for revenge upon the women who had surrounded him for so long, and served him so carefully" (YTM, p. 407) - is missing in the play. Missing also is an exploration of the consequences of passionate awakening

and its attendant spiritual conflicts. These are of little concern to Williams in this play.

It must be noted though, that Williams did glean from his reading of Lawrence an appreciation of how the novelist celebrated the participation of the microcosm of the individual life-force within the macrocosmic whole of the Universe. A natural son of Pan, Williams' protagonist, Hádrian, punctuates You Touched Me! with music he plays on his flute. From time to time he even delivers impassioned speeches about the creation of a new and more natural world order. Clearly Williams intends his play to have cosmic significance. Then again, when the action drags a little, the maid Phoebe, described as "a buxom girl with nymph-like movements" (YTM!, p. 6), romps and squeals her way over the stage aided by the slaps and tickles of the perennially inebriated Captain Rockley. Joseph Wood Krutch, who reviewed the original production of the play at the Booth Theatre, New York City did not feel the playwright had achieved "a very satisfactory integration". He noted;

there may be some connection between phallic worship and a new league of nations, but it is not to me a very clear one. Shortly after the hero appears, playing a penny flute he is in the midst of a passionate speech about the new world order, and to me it does not become clear whether society is to be saved through better international understanding, or whether, as Lawrence sometimes seemed to think, all we need is more and better copulation.¹⁷

The remark directed at Lawrence apart, this is, all in all, not an unfair stab at Williams' romantic comedy.

Certainly You Touched Me! is not Williams' most pleasing work. However, his handling of one motif within the play is important to an understanding of his more successful works. This motif is one common to

both the Lawrence story and the Williams play. The crisis in both works turns about a mistaken touch exchanged between the protagonists. In both works the heroine, forgetting that her father's room is occupied by Hadrian, touches the hero's forehead. The action awakens Matilda to the pervasive power of the sensual, and makes Hadrian aware of a deep desire for the heroine. Although the same incident is placed at the centre of both the Lawrence and the Williams work it has vastly differing implications for both.

Touch, in the Lawrence canon, has the power of arousing a person's sensual nature in an irrevocable way. As a mode of communication touch has a totally binding and regenerative capacity. When in Lawrence's "You Touched Me" Matilda places her hand on the forehead of the sleeper and awakens him, she is shocked to find that her state of "entranced misery" over her father's condition has resulted in a crucial physical contact with the young man. "'Well', said her calm and weary mind, 'it was only a mistake, why take any notice of it'" (YTM, p. 40). But the awakening of regenerative physical desire is never an accident, and "she could not reason her feelings so easily" (YTM, p. 402). Hadrian, too, is profoundly affected for the touch "startled something out of his soul". "The fragile exquisiteness of her caress startled him most, revealed unknown things to him" (YTM, p. 402).

Williams quite rightly realised that there was a structural and thematic connection between "The Fox" and "You Touched Me". In "The Fox" the same theme of touch is incorporated, but in this work in a more subtle way than in the short story: a fantasy experience of touch anticipates a physical one. The night of Henry Grenfel's arrival March

dreams of a fox singing in the darkness, and when she goes to him he bites her and whisks his brush across her face so that "it seared and burned her mouth with great pain" (F, p. 126). This dream of sexual awakening finds its parallel in her response when Henry actually kisses her and she feels burned and wounded. When the dream experience is realised as an immediate sense experience March is bound irrevocably to Henry.

It has already been noted that touch in the Lawrence canon has a binding and regenerative capacity. Even in a work as early as Sons and Lovers Paul Morel and Baxter Dawes come to an understanding of each other through physical contact. However, touch between individuals should always remain a balanced and complementing force; touch can become too intense if it shackles and limits possibilities of growth. Thus, in Women in Love, Birkin tries to balance what he sees as the claustrophobic bond of his relationship with Ursula by touching another. When he wrestles with Gerald he attempts to broaden the bounds of the liaison by establishing a Blutbrüderschaft. In fact how a character responds to touch can be regarded as a measure of Lawrence's approval or conversely his disapproval.

An important work to note in respect to Lawrence's handling of the touch motif is his short story "The Blind Man"¹⁸. Just as in Women in Love Lawrence treats this theme to explore the negative implications of a too close male/female intimacy so Lawrence treats the same theme in this story. In "The Blind Man" the theme is explored almost exclusively. The work is concerned with the marriage of a blind man, Maurice Pervin, and his wife Isabel. Early in the story Lawrence demonstrates that the devouring nature of a totally absorbing "blood" relationship is unbalanced;

the wonderful and unspeakable intimacy has become an intolerable burden for the couple, so much so that Isabel

felt she would go mad, for she could not bear it. And sometimes he had devastating fits of depression, which seemed to lay waste his whole being (BM, p.347).

The wife, in spite of the fact that she believes a marriage should be the whole of existence, intuitively feels that all is not well: "dazed, she schemed for a way out. She invited friends, she tried to give him some further connection with the outer world" (BM, p.348). A possible solution arrives in the person of Bertie Reid. This character is in total contradistinction to Maurice the sensual male. At his centre he is "neuter", "nothing"; "he could not approach women physically" (BM, p.359). Bertie is, in fact, an archetype of the cerebral type of character, anathema to Lawrence. Intuitively Isabel "felt that they ought to get on together . . . she felt that if only each could have a clue to the other there would be such a rare understanding between them" (BM, p.349).

With an almost brutal calm Lawrence leads the reader to the climax of the story, when in a strangely disturbing scene Maurice

laid his hand on Bertie Reid's head, closing the dome of the skull in a soft, firm grasp, gathering it, as it were; then shifting his grasp and softly closing again, with a fine close pressure, till he had covered the skull and the face of the smaller man (BM, p.363).

And then comes Pervin's request, "Touch my eyes will you? - touch my scar!": In spite of a quivering revulsion Bertie acquiesces:

he lifted his hand, and laid the fingers on the scar, on the scarred eyes. Maurice suddenly covered them with his own hand, pressed the fingers of the other man upon his disfigured eye-sockets trembling in every fibre, and rocking slightly, slowly, from side to side. He remained thus for a minute or more, whilst Bertie stood as if in a swoon, unconscious, imprisoned (BM, p.364).

This violent attempt to reach out to another in order to balance the one-sided nature of the fulfilment he finds with his wife is totally abortive. Trapped by literal and spiritual blindness Maurice, however, believes he has achieved his purpose. With crushing irony he addresses Bertie, "Oh my God . . . we shall know each other now . . . We're all right together now, aren't we . . ? It's all right now, as long as we live, so far as we're concerned" (BM, p.364). The two return to the house where Maurice informs his wife that they are friends. His wife knows this cannot be so because she, being sighted, is aware of Bertie's "furtive and haggard look". She knows that Bertie has only one desire, "to escape the intimacy, the friendship which had been thrust upon him". She knows "he could not bear it that he had been touched by the blind-man". Unlike her husband "standing with his feet apart, like a strange colossus", exulting in what he feels is a new found intimacy, Bertie, "his insane reserve broken in", is "like a mollusc whose shell is broken" (BM, p.365). He is still nothing at the core of his being, and now, his protective covering broken, the unwelcome contact has completely annihilated him. The story has come full circle; it ends at its beginning. The marriage is still doomed to imbalance, and Lawrence reveals that the potentially regenerative power of touch is qualified by the necessity of having a worthy recipient.

Probably the fullest statement of the significance of touch in the whole Lawrence canon is to be found in Lady Chatterley's Lover. In this work the touch motif is handled in a much more positive way than it is in "The Blind Man". When in the novel Connie talks about how she likes to be touched by Mellors, his reply moves beyond the significance of touch exchanged between men and women. Reminiscing about his past experience in the army as a leader of men in the First World War, he says:

"You're right. It's that really. It's that all the way through. I knew it with the men. I had to be in touch with them, physically, and not go back on it. I had to be bodily aware of them and a bit tender to them, even if I put 'em through hell." (LCL, p. 290)

Sex experienced between men and women is merely a further point on the same continuum:

Sex is really only touch, the closest of all touch. And it's touch we're afraid of. We're only half conscious and half alive. We're got to come alive and aware. Especially the English have got to get into touch with each other, a bit delicate and a bit tender. It's our crying need. (LCL, p. 290)

In Lady Chatterley's Lover touch is conceived of as a mode of communication in its fullest and finest sense. It is a regenerative force for love and for friendship. To work together mankind must touch together. Touch has a sacramental dimension; the sacred nature of the human interchange of touch allows a new and fuller vision of life. Pushed to its extreme, touch, whose elements include blood intimacy and creative labour, allows a vision of participation of the small life of the individual in the larger life force of all things present in the

universe. This to Lawrence is the ultimate consummation available to man.

It has already been noted that the crisis at the heart of Lawrence's "You Touched Me" and Williams' "You Touched Me!" turns about an exchange of touch. Now, after exploring Lawrence's treatment of the theme, it is illuminating to consider how curiously Williams' treatment of the same theme varies from that of his mentor. Although touch is used to awaken Williams' Matilda to her sensual nature as it does the Matilda of the short story, Williams adds a twist that is peculiarly his own. At one point in the play Captain Rockley says "the talk is the touch" and Hadrian replies "the touch is the talk" (YTM!, p. 85). Whilst it is difficult to attach any special significance to this enigmatic exchange in this play, when set within the larger context of the Williams' canon it comes to seem anything but accidental. Williams has a consistent preoccupation with the actions of talking and touching.

References to talk and touch as interchangeable recur in Williams' writings. In Orpheus Descending, Lady tells Val that she is touched by his talk¹⁹; in 27 Wagons Full of Cotton, Flora Meighan refers to her sexual contact with Vicarro as "a nice conversation"²⁰. Similarly in The Rose Tattoo Serafina accepts Alvaro's sexual advances with the words "now we can go on with our conversation" (RT, p. 239). Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, because he believes the abuse of talk and touch has corrupted his "clean. true" relationship with Skipper induces the alcoholic "click" of a simulated death in order to avoid Maggie's frantic attempts to talk with and to touch him. At one point in the play her words addressed to Brick are described as a "soft caress"²¹. Significantly when

Big Daddy and Brick do manage to touch each other through telling unwelcome truths, Brick's anguished cry is "You told me! I told you!" (CTR, p. 95). In the preface to this same work Williams demonstrates that talking and touching is an issue that concerned him outside of his play worlds:

We talk to each other, write and wire each other, call each other short and long distance across land and sea, clasp hands with each other, and even destroy each other because of this always somewhat thwarted attempt to break through walls to each other. A character in a play once said [Val Xavier of Orpheus Descending] 'We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins' (CTR, p. vii).

A committed Christian Williams insists that his favoured characters search for God in their lifetimes. And given his tendency to see God as anthropomorphic, Williams believes, like the doctor in The Rose Tattoo, that "people find God in each other" and that "when they lose each other they lose God and they're lost" (RT, p. 156). Thus it is tantamount to committing a cardinal sin if a Williams' character closes his eyes to the needs of others. A solipsistic preoccupation with self is always treated negatively in a Williams work, "Hell is yourself. When you ignore other people that is hell"²². Characters who do turn inwards away from others, like Sebastian of Suddenly Last Summer, are brutally punished. One does, however, question whether Sebastian should continue his search for God in another, given his vision of God seen in the destruction of the sea-turtles on the Encantadas. But Williams' characteristic treatment of characters who do not respond to the needs of others implies that his answer to such a question would be an emphatic yes.

So the reason why man must persistently talk and touch in an attempt to "break through walls to another" is to find God. But why is the attempt "always somewhat thwarted"? This question is partially answered by appreciating Williams' perception of man's dual nature. It was demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis that the playwright considered man condemned to live in a post-lapsarian world that allows no waning of the ancient soul/body dual. It is apparently this duel that constantly thwarts man's attempt to escape the self. An analysis of Nonno's poem in The Night of the Iguana goes far to make clear Williams' conception of the human condition, which condition also turns out to be intimately connected to his consideration of talking and touching as necessary but flawed modes of communication between people²³. The poem reads:

How calmly does the orange branch
 Observe the sky begin to blanch
 Without a cry, without a prayer,
 With no betrayal of despair

Sometimes while night obscures the tree
 The zenith of its life will be
 Gone past forever, and from thence
 A second history will commence

A chronicle no longer gold
 A bargaining with mist and mould,
 And finally the broken stem
 The plummeting to earth and then

An intercourse not well designed
 For beings of a golden kind
 Whose native green must arch above
 The earth's obscene corrupting love

And still the ripe fruit and the branch
 Observe the sky begin to blanch
 Without a cry, without a prayer
 With no betrayal of despair

O Courage, could you not as well
 Select a second place to dwell
 Not only in that golden tree
 But in the frightened heart of me (NI, pp. 123-126).

Nonno's poem provides a vision of the Fall of Man. The stem breaks and the golden fruit - Man - plummets to the earth. In a fallen state Mankind is no longer golden: the age of Edenic innocence has "gone past". Yet having known the perfection of Eden, the "native green" of Man's spirit ever yearns to "arch above/The earth's obscene corrupting love"²⁴. In a fallen world, however, a reconciliation of the warring claims of the flesh and the spirit is not possible. The best post-lapsarian man can hope for is the courage to endure, without "betrayal of despair", the ever-thwarted struggle to achieve integration within the psyche.

And really this poem provides a useful context within which to understand the struggle for integration that so many of Williams' fragmented characters engage in. Such characters frantically seek escape from earthly corruption by achieving a vision of God. And because, in a Williams work, one finds God in another, the struggle takes the form of communication with a fellow. Human communication is made through the two basic modes of human contact - talking and touching. Characters use talk and touch endlessly in an attempt to reach out to each other and to, ideally, evoke a response that allows recognition of God. A vision of God, at least for a moment, allows a sense of greater integration of the divided elements of the psyche. In an imperfect world this dynamic exchange, more often than not, fails.

A major theme of The Night of the Iguana is concerned with the

flawed dynamic of communication. Hannah through talk, gives Shannon a glimpse of what it means to love in a spiritual, asexual way. Through offered touch, the "rapaciously lusty" Maxine offers carnal love. It is typical of Williams that his characters tend to vacillate to either their spiritual or their physical natures. Shannon is characterised by inner division, a fragmentation of psyche so complete that, unable to accept either version of love, he vacillates wildly between a desire to find his God (spirit) and to satisfy his sexual nature (flesh). Given this situation, harmony both within and without the characters of Iguana is denied, and each is left in the "separate cubicle" of himself. Nonno the poet, like the Old Testament God, a destructive creator, points up the basic futility of the situation in his poem and leaves the characters like the iguana waiting to die, each tied to the other by his need to resolve inner divisions, yet unable to evade the corruption and suffering of a fallen world.

In his one act play "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen . . ." ²⁵ Williams explores the theme of talk and touch exclusively. The play is built around the act of intercourse, both of a sexual and a social nature. The two modes of communication are shown never to really satisfy a desire for integration. In the scene directions Williams writes:

there is an impression that [the two characters] have lived in this situation for a long time, and that the present scene between them is a repetition of one that has been repeated so often that its plausible emotional contents such as reproach and contrition, have been completely worn out and there is nothing left but acceptance of something unalterable between them.²⁶

Repetitions of the man's request to have the woman talk to him are accompanied by his touching of her. "Tell me" he says, over and over, "a little of what's going on behind your -", then his fingers "trail across her forehead and eyes"²⁷. Even the broken syntax reflects the incomplete nature of their exchange. The two characters are not given names; Williams wants his audience to recognise the universality of their plight. As a whole the play has a ritual quality - nothing changes. The play ends as it begins, illustrating the hopelessly thwarted nature of communication between individuals as well as the unfulfilled longing of the spirit and the flesh to co-exist in harmony.

There is no doubt that Williams shares a deep sympathy with his tortured heroes and heroines. Most often his favoured characters are fugitive types, or artists like himself courageously struggling to escape earthly corruption in a vision of God. They always suffer. Their efforts to find God in another, when thwarted, usually end in a retreat into artistic visions (Tom of The Glass Menagerie); in sacramental purification by fire and water (Val of Orpheus Descending); or by futile attempts to recapture a past of lost innocence (Blanche of A Streetcar Named Desire). Occasionally these characters, caught up in the struggle, are allowed a brief moment of transcendence when they glimpse the New Testament God of Love in another. Blanche Dubois achieves such a rare moment when after much talk Mitch kisses her. The kiss - interestingly the mouth is symbolic of the two modes of communication, talk and touch - is followed immediately by Blanche's line, "Sometimes there's God so quickly". But then Williams, trapped in his own paradoxical view of God, is unable to sustain for Blanche a pure vision of a loving God obtained through a

sexual contact on earth. He allows the moment to lapse. A subsequent failure of the relationship serves only to accentuate Blanche's growing sense of isolation. Finally her fragile new sense of God and possible harmony is fractured completely by Stanley's gross misuse of touch, which causes her to retreat further into neurosis.

Williams, then, because of his theological determinism cannot endorse Lawrence's perception that touch exchanged between worthy recipients is a source of regeneration. In contrast he sees the exchange as necessary but doomed. The failure of human communication is consistent with his vision of man. It is impossible to find God. After the fall man was imperfect. Consequently man, although made in God's image, fails in his quest for integration of warring elements in the psyche. Tennessee Williams shares his frustration with his artist - fugitive types. Over and over through his exploration of the theme of talk and touch Tennessee Williams continues his search for God. And because he considers the artist close to God, like Christ, he attempts through his art to become the word made flesh. But only the New Testament God of Love is the word made flesh, thus only He can unite the two modes of communication. Williams and his characters then must engage endlessly in "an intercourse not well designed" for the purpose .

CHAPTER TWO

¹Val Xavier of Orpheus Descending provides the archetype of this sort of character. Because Orpheus Descending is a play that treats all of the themes discussed in this thesis, a detailed analysis of that work along with a consideration of its ur-version, Battle of Angels, will be the major focus of the next chapter. .

²Tennessee Williams, Out Cry (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 22. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

³Tennessee Williams, "Cried the Fox", in his In the Winter of Cities: Poems by Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1956), p. 16.

⁴Other critics, of both Williams and Lawrence infer a societal reference. H.M. Sagar in his essay "What Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence" in The Twentieth Century, CLXVIII (August, 1960), p. 143 writes

there is a poem dedicated to Lawrence, "Cried the Fox", where Williams reveals that it is the quality of the rebel, the outcast . . . in Lawrence which appeals to him.- a quality of restless nervous energy devoted to making vicious but relatively ineffectual attacks upon society and its conventions. The fox is "desperate", "frantic", "lonely" and "fugitive" and the process ultimately "fatal", "self-destructive".

Also see Norman J. Fedder, The Influence of D.H. Lawrence on Tennessee Williams (The Hague: Mouton, 1966) p. 19. Fedder considers that in the poem "the pack-bourgeois civilisation-preys upon the fugitive animal who manages to elude it, but not without heartbreak and loneliness".

⁵D.H. Lawrence, "The Fox" in D.H. Lawrence, Four Short Stories (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 146. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

⁶John, Supreme Fictions, p. 282.

⁷D.H. Lawrence, "The Man Who Died", in D.H. Lawrence, St. Mawr and The Man Who Died, pp. 161-211. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

⁸Sagar, "What Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence", pp. 147-148.

⁹See also the rowing into darkness at the end of "The Captain's Doll" in D.H. Lawrence, Four Short Novels (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 266. It would seem that Lawrence is able to conceive characters in such a way as to allow them to change and shape their lives, whilst on the other hand, Williams cannot. Most of Williams' characters seem caught up in an already determined obsessional scapegoat ritual, which ends inevitably in pain and suffering. Wylie Sypher in a book The Ethic of Time (New York: Seabury, 1976) makes an interesting distinction about character types which can be applied to the difference between those presented by Lawrence and Williams. Sypher suggests that some writers produce characters with ethical import whilst others do not. Macbeth is a play that has in it both kinds of characters: Macbeth is tragic - having choice - he may be doomed but he will fight the course - bear-like - until the end. The sleep-walking Lady Macbeth, Sypher points out is a "case study" in that she is too shut down by circumstance, and thus is never big enough to contemplate choice. And really this seems a useful model to apply to Williams' and Lawrence's characters. Lawrence creates characters who can change and grow and hence escape being merely case studies. Tennessee Williams does not do this too often hence case studies such as Blanche, Laura, etc.

¹⁰Lawrence, Letters, ed., Huxley. See pp. 46, 47, 76-77, 90, 95-96, 120, 159-160, 328 for a selection of other letters that show Lawrence to be far from a thoroughgoing misogynist.

¹¹Quoted in Norman J. Fedder, The Influence of D.H. Lawrence on Tennessee Williams (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 52. The analysis of "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix" in this thesis owes much to a reading of Fedder. The book as a whole, however, is disappointingly superficial in its treatment of its subject.

¹²Tennessee Williams is not alone in his assessment of the implications of Lawrence's writings on the importance of physical wisdom. Much attention has been directed to this excerpt from a now famous letter that Lawrence wrote to Ernest Collings in 1913. The letter is reprinted in the Huxley collection of Lawrence's letters on p. 96.

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our

minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge. All I want to answer is my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what not.

But this statement taken in isolation is misleading. Whilst there is no doubt that blood consciousness is of great importance to the Lawrencean metaphysic, Lawrence recognised a need for the balancing force of the intellect. Wholeness of being in Lawrencean thought involved the consciousness of blood, mind and spirit involved in a harmonious interplay. This point is made clear in his "Introduction to these Paintings" in Phoenix p. 573-576. He writes:

Any creative act occupies the whole consciousness of a man. This is true of the great discoveries of science as well as of art. The truly great discoveries of science and real works of art are made by the whole consciousness of man working together in unison and oneness; instinct, intuition, mind, intellect all fused together into one complete consciousness, and grasping what we may call a complete truth or complete vision.

¹³Tennessee Williams and Donald Windham, You Touched Me! (Binghampton: Vail Ballou, 1942). All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quote.

¹⁴Tennessee Williams, Tennessee Williams' Letters to Donald Windham, ed. Donald Windham (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1977). All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quote.

¹⁵The letters reveal that it was Williams who made most of the collaborative effort. Windham admits that Williams is most responsible for the current version of the play. One letter (LDW, pp. 99-102) suggests that Windham's name be dropped from the title page of the final version. This letter caused a permanent rift in the fifteen year association between Williams and Windham. Williams expresses regret at their present estrangement in the Memoirs, p. 99.

¹⁶D.H. Lawrence, "You Touched Me", in D.H. Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, Vol. 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 394-410.

All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

¹⁷ Joseph Wood Krutch, The Nation, CLXI, (October 6, 1945), p. 349.

¹⁸ D.H. Lawrence, "The Blind Man", in D.H. Lawrence, The Complete Short Stories, Vol. 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 347-365. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. viii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

¹⁹ Tennessee Williams, Orpheus Descending with Battle of Angels: Two Plays by Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions), p. 79. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²⁰ Tennessee Williams, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays by Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 26. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²¹ Tennessee Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (New York: Signet, 1955), p. 20. All subsequent references to this work will be made in the body of the text of the thesis. References will be to the abbreviated title (see p. vii of the preliminaries). Page numbers will be given in parentheses after the quoted material.

²² Quoted from "The Angel of the Odd", Time, LXXIX (March 9, 1962), p. 53.

²³ My analysis of Konno's poem is similar to that of William J. Scheick in his essay "An Intercourse not Well Designed": Talk and Touch in the Plays of Tennessee Williams" in Jac Tharpe, Tennessee Williams: A Tribute (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1977), pp. 763-773. Whilst I feel that much of what Scheick has to say about Williams' handling of the talk/touch motif is cogent, indeed the essay has greatly influenced my thinking on the subject, I do not agree with the central thesis of the essay, which argues that "Williams actually perceives no real conflict between the spirit and the flesh".

²⁴The yearning to arch above the taint of earthly corruption is reflected in Williams' **characteristic use of imagery**; he often exploits images that have no touch of the earthly. The pure bird in Orpheus Descending is legless so it never touches the corrupting earth. Wind and sky imagery are similarly used throughout the canon.

²⁵Tennessee Williams, "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen . . ." in Tennessee Williams, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays by Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1966), pp. 211-238.

²⁶Ibid., p. 212.

²⁷Ibid., passim.

CHAPTER THREE

Of Orpheus Descending K.M. Sagar writes:

The idea of purity, of sacredness in sex, or in human life at all, is an idea which Williams cannot maintain in his plays. Lady [the heroine] offers Val [the hero] love on the best terms in which Williams can conceive it. But it is not enough. It is Val's destiny to become "burning flame at the hunter's door" cleansed by fire of all human corruption.¹

Sagar's comment underscores the central argument of this thesis, and because the play Orpheus Descending along with its ur-version Battle of Angels, ostensibly the most "Lawrencean" of Williams' plays, treats all of the themes discussed thus far, the two related works will be considered in this, the concluding chapter of this thesis, in detail. The discussion will provide a final and complete summary of the paradoxes inherent in Williams' professed allegiance to his literary mentor D.H. Lawrence. It will be revealed that, as in the other works of Williams, all that is Lawrencean in the plays blurs as it becomes lost in Williams' theologically determined universe.

But first an account of the genesis of Orpheus Descending. The play preoccupied Williams for a large proportion of his career; Orpheus Descending appeared disguised under several different titles. The first version, The Fugitive Kind (1937)² was written whilst Williams was studying in the Drama Department of the University of Iowa, and performed by a small amateur theatrical group, the Mummies of St. Louis. The

script of the next version, Battle of Angels (1940), so impressed John Gassner that on his recommendation Williams was awarded a one thousand dollar grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. For its try-out run Battle opened in Boston on December 30, 1940. It was a flop³. Thus it was the grant and not the performed play that had the distinction of launching Williams' professional career. Nothing daunted, Williams continued to rework this play: it was squeezed through the artistic wringer many times. The fifth major rewriting is the current version, Orpheus Descending. Opening at New York's Martin Beck Theatre on March 21, 1957, the play had a mixed reception from the critics and only a moderately successful run. Nonetheless, in spite of flaws, Orpheus is a powerful play. In 1958, the two plays Orpheus Descending and Battle of Angels were published together in book form.⁴

In the preface to Orpheus with Battle Williams explains why he has stuck so stubbornly to this play - "for seventeen years in fact"⁵. Of the play Williams writes "I feel it is a sort of emotional bridge between those early years and my present state of existence as a playwright"⁶. And nothing writes the playwright "is more precious to anybody than the emotional record of his youth"⁷. The plays considered together trace "the trail of his sleeve-worn heart"⁸. The endless revisions, repairs, additions and omissions made through the years have not surprisingly resulted in a work that touches on all the major aspects of Williams' thought. This same sort of perception is shared by one of Williams' more astute critics: Donald S. Costello considers that these two plays "provide[the reader] with a vocabulary for an interpretation of the whole body of [Williams'] dramatic literature"⁹.

And it is true that the major achievements and even the more recent works provide little more than footnotes to Orpheus with Battle; they merely reiterate the same themes, structures and character types in different contexts.

On its surface the play is Williams' most Lawrencean. At the plot level the work is, seemingly, a reworking of "The Fox": "a wild spirited young protagonist [Val Xavier] wanders into a conventional community of the South and creates the commotion of a fox in a chicken coop" (OWB, p. vi). The commotion is caused by Williams' exploitation of a very Lawrencean theme: Val has a "fresh and primitive quality, a virile grace and freedom of body, and a strong physical appeal" (OWB, p. 132). His arrival in the Southern community disrupts the lives of three women he meets there. Several times Val's character is linked with the Lawrencean image of the fox: "He lived like a fox". (OWB, p. 167). It should be noted, however, that the fox image takes on a quality that is Williams' own: Val is treated "like a fox that's chased by hounds" (OWB, p. 165). Williams holds tenaciously to his belief that we are doomed by our past, lost innocence and guilt, a pattern which produces scapegoat figures in flight. A situation which is resolved usually by death, sacrifice or madness. Val is no exception, as Sagar notes, it is his destiny to "become burning flame at the hunter's door". He does, however, leave a snakeskin jacket behind, an evocation of the Lawrencean renewal motif.

Val, like so many of Williams' favoured characters, vacillates from one pole of his psyche to the other in order to find a possible route to transcendence. The vital modes of communication of the flesh

and the spirit, touching and talking, underscore his efforts. Touch provides Val with the first route. We learn that as a young boy Val was orphaned and presumably lived at one with nature in a swamp. The swamp, an inversion of Eden, evokes visual associations of reptiles in the mind. It was here that he waited for "something" (OWB, p. 168) to give meaning to his life. This "something" materialises in the person of a beautiful young girl who appears naked as if by magic. Eve-like, she smiles temptingly and "traps" (OWB, p. 169) Val into following her into his cabin. Although Val teaches her the meaning of "love" (OWB, p. 170) - with a name like Valentine we would hardly expect him to fail - the "sweetness" (OWB, p. 170) between them does not leave him any closer to ultimate answers. Thus when the audience meets Val in the present of the play he is disillusioned, a fugitive seeking again for the elusive something to give meaning to existence. "A warm-blooded boy" (OWB, p. 35) Val once believed that people got to know each other "by touch, by touching each other" (OWB, p. 46), but now he wonders if "touch makes people more strangers than ever" (OWB, p. 47). Disillusioned certainly, but not daunted or corrupted, Val admits of the failure of touch as a viable route to transcendence:

I'm through with the life I've been leading . . .
 I lived in corruption but I'm not corrupted.
 Here is why [picks up guitar] . My life's
 companion! It washes me clean like water when
 anything unclean has touched me (OWB, p. 37).

Val rejects sex and turns to use of his Orphic voice: Val hopes his music will provide a means to escape the corruption of the earth. But to leave the route of sex behind will not be easy for the wandering Val.

The scene into which Val wanders is Two River County; it is both barren and corrupt. The small Southern community is, for the most part, inhabited by veritable agents of death-in-life. This death in life aspect of the community is embodied in a large chorus of townspeople. The inhabitants comprise a motley assortment of frowsy women, malicious gossips gloating over the suffering of others. In an early, frankly expository passage, Dolly and Beulah, frumpy middle-aged housewives, set up tables and gossip about the owners of the store in which they sit. The audience learns of the domestic situation of Jabe and Lady Torrance. Lady is bringing her husband home after an unsuccessful operation for cancer. Beulah tells of Lady's father, a "wop", who planted an orchard and opened a wine garden. In the wine garden couples courted during the Prohibition period. Lady, young then, was courted by David Cutrere, scion of the county's most distinguished plantation family; she was jilted for a more "suitable" match. Soon after the jilting Lady married Jabe Torrance, not knowing that he was a member of a redneck gang that burned down the orchard and the wine garden destroying her father with them. The father's sin was that he was Italian and sold liquor to "niggers". The husbands of these gossiping women are pot-bellied bigots who run a version of the Klu Klux Klan. Their major purpose in life is to keep "wops", "niggers", and their like in their rightful places.

Because the large chorus of townspeople have turned away from their fellow men they have become corrupt; they have given up their search for God. And it is typical of Williams' schematized division of character types that the "non-fugitives (those who have made their peace with the corrupting earth) are counterpointed by other, favoured

"fugitive types" in active search for salvation. Val Xavier and three women, Vee Talbot, Lady Myra and Carole-Cassandra are misfits striving against impossible odds to escape the corruption that surrounds them. This schematic division of characters is given further resonance by symbolic contrasts which oppose shadow and light, barrenⁿness and fertility, blindness and visions, disease and health. There is even an unmistakable representation of an Old Testament Jehovah to serve as foil to Val's representation of a surrogate Christ. In self-righteous fury Jabe Torrance demands a sacrifice for any vitality he sees flourishing outside his sick-room - appropriately enough, situated stage-above. His demands for atonement are articulated by the angry thumps of his cane which punctuate the play. In the preface to Orpheus with Batile Williams explains the purpose of these divisions. He states that the theme of his play addresses itself to the

unanswered questions that haunt the hearts of people and the difference between continuing to ask them, a difference represented by the four major protagonists of the play and the acceptance of prescribed answers that are not answers at all, but expedient adaptations to a state of quandary (OWB, p. vi).

The play then is didactic in that Williams fulfills his moral obligation to "speak out against the dead current of prescribed ideas [which leave society] standing in the dead center of nowhere"¹⁰. The question that haunts "the hearts of the people" is of course the one which haunts the whole Williams canon: "What is the nature of the American God?". Thus the "non-fugitives" in the play in their attempt to accept "prescribed answers" commit Williams' cardinal sin: they refuse to be like God to each other, treat their fellows as objects, and hence give up

their search for God. In contrast the fugitives, far from treating their fellows like objects, attempt to befriend each other, to be like God to each other. The search for the **elusive deity must be continued.**

The theme of people exploiting their own kind is important in Orpheus with Battle. Donald P. Costello discusses this business at some length; he observes that the metaphor takes on a mercantile basis¹¹. Costello catalogues a whole series of quotations from Orpheus with Battle to make his point. Early in the play Beulah makes damaging insinuations about the marriage of Jabe and Lady Torrance; she says "Jabe Torrance bought that woman" (OWB, p. 5). Lady herself confirms Beulah's view: "I sleep with a son of a bitch who bought me at a fire sale" (OWB, p. 42). Lady accuses David Cutrere, her former fiancée, of marrying for money just as she herself had married Jabe for his money; "You sold yourself, I sold myself - You was bought. I was bought" (OWB, p. 61). Val adds comment which invests the mercantile image with even more sinister overtones: "I'm telling you Lady, there's people bought and sold in this world like carcasses¹² of hogs in butcher shops" (OWB, p. 41). The fugitives, aware of the price of being of the earth, are frantic in their efforts to transcend it.

Although the conflict of Orpheus with Battle is worked out between individuals at the societal level, the underlying treatment of the conflict can be read in theological terms that find a direct parallel in The Night of the Iguana. Soon after his arrival Val Xavier¹³ (note the name) exercises his Orphic voice and sings a song called "Heavenly Grass". The lyrics of the song appear as a poem in an earlier collection of Williams' poetry:

My feet took a walk in heavenly grass.
 All day while the sun shone clear as glass
 My feet took a walk in heavenly grass,
 All night while the lonesome stars rolled past.
 Then my feet came down to walk on earth,
 And my mother cried when she gave me birth
 Now my feet walk far and my feet walk fast,
 But they still got an itch for heavenly grass.¹⁴
 But they still got an itch for heavenly grass.

But whether his feet itch for heavenly grass or not, because Val is earthbound for his lifespan, he is condemned to live crippled by guilt in a world that is inevitably corrupt. And just as the tree symbolism of Nonno's poem captures this dilemma, so Williams exploits bird imagery in Orpheus with Battle for the same purpose. Like the fallen fruit the protagonist is moved by an insistent desire to escape the earth and regain a position in the air, the realm of birds. In an important pivotal passage in Orpheus with Battle Val tells Lady Myra about a sky-blue legless bird he has once seen:

VAL: You know they's a kind of bird that don't have legs so it can't light on nothing but has to stay all its life on its wings in the sky? That's true. I seen one once, it had died and fallen to earth and it was light-blue colored and its body was tiny as your little finger, that's the truth, it had a body as tiny as your little finger and so light on the palm of your hand it didn't weigh more than a feather, but its wings spread out this wide, but they was transparent, the color of the sky and you could see through them. That's what they call protection coloring. Camouflage they call it. You can't tell those birds from the sky and that's why the hawks don't catch them don't see them up there in the high blue sky near the sun . . . But those little birds they don't have no legs at all and they live their whole lives on the wing, and they just sleep on the wing, that's how they sleep at night, they just spread their wings and go to sleep in the wind like other birds fold their wings and go to sleep on a tree . . .

LADY: I'd like to be one of those birds.

VAL: So'd I like to be one of those birds; they's lots of people would like to be one of those birds and never be - corrupted!

LADY: If one of those birds ever dies and falls on the ground and you happen to find it, I wish you would show it to me because I think maybe* you just imagine there is a bird of that kind in existence. Because I don't think nothing living has ever been that free, not even nearly. Show me one of them birds and I'll say, Yes, **God's made one** perfect creature (OWB, pp. 41-42).

Although Val struggles ever to emulate the legless bird¹⁵ he must still walk the corrupt earth. His flaw is that he is human.

It has been repeatedly argued throughout this thesis that Williams' handling of sexual themes is complicated by his religious conditioning. Williams attempts to remain committed to his neo-Lawrencean point of view that the sexual instinct should be trusted absolutely, but at the same time is far too strong a traditional moralist, far too suffused with a Christian sense of sin and guilt, to accept such an idea with equanimity. Thus he vacillates, like his favoured characters, never quite convinced of either Cavalier sensuality or Puritan transcendence as a means of escaping the corruption of a post-edenic world. It is this paradox that shapes the attempts of the fugitives to escape corruption and similarly structures the relationships between them. The paradox at the heart of Williams' controlling vision as it manifests itself in Orpheus with Battle will be discussed below.

In Summer and Smoke it was observed that Williams incorporated the theme of psychomachia quite directly¹⁶. Alma was an unmistakable representation of the soul, as John Buchanan was, equally, an unmistakable representation of the flesh. The conflict of the drama exposed the dilemma of post-lapsarian man entrapped within his dual impulse towards

good and evil. In Orpheus with Battle the basic structure is certainly more complex, but, like Alma and John, Carole-Cassandra and Vee Talbot are diametrically opposed figures trapped by the same dilemma. Carole-Cassandra resolves her conflict by giving in to the demands of her flesh, and Vee to the demands of her spirit. Val is more complex in that he contains the opposing strains within himself much like Shannon of The Night of the Iguana. Analysis of these characters will show that Williams attempts to invest the sexual relationship with theological overtones, and likewise the spiritual with sexual overtones. The result is the establishment of an uneasy tension of opposites that ends in violent destruction.

Val's characterisation is developed with the help of a heavy overlay of symbolism. The guitar is a symbol of Val's art. Yet there is a paradox inherent in Williams' handling of the symbol. Val plays the instrument sporadically when anything unclean - usually a sexual contact - has touched him. Most certainly the guitar is treated throughout the play with the care afforded a holy relic. Clearly a sacred symbol, the guitar does allow Val a measure of absolution for his indulgence in carnal sin. Even the lyrics of "Heavenly Grass" underscore the sacramental nature of the instrument. On the one hand then, as Nancy Tischler notes, Val's guitar is a "sacred symbol, evidence of an immortality and a transcendence of the flesh achievable in art"¹⁷, but on the other "it is also a phallic symbol, clutched at by the sexually undernourished wives of "small planters", stroked by [Carole-Cassandra] and threatened by the penis-envying husbands of the community"¹⁸. And a delicious sexual irony underpins one of Sherriff Talbot's lines: he remarks to

Val at one point in the play, "awright boy - git down off th' counter, I ain't gonna touch y'r guitar" (OWB, p 96).

When Williams uses the Lawrencean symbol of the snake a paradox similar to that of his use of the guitar symbol is involved. As Fedder notes

the snakeskin jacket . . . has its Lawrencean counterpart. The use of the snake to symbolise a desirable state of vibrant aliveness - a deliberate reversal of the traditional Judeo-Christian conception of the reptile's attributes - is . . . the subject of Lawrence's poem "Snake".¹⁹

Further resonance is added to this symbol by Williams' reversal of traditional associations of Eden (in the play a swamp) and by his locating Two-River County in the legendary location of Eden.²⁰

Val disrupts the lives of three women in Orpheus with Battle. One of these women is the Carole Cutrere of Orpheus Descending, originally the Cassandra Whiteside of Battle of Angels. In both plays she is decadent and corrupt. But she was not always so. Through her characterisation Williams expands the theological theme of the aboriginal fall to include the fall of the American South. Ill at ease in post-civil war America, "her family name [Cutrere] is the oldest and most distinguished in the county" (OWB, p. 12), she attempts to retreat into a past where she felt her self had some kind of definition. This past she associates with a golden age of lost innocence. Williams makes Carole's association with past innocence quite clear: several times during the course of Orpheus with Battle he identifies Carole-Cassandra with child imagery.²¹ Carole's retreat into her past, however, only serves to make her aware of the corruption at the heart of the old "ideal" of the Southern tradition.

In her effort to redeem the past and thus herself she becomes, for a while, another Saviour, "a Christ-bitten reformer" (OWB, p. 12). Carole takes up causes, civil rights, free clinics, and even the cause of equal justice for blacks and whites. She fails. Her fortunes and her energies squandered she admits defeat. Acknowledging her neuroticism she lays the blame to "blood gone bad from too much interbreeding" (OWB, p. 161). Having seen too much, she wears "dark glasses over her eyes" (OWB, p. 161) to hide the secret she has learned of the inherent corruption of a tradition once envisioned as golden.

Carole-Cassandra's failure to right the wrongs of her past or even to effect change in her present causes her to give up the struggle. She allows herself to be defined by the corruption she sees around her. Once so determined Carole loses her potential for rebirth. She is unable to affect her future in anyway. For advice on how to live in the present she looks to the past. Claiming she can communicate with the dead, she tells us their message is "Live, live, live, live, live" (OWB, p. 28). Her translation of the message from the dead involves her in a steady round of fast driving, drinking, and frequent stop-overs in sleazy motels. Carole's decadence grows out of her desperation: her former moral purity and the realization that past innocence is irrecoverable turn her into a weary sinner who can no longer feel guilt.

Predictably Carole-Cassandra offers herself to Val, but he, not wanting to join her in corruption, turns her down. Val knows that in Carole's psyche the war between flesh and spirit has been resolved in favour of the former. He sees Carole-Cassandra's indulgence of her sexual nature as no route to transcendence but rather as a panacea, an

opiate, that serves only to ease her pain. Yet Val and Carole travel different roads for the same reason. Carole makes this clear in a conversation she has with Val; she says "I'm an exhibitionist! I want to be noticed, seen, heard, felt! I want them to know I'm alive! Don't you want them to know you're alive?". Val demurs, he replies "I want to live and I don't care if they know I'm alive or not". Carole disagrees. She puts her finger on the sameness of their differences when she replies "Then why do you play a guitar? VAL: Why do you make a goddam show of yourself? CAROLE: That's right, for the same reason. VAL: We don't go the same route . . ." (OWB, p. 27). Both are equally damned because both routes to transcendence are dead ends in a fallen world.

Val must resist Carole's advances, but his rejection of her is gentle, compassionate. He is aware that her giving in to corruption, paradoxically, is a manifestation of her search for lost innocence. Williams ties both characters to the symbol of the blue bird of freedom. On one occasion Carole initiates an attempt to seduce Val. She touches him, flicking ash from his "new blue suit". At the time of the attempted seduction she is waiting to be picked up by her brother in his "sky-blue Cadillac". Val recognises their deepest yearnings and draws attention to the bird, symbolic of both their needs. He says quietly to Carole

Who're you tryin' t' fool beside you'self? You couldn't stand the weight of a man's body on you [he touches her]. What's this here? A human wrist with a bone? It feels like a twig I could snap with two fingers . . . [runs fingers along her neck tracing a vein] . Little girl, you're transparent, I can see the veins in you. A man's weight on you would break you like a bundle of sticks . . . (OWB, p. 58).

Like the bird Carole is "transparent" and fragile. Carole agrees that love-making causes her pain, and that she is too frail to bear children. But for her, even the transitory communality of sex is worth any risk. In his treatment of this character Williams demands that his audience sympathise with her, exposing his perennial sympathy with his maimed protagonists. Carole will court death for a brief moment of contact with another. Death is preferable to a "life-long sentence of solitary confinement inside her own lonely skin".

In Vee Talbot, Val is confronted with another route to transcendence of earthly corruption. Vee is an artist, a visionary who has hopelessly confused sexual repression with religious exaltation. But she, like Carole, must pay a price: her "personality frustrated in its contact with externals, has turned deeply inwards" (CWB, pp. 130-131). Val well understands that Vee's religious conviction expressed in her art allows her a measure of transcendence of the corruption and chaos she sees around her, but he also understands she couldn't live without "visions" (CWB, p. 65). The price is the solitude of madness, and a retreat into Vee's world is not one the "warm-blooded" Val is prepared to contemplate.

Vee will, however, be instrumental in Val's destruction. He arouses her husband, Sherrif Talbot, to vicious anger when he encourages her painting with characteristic sympathy for a fellow fugitive.

Without no plan, no training, you started to paint as if God touched your fingers. [He lifts her hands slowly, gently from her soft lap.] You made some beauty with these two, soft woman hands . . . (CWB, p. 68).

Val's touch and Vee's confusion inspire Vee to paint a vision of Christ pressing His hand to her breast as she claims the visionary Saviour had done. Unfortunately the image of Christ Vee paints is in Val's likeness. Sherrif Talbot misunderstands the import of the identification and Val's fate is sealed as he intends revenge on his wife's "saviour".

Val manages to avoid following Carole-Cassandra and Vee, but he experiences greater difficulty when he is confronted by Lady-Myra. Although determined in his resolve not to be corrupted he cannot help touching the women who wander into his life. When Lady-Myra makes her first advance he tells her "I oughtn't to touch you, but I keep wanting to, Myra . . . I'm afraid of my hands. I hold them in so hard the muscles ache" (OWB, p. 190). Immediately after this impassioned statement he "strikes a chord sharply" on his guitar. The juxtaposition of his admission of attraction for Lady-Myra and his immediately subsequent attempt to invoke the measure of transcendence afforded by his art underscore the deep split between the puritan and cavalier sides of his nature.

Of the relationships Val forms with the women in Orpheus with Battle the one with Lady-Myra is the most complex. Within its bounds Williams attempts to resolve the problems he pointed up in Val's relationships with Vee Talbot and Carole-Cassandra. Val's difficulty in marrying the warring claims of the flesh and the spirit is shared by his creator. Williams' uneasiness at wholeheartedly endorsing the way of flesh as the way to salvation is reflected in his handling of the Val - Lady-Myra relationship. Williams copes with paradox by investing their relationship with a heavy overlay of Christian symbolism. Their names apart, this

effort is reflected in a crude bit of stage business when Val's expletive "God, I - Lady you - !" (OWB, p. 149) is reinforced by Lady's laughing reply "God you an' lady me, huh" (OWB, p. 149). Val is a version of a God of Love and Myra a surrogate Virgin Mary figure.

Given Val and Lady-Myra's conspicuous linking to the Christian myth it is not surprising that theirs is no ordinary sexual communion. Rather Williams provides his audience with a parody of the annunciation, further complicated by the incorporation of allusions to the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree (Luke 13, 6-9). Val touches Lady and brings life where all had been dead. Lady-Myra does conceive and brings life back to a barren world (represented by the dry-goods store). Williams is at his lyric best when in the ecstatic annunciation scene Lady announces

True as God's word! I have life in my body, this dead tree, my body, has burst in flower! . . . When a woman's been childless as long as I've been childless, it's hard to believe that you're still able to bear! - We used to have a little fig tree between the house and the orchard. It never bore any fruit, they said it was barren. Time went by it, spring after useless spring, and it almost started to - die . . . Then one day I discovered a small green fig on the tree they said wouldn't bear. I ran through the wine garden shouting, "Oh, Father, it's going to bear, the fig tree is going to bear!" - It seemed such a wonderful thing, after those ten barren springs, for the little fig tree to bear, it called for a celebration - I ran to a closet, I opened a box that we kept Christmas ornaments in! - I took them out, glass bells, glass birds, tinsel, icicles, stars . . . And I hung the little tree with them, I decorated the fig tree with glass bells and glass birds, and silver icicles and stars, because it won the battle and would bear . . . I've won, I've won Mr. Death, I'm going to bear - Oh, God, oh God . . . (OWB, p. 114).

Lady's fertility is paralleled in the play by the arrival of spring.

But the brief stirring of life will prove as fragile as the glass ornaments

she hangs on the fig tree. Her pregnancy is an untimely one: it is not Christmas but rather the eve before Good Friday. Good Friday demands a sacrifice, as well as a celebration. Lady's cry "Oh, God, oh god" is answered by the appearance of Jabe - "he is death's self, and malignancy, as he peers, crouching down in the store's dimness to discover his quarry" (OWB, p. 114). Jabe Torrance, an Old Testament Jehovah, kills Lady along with the stirrings of life within her. His demand for more sacrifice is satisfied on Good Friday when Val, the surrogate Christ figure, is lynched and burned by a gang led by Vee's husband. One of Val's final lines in Battle is an echo of Christ's valediction, "It is finished" (OWB, p. 231). In Orpheus Descending the line is changed to "the show is over. The monkey is dead" (OWB, p. 115), but the expletive "Christ" is repeated twice as the lynch mob go about their business.

Val's first impulse on hearing of Lady's pregnancy is to run. He attempts to reject Lady-Myra on the grounds that she compromises his freedom to search for answers to the Big Questions. Val wants to reject Lady-Myra because she, like the girl on the Bayou, can only offer sexual fulfilment, and Val knows this is only a "make-believe solution" that will not help him in his quest for purity. Val's attempted rejection of Lady-Myra demonstrates once more Williams' bleak picture of the possibility of unity between the sexes. Just as in "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix" shared moments of tenderness are undercut by an insistent theme of misogyny, so such moments are undercut in Orpheus with Battle. Val tells Kyra:

there's only one safe thing for me to do.. Go back to New Mexico and live by myself.

MYRA: On the desert?

VAL: Yes.

MYRA: Would I make the desert crowded?

VAL: Yes, you would. You'd make it crowded, Myra.

MYRA: Oh, my God, I thought a desert was big.

VAL: It's big Myra. It stretches clean out 'til tomorrow. Over here is the Labos Mountains and over there, that's the Sangre de Christa. And way up there, that's the sky! And there ain't nothing else in between, not you, not anybody, not nothing.

MYRA: I see.

VAL: Why, my God, it seems like something when you're out there alone by yourself (not with nobody else!) that your brain is stretched out so far, it's pushing right up against the edges of the stars!

(OWB, p. 224)

As Sagar notes, if one can overlook "the appalling travesty of Lawrencean prose, the ending of St. Mawr is invoked here"²². The passage, however, is not capable of being read in Lawrencean terms. Val's intended escape is from the flesh, from corruption; this ideal is not to be realised in the Williams' canon by men but rather by blue birds of freedom. Lou makes for the New World, not because she runs from sex but rather from the decadence that has corrupted love relationships back in Europe. In St. Mawr "the New Mexico landscape is realized in terms of life, in terms of acquiring an inward vision and cleaner energy with which to "win from the crude wild nature the victory and power to make another start."²³ Williams cannot see or accept the dialectic tension at the heart of the Lawrencean metaphysic that allows an individual made fugitive to shore up the necessary strength that enables one "to make another start". Never quite convinced of sensuality as a route to salvation, he must, in the end, sacrifice Val. The ending of the play is downbeat. Carole inherits the snakeskin jacket. She draws attention to its

totemic value in her final speech: "Wild things leave skins behind them, they leave clean skins and teeth and white bones behind them, and these are the tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind" (CWB, p. 117). It will be up to the fragile and delicate Carole, a character realized in terms of death, to continue the search for the "unanswered question" that haunts the hearts of people.

Orpheus with Battle is not a good play. In its symbols, in its lyrical passages it has moments as powerful as Williams ever wrote. It fails because it is a prime example of what Lawrence would term "putting one's thumb in the pan". Williams focusses far too much on the didactic aspects, on ideas behind the characters, rather than on the characters themselves. This is partly a matter of his explaining his symbolism too much. Williams' more successful work is achieved when the characters dominate the thematic structure. Williams too often apportions different thematic strains into individual characters. This is why Amanda Wingfield, the embodiment of Southern culture is much more successful as a character than Carole. It is why Blanche Dubois, the desperate fugitive of A Streetcar Named Desire does not fall prey to the subjective simplicity of melodrama as does Val in Orpheus with Battle. When Williams created Blanche and Amanda he submitted to what Lawrence would call a passional urge, allowing himself to move through flux. The work leads Williams, rather than Williams the work, allowing the didactic purpose not to interfere with the passional inspiration.

But ultimately Williams' own maimed background overpowers his artistic inspiration. He is so committed to creating characters who as

versions of himself, are sacrificial victims that he becomes too vehement in railing against corrupting forces. In the same way his appreciation of Lawrence is too coloured by his unwavering belief in the existence of God. A Christian moralist, Williams could never accept with equanimity Lawrence's passionate belief in the power of the sensual. For these reasons when Williams chooses to incorporate Lawrencean elements in his work the result is never more than the creation of a "pseudo Lawrencean hymn to life". These hymns are always unconvincing, especially when viewed in light of the work of the writer who inspired them.

Nonetheless Williams gives us an unwavering assessment of his particular view of humanity's plight. Over and over he asks the same question:

Is there no mercy left in the world anymore? What has become of passion and understanding? Where have they all gone to? Where's God? Where's Christ?²⁴

The question, sometimes shrill, sometimes pleading, reverberates through the whole canon. It is a question asked by the lonely, the frightened, the outcast, and ultimately by Williams himself. The closest Williams comes to answering the question is when his characters, through compassion for a fellow, glimpse the New Testament God of Love in another. It is difficult for the artist to create beauty in a closed and malignant universe. But, in his best plays, Williams achieves this with consummate skill.

At the beginning of this thesis I posited several questions that a study of the Williams canon raises: why are so many of Williams' heroes and heroines maimed, either psychologically or physically? Why do so many of the relationships structured by Williams attain a fragmentary

community, only to fail? Why does such terrible violence provide a backdrop to so many of his play "worlds"? And finally, why are Williams' plays saturated with guilt, and his characters so often unable to transcend the norms of conventional morality without incurring dreadful punishments? By looking at how Tennessee Williams subordinated the work of D.H. Lawrence to "his own peculiar bent" I have attempted to answer Eric Bentley's request that "one day a critic will explain what Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence."

CHAPTER THREE

¹Sagar, "What Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence", p. 145.

²Tennessee Williams' The Fugitive Kind remains unpublished. In the Hemoirs, pp. 42-44 Williams gives account of what he terms this "semi-professional" play.

³Battle of Angels opened on December 30, 1940, at the Wilbur Theatre in Boston. The play was directed by Margaret Webster and starred Miriam Hopkins. The play was not well received by the critics. It was reported by one critic in The Boston Globe as "the story of a half-wit living a defensive life against predatory women". The amount of destruction in the final scene was deemed by most critics to be outrageous. Not only this, on its third night an overzealous stagehand overdid his task of creating atmosphere. Dense clouds of black smoke caused the audience to choke and cough their way out of the theatre. The play then was not only a flop, it was a spectacular one.

⁴Battle of Angels and Orpheus Descending were published together in 1955. The later version, Orpheus Descending has not been radically altered. Rather it has been tightened, polished and deepened. Also, along with the Christian myth, symbolic reference is made to the Orpheus Legend. The two plays will be considered in this chapter as one unit and referred to as Orpheus with Battle. If revisions are considered important to the thrust of the argument of this thesis they will be discussed in the text.

⁵"The Past, The Present and the Perhaps" reprinted as the preface to Orpheus with Battle, p. vi.

⁶Ibid., p. x.

⁷Ibid., p. vi.

⁸Ibid., p. vi.

⁹Donald S. Costello, "Tennessee Williams' Fugitive Kind" in Stanton, ed., Tennessee Williams, p. 107. I agree with Costello's statement. Whilst the argument of this thesis quite naturally brought me to many of the conclusions drawn in this chapter, the degree of my indebtedness to a reading of this essay will be reflected in the references to Costello.

¹⁰See p. 7 above.

¹¹Costello, "The Fugitive Kind", p. 113.

¹²Costello notes that "cannibalism is central to Suddenly Last Summer . . . for Sebastian becomes an object, used for food by the bird-like boys of Cabeza de Lobo, just as the turtles had been devoured by the flesh eating birds of the Encantadas, all . . . mirror the way Sebastian had used his mother and Catherine. Even at the beginning of Williams' career this cannibal metaphor had taken hold of Williams' imagination. In the one act play, The Strangest Kind of Romance, the prophetic Old Man denounces men of the earth, especially the "stupidity and cupidity" of commercial and industrial society: "Feed on, Feed on! You race of gluttons! Devour the flesh of thy brother, drink his blood! Glut your monstrous bellies on corruption". These comments of Costello's can be found on p. 114 of his article and the quote on p. 151 of the edition of Williams' 27 Wagons Full of Cotton cited above. In addition note that cannibalism provided the controlling metaphor of Williams' short story "Desire and the Black Masseur" discussed in Chapter One above.

¹³Valentine Xavier is obviously a name intended to evoke associations with Christ and with the patron saint of Lovers. Interestingly Sevier is a version of a Williams' family name. Peggy W. Frenshaw provided this information to give credence to her opinion that Williams was in the habit of identifying with his favoured protagonists. See Peggy W. Frenshaw's introduction to Tharpe, Tennessee Williams, p. 17.

¹⁴Williams, "Heavenly Grass" in his In the Winter of Cities, p. 101.

¹⁵Fedder in The Influence of D.H. Lawrence on Tennessee Williams, p. 65 posits that "perhaps the source of Williams' metaphor is Catherine Carswell's The Savage Pilgrimage which records Lawrence's deep interest in the legendary Bird of Paradise, who, "being bereft of its feet . . . can never alight". Carswell continues:

I have thought that the plight of the heavenly but footless bird must have struck Lawrence as having a similarity with his own.

Fedder cites Catherine Carswell, The Savage Pilgrimage (London: Secker, 1932), p. 64 as his source.

¹⁶See p. 21 above.

¹⁷Nancy Tischler, "The Distorted Mirror" in Stanton, ed., Tennessee Williams, p. 161.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁹Fedder, The Influence of D.H. Lawrence on Tennessee Williams, p. 65.

²⁰The legendary location of Eden is between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The name "Two River County" suggests a possible echo of this.

²¹In the cited edition of Orpheus with Battle the child imagery is applied to Carole-Cassandra in the following way: on p. 19 Carole regards Val with "the candid curiosity of one child observing another"; on p. 13 Carole's voice is referred to as being "curiously clear and childlike"; on p. 57 Williams insists that during a dialogue between Val and Carole "there should be an air between them of two lonely children". This repeatedly emphasized child-like quality is incongruously juxtaposed to her haggard and dissolute appearance, "the face and lips powdered white and the eyes outlined and exaggerated with black pencil and the lids tinted blue". And really it is thus that the cultural paradox of the Southern American past is captured in her physical characterisation: we see at one and the same time the charm and virtue of a genteel tradition but also its artificiality.

²²Sagar, "What Mr. Williams has made of D.H. Lawrence", p. 145.

²³Ibid., p. 145.

²⁴Tennessee Williams, "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion", in 27 Wagons Full of Cotton (New York: New Directions, 1945), p. 70.

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