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Study of loneliness as found in four of Tennessee Williams' women; Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and Maggie

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A STUDY OF LONELINESS AS FOUND
IN FOUR OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' WOMEN
--- AMANDA, BLANCHE, ALMA, AND MAGGIE

BY
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B. A., University of Portland, 1966

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In its essence the art of theatre rests on a common foundation with all learning --- on man's capacity to explore, wonder, and reflect. From its very beginnings in ancient rite and ritual, to its present turmoil of change and development, theatre has been primarily concerned with mankind. It has been a recorder of the times and of society, but the main interest has rested upon the relationships of man with things, animals, gods, and most important, man's relationships with other men and with himself. These latter relationships --- man with other men and with himself --- are of primary concern in today's world. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to explore and reflect upon one of the intrinsic factors of man's relationships --- the concept of loneliness. The base for the study is found in modern psychology and its theories on loneliness. Though the study of loneliness in the field of psychology seems to be a fairly recent one, in the world of the theatre the authors who have dealt with loneliness number even among the ancient Greeks. It may be, however, that the modern theories of psychology will apply to many other plays besides those of Williams. Thus, to limit the scope of this thesis one author has been chosen and only
four of his characters will be studied in depth. It is the intention of this study to view loneliness as depicted by Tennessee Williams and to attempt to use psychology as a measuring rod not only to find out why people think, act, and feel as they do but also to discover how to help those in need. Williams offers a kind of answer for the lonely that seems worthy of investigation and perhaps support.

One of the basic truths made known to man by philosophers and psychologists, both ancient and modern, is that man is ultimately a lonely creature. Within this concept, it is also known that the avenues to self-knowledge are painful and yet rewarding ones. Thus loneliness presents itself before mankind as a hindrance as well as a blessing for there are those who are not strong enough to cope with the pain and anguish it brings to human existence. Tennessee Williams, a great playwright as well as a psychologist of sorts, confronts man with the lives of sensitive men and women who are hindered by their loneliness. The problems he envisions for them are brutal but amazingly human for his are the people who have evaded and denied a fundamental truth of life --- the terrible loneliness of individual existence --- and thus have cut themselves off from one of the significant avenues to self-knowledge, self-growth, and self-respect. The unrelenting question, however, is, what can be done for these people? Does the world sit back and watch them destroy themselves and sometimes others? Does it help them destroy
themselves because they are not fit for human existence?
Or does the world help the lonely man to face himself and
his loneliness and, if so, wherein lies the starting point
of such aid?

Since loneliness is an intrinsic condition of human
existence, its recognition and acceptance is a must for the
mature and complete development of man. Tennessee Williams
is one among many who is cognizant of this fact. In all of
his plays he deals with the loneliness of man, its recognition
and acceptance. The plays which are most startling in their
candor --- The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire,
Summer and Smoke, and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof --- reveal the
staggering confusion and painful insecurity that four women
face because of their unresolved loneliness. Through the
portrayal of the lonely lives of Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and
Maggie, Williams states his basic premise that for those of
the lonely world who are incapable of facing themselves and
their loneliness, perhaps the answer lies in the understand­
ing that others in the world can offer.

Any insight into the life of man is important to his
final, complete, and meaningful growth as a human being.
Man is reputed as being an animal of dignity and worth whose
faculty of reason allows the awareness of his own intrinsic
loneliness. The importance of the study of loneliness be­
comes self-evident as one acknowledges the part loneliness
plays in the development of man's self-knowledge. Tennessee
Williams, through the communications medium of the theatre, does study the loneliness of mankind. Though he is not the only playwright concerned with loneliness, his study of loneliness is related primarily to those who do not have the inner strength to face their loneliness and their ensuing struggles for a meaningful life. Williams provides man with a possible as well as a probable answer to the dilemma concerning the aid other humans might be able to give those who are losing the battle for self-respect and self-knowledge because of loneliness. He seems to suggest that the human understanding others can offer these people is necessary for their well-being and can provide a path that leads to their self-understanding and growth. There has been no comprehensive study of Tennessee Williams' plays from the point of view of his personal psychology or philosophy of loneliness to date. Neither has there been any comprehensive study of the lives of Williams' characters from the writer's view of loneliness. Yet, within the words and actions of his characters is found, perhaps, the basic beliefs of Williams himself. Since loneliness is an important phase in the study of mankind, it is then important that Williams' major characters be studied thoroughly. Perhaps it will then be found whether or not Williams' plea for understanding among all humanity is valid.

In order to present as clear a picture as possible of Williams' view of the world of loneliness, it has been
necessary to research various works in the fields of psychology and Williams' personal life and philosophy. Undoubtedly, it will be manifest to most readers that the problem with which this paper is concerned, that of loneliness, can be clarified only within the framework of a psychology of loneliness. It is simply a matter of fact that the comparative determination of ultimate and fundamental concepts is something pertaining to psychology. Thus, it is deemed necessary to include an entire chapter which deals with a concept of loneliness and determines what the reality in question is, how it is related to other realities, and how its mode of being deviates from other modes of being. This chapter then provides the base from which the rest of the study evolves. Beyond the preceding, a great deal of research into the works concerned with the life of Williams, himself, provides an insight into the aspects of loneliness which he experienced and which aided in the formation of his own ideas and concepts of loneliness. Last, and yet, of chief importance, are Williams plays, especially the four with which this paper is primarily concerned.

Thus, there are three divisions which have been found necessary for the successful completion of this study: (1) a study of loneliness, (2) an examination of the life of Tennessee Williams, and (3) a detailed study of the lives of Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and Maggie. Each of these chapters will be handled in an analytical fashion. The chapter on
loneliness includes a study of existential loneliness as well as loneliness anxiety and the effects of both on the human mind --- fear and anxiety. A brief discussion of the early years of Tennessee Williams is followed by an analytical view of his family relationships. The main body of the paper is found in the chapter which studies and discusses, primarily, the lives of Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and Maggie with references to other Williams' characters. The conclusion sums up the findings of the paper and asserts the validity of Williams' idea.
CHAPTER II

A CONCEPT OF LONELINESS

Fear

Since the time of man's first disobedience of God, man has been prey to many and varied emotions, among them, fear and anxiety. The Bible records man's first experience of fear when, after eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve hid themselves from God. When God asked Adam and Eve where they were, Adam replied, "...I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."¹ The emotion of fear is said to be a common experience in the everyday life of man. It is usually aroused by conditions that man knows threaten his well-being—his physical safety, comfort and welfare, plans and desires, pride or anything that he values and wishes to protect. From birth to death fear is with man though the nature and conditions which are most apt to cause it change with man's growth. For instance, the infant cries out in terror when mother leaves the room primarily because she is his security and he is afraid of her absence. The young child

of eight, however, is no longer afraid of his mother's absence, unless of course it is unexpected. Rather, a greater fear is climbing on that new bicycle and learning to ride, perhaps because of the danger of falling. Or the mere sight of a spider, bee or some other insect or animal might be enough to send chills of fear through the eight year old. By adolescence a man has undergone a long series of developments, both physically and mentally, that influence the ebb and flow of his fears. Most of the earlier fears have been outgrown though some are likely still to persist and again many new fears have arisen by virtue of the threats and allurements that go with adolescent development itself. Personal physical harm seems to be more threatening to the adolescent and the fear regarding correct personal appearance becomes manifest. Also, a man has usually become more aware of the world around him and many of the fears he develops at this time arise out of problems and situations presented by the world. For instance, man begins to worry about finding a purpose in life, building a philosophy, being successful in his chosen field, having meaningful personal contacts with others. These are the types of fears that are primarily carried over into adulthood while irrational fears, such as the fear of doing poorly on an examination when one previously has always done well, have usually been overcome.

Webster defines fear as "a painful emotion excited by an expectation of evil or the apprehension of impending
danger: . . . ." For the purposes of this paper, however, it has been found that the preceding definition must be limited further in order for it to apply precisely to the concept of fear and not include anxiety. Therefore, a more concise definition of fear might be, a painful emotion excited by apprehension of specific dangers. Fear is founded in knowledge. Man knows that he is threatened, he knows of the impending danger, and he knows what or who causes the threat. For instance, the infant, even though only by instinct, knows that without mother he is helpless; the young child knows that if he gets on the bike he might fall; the young man in school knows that if he does not pass his exam he will not get a good grade; man knows that if he crosses a busy street against the light he will be hit by a car. In each of these situations man is aware of the danger, its source, and, he is also aware of the steps to take to overcome the dangers --- the baby cries, the child gets someone to hold the bike steady or he doesn't ride, the young man studies, and, in general, man either waits for the light to change or crosses when there are no cars in sight.

Anxiety

Fear and anxiety rest upon a common ground. They are both painful emotions excited by some threat. In anxiety, however, man finds that he is threatened without knowing what steps to take to overcome the danger. For instance, an example of the basic difference between fear and anxiety has been experienced and told of by many of America's automobile drivers. Situation: A man is driving down a two-lane highway. He sees a car, coming from the opposite direction, pull into his lane to pass. The man in such a situation might then judge the distance between the two cars and slow down while turning his car toward the shoulder of the road. He probably felt fear but took steps to overcome the danger. But, if, as the man starts to pull toward the shoulder of the road, he is surprised by the unexpected appearance of someone walking along the shoulder, he is suddenly caught in the middle of the road not knowing which way to turn. The man's heart is pounding very fast and, in contrast to the experience of fear as related above, he panics and normal reactions are hindered. When and if the experience is concluded without loss of life the man is left with a feeling of complete emptiness, a drained feeling, and possibly even light-headed or faint. This is anxiety. Says Dr. Rollo May, "Anxiety is the feeling of being 'caught', 'overwhelmed': and instead of becoming sharper, our
perceptions generally become blurred or vague."

Anxiety, like fear, has many and varied causes and may take different forms and intensities because, as Dr. Rollo May points out, "... it is the human being's basic reaction to a danger to his existence, or to some value he identifies with his existence." Fear is produced by a danger which threatens one side or one part of the self. Anxiety, on the other hand, occurs when the threat involves the total self and strikes out at man's very being.

The history of the world is a history of developmental change and progress. In accordance with this fact it is also the history of the changing values and goals of man. Today's world seems to be in a state of confusion and bewilderment caused by the transition taking place in man's values and goals. This transitional state with its political and economic upheaval, interminable half-wars and cold wars, its rising outbreak of suicide, divorce, and murder, and its impending threat of a third world war, provides the perfect atmosphere for anxiety. Among the causes of anxiety today, is the loss of the center of values in our society. The idea of individual competitiveness is becoming less important to society and indeed the individual no longer has much of a chance for self-success in business. In our present day of

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4 Ibid., p. 40.
giant business and monopoly control the vast majority of business men and professional people must belong to some large group or other to survive economically at all. Though man, in the past, has been taught to strive to get ahead, it is now becoming more important to merely 'keep up' and to learn to work well with one's fellow workers. Man no longer does what he does for his own satisfaction and good, and thus the good of society, but rather he is now forced to live for society first. This transition results in the loss of a certain amount of man's individuality and, for some, causes anxiety. The good of society should follow from the good of the individual but cannot be separated from it. Karl Marx noted in his philosophy,

... history is a march toward man's self-realization; society, whatever the evils produced by any given society may be, is the condition for man's self-creation and unfolding. The 'good society' . . . becomes identical with the society of good men, that is, of fully developed, sane, and productive individuals.5

Freud called it neuroticism, Marx termed it alienation but, whatever the word used to describe the situation, there exists a state of overwhelming collectivism in today's society that is, to some extent, the cause of a kind of de-humanization of man because of the loss of emphasis on the

individual. It brings about the loss of man's sense of self, of his sense of true dignity and worth. Man, as a self, becomes an insignificant cog in the wheel, so to speak, and his personal choices don't always matter because of the giant economic, political, and social movements of our time. Flowing from this situation also, man seems to have lost the universal language for personal communication. As Erich Fromm points out in almost every book he has written, man has an excellent vocabulary for technical subjects, but when it comes to meaningful interpersonal relations his language is lost. Many times two people find themselves confused semantically, especially concerning words such as truth, integrity, courage, freedom, and love. Even today's artists find communication difficult. They shift from style to style and never really find a common language.

All of the afore-mentioned situations --- the loss of the center of values in society, the loss of the sense of self, the loss of a universal language for personal communications ---coupled with other transitions in goals and values too numerous to mention, have brought about today's age which has often been referred to as an age of anxiety. Modern man is in the throes of finding answers to the questions, 'Who am I?, Who should I be?'. The goal for every human being is to become a person --- to fulfill one's own potentialities, and this requires a self-consciousness that chooses and affirms whatever is necessary for development.
Dr. Rollo May points out, "One of the few blessings of living in an age of anxiety is that we are forced to become aware of ourselves."⁶

**Existental Loneliness**

There are, in modern man's experience, two forms of loneliness, the first being "existential loneliness". Clark E. Moustakas believes, as do many others, that the real loneliness of genuine experience is an intrinsic condition of human existence. He believes that out of the depths of grief, despair, and the shattering feeling of total impotency springs the urge to create new forms and images, to discover new ways of being aware and expressing experience, and to rejoice in the new knowledge of self.

The deepest experiences the soul can know --- the birth of a baby, the prolonged illness or death of a loved relative, the tortuous pain or the isolation of disease, the creation of a poem, a painting, a symphony, the grief of fire, a flood, an accident --- each in its own way touches upon the roots of loneliness. In all these experiences we must perforce go alone.

Moustakas goes on to say,

The experience of separation or isolation is not unhealthy any more than any condition of human existence is unhealthy. Ultimately each man is alone but when the individual maintains a truthful
self-identity, such isolation is strengthening and induces deeper sensitivities and awareness.7

For Moustakas, then, loneliness is an intense feeling of separation or isolation. Dr. Rollo May agrees basically with Moustakas' picture of loneliness and says that modern man will generally describe loneliness as a feeling of being "...on the outside," isolated, or, if they are sophisticated, they say they feel alienated.8 He, like Moustakas, feels that if man were to constructively experience his loneliness he would benefit greatly by the further development of his sense of direction, and more meaningful relations with others.

As Erich Fromm says, man is

...life being aware of itself; he has awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he is born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, ...9

Fromm goes on to point out that man's awareness of his separateness leaves him with a sense of being cut off from the rest of the world for he becomes unable to actively grasp the outer world of things and people.

The books of the Old Testament, also, provide a profound and powerful literature on the history of man's loneliness. The terrible feeling of abandonment and isolation, the scourge of being destroyed without cause are beautifully portrayed in the verse of "Job."

And Job said:

'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, 'A man-child is conceived.'
Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.
Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.
That night --- let thick darkness seize it! Let it not come into the number of the months.
Yea, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry be heard in it. ..\n
These lines show the utter despair that has been brought upon Job by his loneliness. He curses his birth and his is the classic example of the story of a man whose isolation from the world is complete.

Loneliness, then, might be defined as the individual's piercing awareness of his own isolated existence. Strangely enough, the individual who is lonely, if let be, will finally come to realize himself more fully, and recognize loneliness as a condition of human life which can enrich it. Though in loneliness one is definitely cut off from the world and from human companionship, one will ultimately find that, rather than causing a break or division

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10The Holy Bible, "Job" 3:2-7, p. 392.
of self, loneliness, when faced and accepted and lived with, expands the individual's wholeness, perceptiveness, sensitivity and humanity. As Moustakas says,

The person's identity comes into relief as he breathes his own spirit into everything he touches, as he relates significantly and openly with others and with the universe. Without any deep and growing roots in the soil of loneliness, the individual moves in accordance with external signals. He does not know his place in the world, his position, where he is or who he is. He has lost touch with his own nature, his own spontaneity.\footnote{Moustakas, p. 50.}

Man, naturally, fears loneliness. However, as characteristic of fear, there is a turning point at which one faces his fear and through knowledge conquers it. This, then, is the basic truth concerning existential loneliness. Though a man fears his individual solitude he is aware of it and aware that he must accept it as part of his nature and face it. Through his acceptance and final knowledge of loneliness, man learns to explore and thus expand his knowledge of himself. His greater knowledge of his own being will also make itself evident in his relations with others, for they will be truer and richer experiences in the world of human relationships.

Loneliness Anxiety

The second form of loneliness that is part of man's experience is the loneliness of self-rejection and self-
alienation which in reality is a vague and disturbing anxiety. This type of loneliness separates man from himself as a feeling and knowing entity.\(^{12}\)

A child is born. The umbilical cord symbolizing the physical symbiotic union between mother and child is cut. But what of the psychological umbilical cord? Physically, after birth, the infant is an individual, a separate entity from mother, father, and all men. Psychologically, however, the infant is still one with his mother. Immediately following birth, the state of existence of the infant does not differ much from the preceding state of inter-uterine existence. The infant, a being who does not yet recognize objects and who is not yet aware of itself or of the world as being outside of itself, is still entirely dependent on mother for warmth and nourishment. In fact, to the infant, mother is warmth, nourishment and security --- the giver is not yet distinguished from her gifts. Thus, during infancy, man does not experience anxiety because he is not aware of the world nor does he yet experience his own individuality.

As he grows and develops, however, man does become aware of self and the world around him. The child's psychological existence in the world of "we" is lost in the world of "I" as the child begins to distinguish the separate existence of different things, to name them, and to learn

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 24.
about them. The tie between mother and child changes as the child learns that mother is not homogeneous with food, warmth and security, rather she is the source. As he learns of the world and of his own existence as a self, the child also becomes aware of his loneliness and the need for human companionship. The psychological umbilical cord, in most instances, is cut as the child matures and reaches out more and more for interpersonal relationships with others. Indeed, if it is not severed, if the child does not reach out or is not allowed to have meaningful relationships with others, great harm can follow. Dr. Rollo May makes this clear as he says of a child who encounters this experience, "His development is blocked, and the surrendered freedom for growth turns inward and festers in resentment and anger."¹³ He also points out that these are generally the people who are greatly upset when they must make important decisions such as those concerning life's work, marriage, or any crises they might face. Figuratively speaking, these are the people who always go back to mother.

Through his interpersonal relationships with others, the child eventually learns more about himself as a thinking, acting, and feeling unity. He enhances his own existence as an individual and also his scope of possible relationships is thereby broadened. He becomes aware of the different sides

¹³May, p. 121.
of himself. At this point in his development, sometimes referred to as the age of "the use of reason," man begins to experience loneliness or the feeling of isolation as a real threat to his very existence. It is no longer a slight fear forever forgotten by running to mother or playing with the child next door. Rather, loneliness now becomes a more intense and probing anxiety which cries out for relief. Erich Fromm tells of the anxiety caused by man's awareness of his separation, of his aloneness and of the need of man to alleviate this anxiety.

The deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. The absolute failure to achieve this aim means insanity, because the panic of complete isolation can be overcome only by such a radical withdrawal from the world outside that the feeling of separation disappears — because the world outside, from which one is separated, has disappeared.  

Perhaps every man, when looking back at his life, can remember one time or another when his very existence was threatened with annihilation. Maybe this threat occurred when, as an impressionable youngster someone said the world would end the next day, or perhaps when driving down the highway one realized that there was no way to avoid a head-on collision. Whatever the threat may have been, the reaction recorded in the minds of most men was feelings of overwhelming loneliness and isolation. One of the best examples of this took place when the first atom bomb exploded

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over Hiroshima. The people of the United States sensed their grave danger — that was, that they may well have been the last generation — but they did not know wherein lay the methods of control. It is part of history that at that moment the reaction of great numbers of people was, strangely enough, a sudden and penetrating loneliness.

"Modern Man is Obsolete", an essay written by Norman Cousins, attempts to express the feelings of intelligent people at that bewildering and shocking moment in history. However, it is not an essay concerned with how to protect oneself from the dangers of the bomb, nor is it concerned with the questions of right or wrong. Rather it is a deeply thoughtful essay which meditates on the concept of man's loneliness. Cousins proclaims,

Whatever elation there is in the world today because of final victory in the war is severely tempered by fear. It is a primitive fear, the fear of the unknown. . . .

This fear, or rather anxiety, concerning irrational death is one of the prime causes of modern man's feelings of loneliness, and Cousins, in his essay, goes on to show how all of man's history is primarily an endeavor to shatter his loneliness.

Down through the ages, man has inevitably been confronted with questions like, How does one overcome his

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separateness? How does one achieve meaningful union or oneness with others? There have been many and varied answers offered. As seen in the discussion concerning existential loneliness, one answer is to face loneliness, thereby strengthening the concept of one's self and creating a world which allows the more meaningful human interpersonal relationships to flower. But, since man is a member of a human race with a fallible nature, his history is not the history of the saint or the flawless decision or action. Rather, history shows many attempts at answers other than that of existential loneliness and many of these "other" answers bring about what is herein referred to as loneliness anxiety. These "other" answers include such things as obsessional work, conformity, striving for personal power and status, alcoholism, promiscuity, and religious fanaticism. As man reaches out for these substitute answers, history records man as faltering because, generally speaking, this type of thing merely alienates man from himself. These answers, when grasped and substituted for the real answer to overcoming loneliness and achieving meaningful unity in our world, tend to create a gap between the real man and the roles that he plays. Eventually, not only is there a gap formed, but also knowledge concerning which is the real man and which is merely one side of this man is lost and hence the knowledge of self is lost. Therein lies loneliness anxiety. Moustakas says,
Loneliness anxiety results from a fundamental breach between what one is and what one pretends to be, a basic alienation between man and man and between man and his nature.  

One of the substitutes for man's real union with himself and with others previously mentioned was man's striving for power and status in the world. One perfect example of man's failure to overcome his loneliness and experience deeply meaningful interpersonal relationships is found in the Greek playwright's, Sophocles', character of Creon, in the play, Antigone. Creon has attained the status of king and asserts his power of authority over all as he proclaims that Polyneices shall never receive the proper funeral honors and that anyone who attempts to bury the body will be subject to death. But someone does try to bury the body and, when it is suggested to Creon that the hand of God might be seen in such an action, he will not even consider this as possible. Antigone then reveals that it was she who tried to bury her brother and she tells Creon that his decree, a man-made law, could never "...override the laws of Heaven unwritten and unchanging." Creon is enraged to find that his authority is being defied and as he speaks of Antigone's fierce, unrelenting temper he actually foreshadows his own downfall:

16Moustakas, p. 50.

But it is those that are most obstinate 
Suffer the greatest fall; the hardest iron, 
Most fiercely tempered in the fire, that is 
Most often shaped and splintered.

Creon is alone but does not know it for power has blinded
him to truth. Creon's son Haemon is not blind, however, and
he tells his father:

Therefore let not
This single thought possess you: only what
You say is right and nothing. The man
Who thinks that he is alone is wise, that he
Is best in speech or counsel, such a man
Brought to the proof is found but emptiness.

But Creon sees nothing but insolence in his son's statement.
Creon's substitute of power for the true development of self
ends in disaster. His son and wife both die cursing him and
his own existence becomes meaningless to him.

Man has also found that he can sublimate his loneli-
ness and achieve a kind of unity through conformity. This
is particularly applicable to modern man. Today conformity
is almost advocated as a way of life and yet people seem to
find that eventually this way of life arouses inward feelings
of despair and emptiness, and fears of loneliness. Why?
Dr. Rollo May, in his book, Man's Search for Himself, tells
of an incident that appeared in the New York papers. It
seems that a bus driver disappeared one day taking with him
the company's bus. Several days later he was picked up in
Florida. His explanation was that he had merely gotten
tired of the everyday routine. The citizens of the Bronx
cheered him; the bus company decided not to prosecute; and
the driver got his job back under the condition that he would take no more jaunts. When explaining why all the Bronx people had cheered at such a breach of conformity, Dr. Rollo May says,

"Was it not that this driver who got bored to death with simply making his appointed rounds, . . . typified some similar emptiness and futility in these middle-class people, . . . ?" 18

In conformity man finds a lack of relatedness with his own nature and that of others. Certainly he does find an equality in conformity but this is not enough to alleviate man's loneliness anxiety for it is not man's nature to be exactly like everyone else. An old saying that parents often use when they do not want their child to do something he wishes to do because his friend is doing it is, 'Would you jump off a bridge just because he did?' It seems there may be more truth than poetry to such a question were it to confront today's society. It has been noted by several psychologists and philosophers that, in conformity, man's development and creativity seems to come to a standstill. It is as if man had reached a plateau in the mountainous ranges of life and refused to go any higher because no one else would either. To stay on this plateau for long, however, would eventually cause boredom and a feeling of emptiness. Loneliness anxiety would finally become a factor in man's

18 May, pp. 21-22.
life because of the field of nothingness he would view in the future. As far as the ethics behind conformity are concerned, Dr. Rollo May explains,

Whether you dignify the standards by calling them 'cultural' or moral rules or absolute religious doctrines, what is ethical about such conformity? Obviously such behavior leaves out the essence of the unique relationship with the other person, and the working out, in some degree of freedom and personal responsibility of the creative relationship.\[19\]

This increasing tendency toward the elimination of difference in today's society can be related to the idea of equality. However, the equality brought about by conformity is not the equality of "oneness" but rather the equality of "sameness." Thus, conformity, because it is calm and dictated by routine, and because it does hinder the development of self, cannot provide ample unity to still man's fear of loneliness, but instead man eventually will find loneliness anxiety a part of the heritage of conformity.

Another substitute man has found to erase his feelings of loneliness in the world is the 'love' of man. When the word "love" is used in connection with loneliness anxiety it does not connote the true mature love that Erich Fromm speaks of in The Art of Loving as the "...union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality."\[20\] Rather, loneliness anxiety thrives on the type of

\[19\]Ibid., p. 188.
\[20\]Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 17.
love that arises from need and not from any true relationship with a person. The basic pattern of this type of love is found in the physical, biological relation between the pregnant mother and the foetus. They exist together as one, they need each other. The foetus is a part of the mother and lives by virtue of the mother's life which, at the same time, is enhanced by the existence of the foetus. The mental symbiotic union connotes the same kind of attachment psychologically, however, the two bodies exist independent of one another. There are two known forms of the psychological symbiotic union, active and passive, which constitute the love arising from need. Both of these types of union, referred to as sadism and masochism respectively, are typified by the relationship between mother and child when the psychological umbilical cord is not cut. The difference between mother and child in this relationship is merely that one dominates, commands, and exploits, while the other is dominated, commanded, exploited. One cannot exist without the other and yet their existence together finally brings about deep-seated loneliness anxiety because neither is a person in his own right but merely a part of the other.

One good example of such love and its possible consequences can be found in Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet. Certainly there existed many factors contributing to the destruction of Ophelia. One of the prime factors, however, was the rather sadistic love her father, Polonius, bore Ophelia,
coupled with her own masochistic submission to his demands and exploitations. She sought the love of Hamlet but her father would not allow such a relationship. Finally, while Ophelia was being used by her father to seek out the depth and source of Hamlet's madness, Hamlet, himself, turned her away. Thus at the death of Polonius, that part of Ophelia which belonged to him, also died. Because of the immature symbiotic love between Polonius and Ophelia, that part of herself that died with her father was such a large part that the loneliness anxiety she felt following his death was utterly overwhelming and destructive, whereupon, Ophelia courted madness and finally death to obliterate the feelings of anxiety and loneliness.

Loneliness anxiety can and does result from the very same things that cause pure anxiety and also from many other situations and sources. In order to stop such an emotion, man must face himself. He must come to know himself, and thus others, better. The questions are, however, "Can man face himself and his loneliness?" and, more important, if he can, "Will he?". Shakespeare's famous soliloquy, spoken by Hamlet, shows the situation of all mankind in his struggle to know self:

Ham. To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die --- to sleep---
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die --- to sleep.
Man, like Hamlet, must decide, for himself, who he really is, who he should be. He must be ready and able to face defeat as well as success in his life, loneliness as well as companionship.

If, however, man is not strong within himself, if he finds it difficult to face his loneliness and to know himself he, because of his nature, reaches out to others for help and guidance, or, at the very least, for the comfort in the knowledge that he is not alone.

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Tennessee Williams was born March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi, the son of Cornelius Coffin Williams, a traveling salesman for International Shoe Company, and Edwina Dakin Williams, daughter of the local Episcopal Rector. He spent most of his childhood in small towns in Mississippi and Tennessee and then in 1918 the family moved to St. Louis. This move seemed to have a bad effect on both Tennessee Williams and his sister and there is recorded an apparent development of certain neurosis at this time in his life. He attended the University of Missouri until the depression when he was forced to quit school and go to work. Williams got a job selling shoes and after two years of hard and frustrating work he was stricken by a nervous breakdown. After his recovery he attended Washington University, St. Louis, and it was there that he won the first of many awards --- first place in a one-act play contest. Later he withdrew and transferred to State University in Iowa, received his BA Degree and went out in the world to become an itinerant writer. Williams' first taste of success came with the play, The Glass Menagerie, but it
wasn't until 1947, with the play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, that he established permanent acclaim and success as one of America's most important writers.¹

Edwina Dakin Williams, the mother of Tennessee Williams, was a very soft and gentle woman never given to harsh words or deeds. "Edwina herself was a small, bird-like, beautiful young woman, composed and proper to the point of puritanism."² Since she was unable to lavish her love and attention upon her husband because of his constant absences from the home and his brute nature, the early life of Tennessee, along with that of his sister, Rose, was dominated by their mother who found them to be the perfect objects for this discarded love. When Tennessee was five years old he contracted a serious case of diphtheria which paralyzed his legs for the better part of two years. This illness kept the boy out of school and deprived him of the normal everyday encounters of most children. Also, his mother's loving protection became intensified and she forbade him to go outside or to play with other children. Hence, Tennessee's world of interpersonal relationships with others was limited to his mother, his grandmother and his sister. This situation intensified Williams' subjective


world and his shyness grew and his life turned inward. He, himself, admits that he became, "... delicate and sissified." But these would not be the only consequences the child would suffer. As a natural course of events, because Williams was denied the interpersonal relationships with others that are vital for the growth and development of childhood, Williams was, in all probability, bothered by feelings of loneliness and anxiety. These feelings account for Williams' introversion which in turn accounts for his later unsuccessful attempts at interpersonal relationships. "If home was 'not a pleasant refuge,' as Williams once said, the outside world was no better. Williams recalls being teased by gangs of boys when he began to go to school." This is not to say that Williams never had any true and meaningful relationships with others but, rather, they were very few and found only among those who offered him understanding.

Mrs. Williams backed her son's talent from the very first signs of interest that he showed in writing. Her ambition for her children was to enable them to do whatever they wished and she seemed to have great confidence in her son's ability to write. When Tennessee was eleven years old, Edwina displayed her confidence in her son when she bought

\[3\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 5.}\]

\[4\text{Gerald Weals, } \text{Tennessee Williams} \text{ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 7.}\]
him a second-hand typewriter with money she saved from her household allowance. Only once, and that during the depression, did Mrs. Williams ever withdraw her encouragement from Tennessee. Though she was still proud of her son's efforts at writing, she decided that materially, this a luxury that her son and her family could not afford during the hard times. Her attitude was a blow to Tennessee at the time but caused no real break between him and his mother. In fact, in her book, Remember Me to Tom, it is made clear how very close mother and son still are, and Mrs. Williams hints at the fact that she probably understands her son even better than he understands her. She has continued to stand up for her son's work to this day and when asked for her criticism her answer is:

To me, Tom chooses the crystal-clear word to write with deep discernment about people and with great sympathy for them. I don't know another contemporary writer with such compassion. . . . I feel Tom could not write any better. He is the greatest playwright of our age as is.  

The father of Tennessee Williams was a hard and a coarse man. He was often away from home because of his traveling and Tennessee never got the chance to know his father well.

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5E. D. Williams, pp. 252-253.
His father's presence frightened him not only by its coarseness but by its strangeness, and from earliest childhood he regarded his father with awe, fear and definite sense of disgust. Tom's disgust with his father was echoed by the elder Williams' disgust with his son. When the family moved to St. Louis, Cornelius Williams no longer spent long intervals traveling away from his home. The love and close interpersonal relationship which should exist between father and son never did find expression, however, between Tennessee and Cornelius Williams. A father, presumably, is the one who teaches the child, who guides him on the pathways into the world. His guidance and teaching should be patient and tolerant, rather than threatening and authoritarian. It should relay to the growing child an increasing sense of competence and confidence and eventually permit him to become his own authority. What a father "should" be and what Cornelius Williams "was", however, were two entirely different things. Perhaps, had Cornelius been present more often during his son's early life, Tennessee would have become less "delicate and sissified" and it is possible that this, in itself, would have made Cornelius a little less intolerable of his son's chosen vocation. The fact remains, however, that Cornelius Williams, who went so far as to nickname Tennessee "Miss Nancy", was a major source of anxiety.

6 Nelson, p. 3.
for the youngster.

The elder Williams seems to have gone to extreme lengths to destroy the morale of his son. Tennessee became attached, during high school, to a girl named Hazel Kramer and his father so objected to the romance that when he found out she would be going to the same college as Tennessee, Cornelius put pressure on her grandfather, threatening his job, and finally forcing Hazel to go to another college. When Tennessee learned the truth, he was infuriated by his father's actions and though he said nothing, "whatever shreds of a relationship that still existed between Tom Williams and his father were now irrevocably broken."7 Upset by this loss of someone he had been close to, Tennessee became disinterested in college, his grades began dropping and he, in turn, infuriated his father by failing his ROTC course. As far as Cornelius was concerned this was merely further evidence of his son's weakness. At that time came the height of the depression and Cornelius decided to take Tennessee out of college and put him to work with the International Shoe Company. Tennessee's job included dusting shoes, typing factory orders and hauling around packing cases filled with the sample shoes of the traveling salesmen. This event did nothing but deepen the chasm between Tennessee

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7Ibid., p. 19.
and his father, a chasm which was never to be filled. After the death of his father in 1957, Tennessee was quoted as saying:

My father was a totally honest man, he was never known to tell a lie in his life or to take an unfair advantage of anybody in business. He had a strong character and a sense of honor. He lived on his own terms which were hard terms for his family but he should not be judged as long as he remains the mystery that he is to us who lived in his shadow. Maybe I hated him once but I certainly don't any more.⁸

The first time Tennessee Williams was able to use his father as the basis for one of his characters in a play he was remarkably successful. Big Daddy and Brick Pollitt represent Cornelius and Tennessee Williams vividly in their relationship with one another.

. . . the brick wall isolating them from one another so that all their talks ended in misunderstanding. The masculinity of the domineering father who finds it hard to understand the idealistic, yielding sensitiveness of the son is an echo of that earlier, impossible relationship.⁹

Whatever the true emotions Tennessee felt for his father, hate or disgust, their relationship courted loneliness and anxiety for Tennessee. The guidance Cornelius offered Tennessee was neither patient nor tolerant but rather tyrannically authoritarian. Tennessee never felt the loving guidance of closeness which many find in the

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father-son relationship, but instead the loneliness and anxiety one experiences when one's existence is threatened. And, indeed, Cornelius was a threat to Tennessee's existence because of his condemnation both of his son and his son's chosen profession. But Tennessee did not fall down under the heavy hand of his father because he found both strength and himself through his writing. As Dr. Rollo May comments, what our society today needs is "...persons who can be, that is, persons who have a center of strength within themselves."10, he seems to be pointing to people like Tennessee Williams.

The story of Tennessee's sister Rose's life is a tragic one. Though Rose resented the intrusion of the new baby when Tennessee was born, they grew to have an extremely close relationship. Since both children were very sensitive they completely understood one another and played imaginative games together for hours. During Tennessee's childhood illness, they became especially close. Mrs. Williams noted, however, that Rose's disposition was quite different than Tennessee's and that she was always more dramatically inclined than he. Mrs. Williams explains:

Rose showed plenty of temper and temperament while Tom was usually quiet and calm and still is, in

spite of the violence in his plays. I think his salvation was that he could express in words the confidence he saw and felt around him.\textsuperscript{11}

Rose did not have this saving talent, however, and in her early years she began to withdraw from the world. Her brother was a vital part of her world until she reached puberty and then she withdrew even from him. Tennessee was very disturbed by his sister's rejection of him and could not quite understand since he was so young. He seemed inclined, at the time, to wonder what he had done wrong. Out of his great loneliness, however, came the germ which grew into one of Williams' greatest plays, \textit{The Glass Menagerie}.

As the years passed, Rose became entirely helpless and her fantasy world grew. Thus, Cornelius decided to commit Rose to a sanitarium. After many examinations by different psychiatrists it was decided that a lobotomy was the only answer for Rose and finally the Williams's consented. Tennessee was away at the time but now says that he still feels some guilt about it for if he had been present he would have stopped the operation. Speaking of Tennessee's attitude about the loss of Rose, Mrs. Williams says, "I think his was a grief beyond words, as he saw his beautiful, imaginative sister whom he had always idolized, partially destroyed."\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12]Ibid., p. 86.
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As a child, Williams felt a deep sense of loneliness at the loss of the companionship of his sister as does anyone who loses a loved one. However, his loneliness, at that time, was accompanied by anxiety, for though he knew his sister was lost to him he wished to correct the situation and prevent the loss but it was impossible and he did not know where to turn. Rather than letting loneliness anxiety conquer him, Williams found a certain release and satisfaction in writing, both in the form of diary entry and short story, of the events that took place. Also, with his own growth and development came the understanding that he was not to blame for his sister's retreat from the world. This naturally eased the anxiety but not the loneliness. As an adult, when he received word of Rose's lobotomy, Tennessee Williams undoubtedly experienced an even deeper sense of loneliness anxiety. Tennessee's feelings of guilt, mentioned in Mrs. Williams' book, *Remember Me to Tom*, concerning the operation, stem from this loneliness anxiety. Edwina Williams later notes that as soon as Tennessee was able financially he took over all responsibility for Rose's care and happiness. By offering himself as her strength and security, Williams thus alleviated the anxiety he felt for Rose and to this day, he visits her quite often and the trust funds he has established for her have made her somewhat of an heiress.

Tennessee Williams lived a good deal of his young
life in the care of his grandparents and was closely al­lied with them both. Tennessee adored the old people and often accompanied his grandfather on his daily house calls. It seems that Tennessee might have found in his grandfather, a substitute for the father he needed. Tennessee's grand­mother encouraged his talent for writing all through her life and paid for most of his higher education. Beyond this, when he was an itinerant writer, she would save small sums of money and send it to him. Tennessee noted that often the money she sent him would mean his first good meal in days. After his grandmother's death, Tennessee and his grandfather spent many happy hours together on various visits and as Edwina relates in her book, "Father always championed every­thing Tom wrote. . ."  

Throughout the life of Tennessee Williams there have been recorded many incidents when the shyness and intro­version carried over from his youth, have caused others to dislike Williams. These emotions have, as well, caused him to withdraw from society and the world. One such incident, which describes perfectly the anguish of his loneliness, occurred immediately after the success of The Glass Menagerie. Williams wrote a personal essay called "The Catastrophe of Success" in which he told of the distressing events sur­rounding that time in his life. The security suddenly thrust

\[13\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 124.}\]
upon him because of his success was distasteful to Williams and the luxuries of the rich became inane and hateful. Following his trivial material dislocation in the world, Tennessee found himself becoming indifferent to people.

'A well of cynicism rose in me. Conversations all sounded as if they had been recorded years ago and were being played back on a turntable. Sincerity and kindliness seemed to have gone out of my friends' voices. I suspected them of hypocrisy. I stopped calling them, stopped seeing them. I was impatient of what I took to be inane flattery. I no longer felt any pride in the play itself but began to dislike it, probably because I felt too lifeless inside ever to create another. I was walking around dead in my shoes and I knew it but there were no friends I knew or trusted sufficiently, at that time, to take them aside and tell them what was the matter.1

At that time Tennessee chose to withdraw from the world by having an eye operation and once again he found his center of strength within himself as his feelings gradually began to return to normal. Edwina Dakin Williams wrote,

Tom's youth does explain, I feel, his deep interest in and sympathy with people trapped in emotional tragedy, like Blanche in Streetcar and Brick in Cat. I am sure Tom felt at his wit's end many a time, hemmed in by disaster, just like the characters he created. What saved Tom, perhaps, was his humor, always a part of him.1

The most urgent need Williams experienced as a child is adequately described by the challenge of Socrates ---

"Know thyself." To a great degree Williams has accepted that challenge. To a lesser degree, he has answered it.

14Tischler, p. 132-133. 15E.D. Williams, p. 41.
Unlike Rose, the loneliness anxiety, the shyness and the introspection he experienced did not undermine him; for he is a person who can be, who has found some strength within himself. Williams is a man who has fulfilled his potenti-alities in-so-far as he is capable, and who has chosen and affirmed that which was fundamentally necessary for his own development.
AND SO IT WAS I ENTERED THE BROKEN WORLD
TO TRACE THE VISIONARY COMPANY OF LOVE, ITS VOICE
AN INSTANT IN THE WIND [I KNOW NOT WHITHER HURLED]
BUT NOT FOR LONG TO HOLD EACH DESPARETE CHOICE.

"THE BROKEN TOWER" BY HART CRANE

Tennessee Williams used this stanza, taken from the
American poet's poem, "The Broken Tower", to introduce his
play, A Streetcar Named Desire. Both Williams and Crane are
contemporary writers and both are concerned with the reality of a
broken world though the mediums of communication they have
chosen differ.

Today's theatre is primarily a product of revolt ---
revolt against the well-made play, against complacence, against
restriction and conventionality --- revolt that is striving
to communicate truth and freedom. The people of this time
have begun to look for involvement in the theatre and
Williams' understanding of the art of the theatre and his use
of every available method of communicating to an audience has
made him one of the great dramatists of today who can, and
does, offer involvement to the audience. With few ex-
ceptions, Williams' plays are set in the deep South where
he, himself, was a victim of circumstance and surroundings

1Tennessee Williams, Four Plays by Tennessee Williams
during his youth. Out of the compassion born of his own discovery of the ultimate loneliness and futility of the human individual experience, Williams created the fragile and beautiful characters of his plays and surrounded them with incredible brutality.

Amanda Wingfield, Blanche DuBois, Alma Winemiller and Margaret 'Maggie' Pollitt are four of Williams' fragile southern belles whose lives are affected most by loneliness anxiety. Though almost all of Williams' characters are lonely people, these four women represent, in greatest depth and scope of personality, the truly human struggle against loneliness. Women like Myra in Battle of Angels, Emmie in You Touched Me!, Serafina in The Rose Tattoo, and the Princess in Sweet Bird of Youth all touch upon the surface of loneliness but don't really warrant a study in depth. They do share some similarities with the previously mentioned Williams' women, however. For instance, Myra, like Amanda, has her past to recall (Moon Lake and love) and her present to endure (the prostitution of her marriage to Jabe). Amanda, however, is much more a lady than Myra and there is no sexual solution to her problems. Myra is also somewhat like Blanche for she has lost the world that she knew best, the world that included her father, her home, and her loved one. She had become pregnant and so, seeing no other way out of her troubles, she married a malicious, selfish, crotchety old man. It was a self-destructive
solution somewhat similar to the prostitution of Blanche except that it might be termed legal prostitution. Myra, on the other hand is not a fragile southern woman, rather she is of Sicilian descent and the story of her life is more like the personification of a concept of life rather than a study of a truly human nature. This work failed in its professional tryout but was revised and later brought to life as Orpheus Descending. Orpheus Descending, though it is acknowledged as a better play, explores the same themes as did Battle of Angels. Moreover, many of the characters are the same. However, it does not represent the same quality of playwriting for it is more symbolic. The observations about the depravity and bestiality of life are far less obvious and thus apprehension is more tolerable. In The Rose Tattoo, Serafina, also, loses everything, but the death of her dream does not destroy her. Why it does not is never revealed, instead the study of her, as a person faced by loneliness, is merely a surface study.

In Suddenly Last Summer Williams' character studies are secondary parts of the play. The question of the morality of the prefrontal lobotomy serves as the stage for the more important exploration of the moral responsibility of the family, the church, and organized medicine in a civilized society.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the whole fabric of Williams' art seems to show some kind of conscious pattern
of moral development. However, it also seems that there is a break between the earlier plays and the later ones, beginning with *Suddenly Last Summer*. The earlier works of Williams are studies of transgressions while the later works seem to be studies of destiny and redemption. At the same time, the earlier works also seem to deal more intimately with the transgressors themselves and their relationships than the later works do. The more recent plays that might be discussed under the heading of later plays are *Suddenly Last Summer*, (mentioned previously), *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Night of the Iguana*, and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*. In *Sweet Bird of Youth* one finds a number of transgressors gathered together in a single world, where their destinies are pondered. The people presented have become phantoms --- shadows of former selves. Alexandra del Lago is an image of death whose decadence is matched only by that of young Chance Wayne who regards himself merely as a commodity to be bought and sold to the highest bidder. These people, living as they do, have no real chance for the interpersonal relationships that develop them as persons and give them true depth and meaning. They no longer seem to experience anxiety but instead are plagued only by fear. In *Night of the Iguana*, once again, Williams seems only to have created "character sketches." Though Williams seems to have fully imagined his personae, they are not as
completely conceived in relation to one another as are those in the earlier works. What happens to the people in Night of the Iguana is less important than what has happened in the past. However, the past is not what the play is concerned with. Though Hannah is perhaps one of the loneliest people in the play, under her gentleness is an exquisitely balanced combination of self-knowledge, compassion, and hard courage. She is more of a saint than a person and loneliness and trouble have not swamped her. The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Any More has often been referred to as a "religious allegory". The characters do not seem real but rather are representations. Williams, himself, refers to Flora Goforth as a "female clown" at whom we must laugh even though we may pity her. She has lived a life of absurd pretensions and in the play is battling against final destruction. Once again the depth and scope of character does not seem sufficient to warrant the comprehensive study that is to be applied to Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and Maggie.

Perhaps the character that comes closest to paralleling the more human development of Amanda, Blanche, Alma, and Maggie, is Sandra in Battle of Angels. Sandra is a fragile Southern aristocrat and like Blanche she has chosen alcohol and promiscuity to soothe the pains of her existence. But again, Williams' study of Sandra's life is not complete and as a minor character in the play she is left somewhat in the background. These four women, Amanda, Blanche, Alma,
and Maggie, are also those characters whose struggle against loneliness is most noticeable and truly affected by "anxiety" as opposed to mere fear which is more easily overcome. As will be seen in an examination of each of these characters they are lost, not knowing why the emotion of loneliness dominates their lives nor what to do or where to turn to correct the situation. With one exception, these women find nothing but temporary and dissatisfying solutions to their problems because they cannot face themselves or any true reality. Maggie, on the other hand, does face her "self", and some of her shortcomings and mistakes and thus her fight against loneliness is a more successful one. This will be shown later in the chapter.

Amanda Wingfield

Yes, I have tricks in my pocket. I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

These are the words with which Williams opened his play, The Glass Menagerie. Amanda Wingfield is the character of main concern and she is, "... in the words of Lawrence --- a woman of character and refinement who goes into the lower class, and (who) has no satisfaction in her own life."  

2All textual quotes are taken from Ibid., The Glass Menagerie, pp. vii-64.

Amanda was born and raised in the South among its aristocracy. Her memories of the beauty and gentility of her youth are very vivid and aid her in the creation of a world which is meant to replace the real world that disgusts her. Amanda's attitude toward life has definitely been affected by the atmosphere of gracious living in which she was reared. Always conscious of appearances and the everyday niceties that were so important during her youth, part of her story is the story of a mother struggling desperately to recreate her youth through her children. She has become narrow in her outlook and also what might be termed spinsterish as she oversees the lives of Tom and Laura. Herein lies one great source of loneliness anxiety for Amanda. Her preoccupation with the finer side of life, etiquette, the proper reading material, the moderate use of the vices including the correct usage of language, is, more often than not, resented by those she loves. This resentment, however, is not a reaction to mere correction but rather to the way in which Amanda corrects and the extremes to which she carries that correction. Amanda is realistic concerning the shortcomings of her children and she has the right, as does every mother, to teach her children the acceptable way of handling themselves. However, probably because she is unsatisfied with her own present way of life, her corrections of her children and the demands she makes upon them are unrealistic. One instance of the extreme to which
Amanda goes is found at the opening of the play when Tom sits down to eat. Amanda begins nagging him about the correct instruments to use, the proper way to chew and then immediately launches into a biological comparison of the eating and digestive habits of man versus animal.

Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew -- chew! Animals have secretions in their stomachs which enable them to digest their food before they swallow it down, and chew, chew. Oh, eat leisurely. Eat leisurely. A well-cooked meal has many delicate flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation, not just gulped down. Don't you want to give your salivary glands a chance to function?

Finally Tom can endure neither his mother's harping nor the look or taste of food any longer and he leaves. Another instance of Amanda's misuse of correction occurs when she finds the book by D. H. Lawrence that Tom had been reading. Instead of confronting him with her finding and talking with him about it or even trying to understand why he would want to read the book, Amanda merely takes the book back to the library and then tells Tom that she will not tolerate such filth in her home. Tom's answer to her --- that she has left him with no privacy --- embodies another of the sources of Amanda's feelings of loneliness. Amanda, in her dissatisfaction with her own life, is actually attempting to find satisfaction through the lives of her children. Thus she struggles to instill in them the sense of gentility and beauty that is no longer a real part of her life. But it
is not real for Tom or Laura either, nor can it ever be, and a part of their resentment and rebellion comes about because they wish to lead their own lives. Though Tom's rebellion is openly active and Laura's is obviously passive, the effect on Amanda is the same. She is met at every turn by the loneliness of the knowledge that her children's lives are their own and she cannot live them for Tom and Laura. However, Amanda feels she must do her best for her children and also must rid herself of the loneliness she finds in her own life. Her drive to dominate Tom and Laura, accompanied by the unreality of the dream world she wishes them to accept never leads to the fulfillment she hopes for, but rather to even more agonizing loneliness caused by their rejection of her.

Another preoccupation with things concerning the old way is manifest in Amanda's awareness of appearances. When Tom tells her that he is bringing home a guest from the factory to have dinner with them she immediately begins plans to show off all the best things she owns in order to make a good impression. She is somewhat flustered when she finds she only has one day to prepare; however, this does not stop Amanda from going to extreme lengths to provide the best.

Thank heavens I've got that new sofa! I'm also making payments on a floor lamp I'll have sent out! And put the chintz covers on, they'll brighten things up! Of course, I'd hoped to have these walls re-papered... Not only does she focus her attention on the house but also
she buys Laura a new dress and fixes her hair to make it softer and more feminine looking. When viewing the final results, she finds she must add one finishing touch. She makes Laura wear what she calls "Gay Deceivers" because her chest is flat. After seeing to it that Laura is "presentable", in the grand Southern sense of the word, Amanda retires to her own room to get dressed. She re-appears in the yellow dress that she always wore on Sunday for her own gentlemen callers. Once again Amanda finds a unity with the genteel world of the past and once again she is doomed to failure in erasing anxiety and loneliness.

Amanda is reaching out to the things of the past and trying to make them part of the present. But the past and the present are not, nor can they ever be, one. These things may erase Amanda's loneliness for awhile, they may even block out the present and create for Amanda some feeling of unity, however, it can only be a temporary and fleeting relief from loneliness, unless, of course, Amanda were to drift completely into the world of the past which would mean insanity. Amanda's knowledge of the present, under ordinary circumstances, must return and with it returns an even stronger loneliness for which she must find a better remedy.

In *The Glass Menagerie* Williams shows a home dominated by the mother's anxious fussing, her stories of past splendors as a much sought-after southern belle who married the wrong man, her futile efforts to keep up appearances,
her constant worry about her daughter's fate and the necessity for "gentlemen callers" if the girl, Laura, is ever to be taken care of after her mother's death. The step down the social ladder that Amanda took when she married was the beginning of her destruction. The true interpersonal relationship Amanda sought with her husband could never find fulfillment for they were people whose worlds of meaning were entirely different. He never was a part of the genteel aristocratic world of the South and Amanda could not part with that world. Thus there existed between the two a mutual lack of comprehension which brought about the departure of the husband from Amanda's home. Because of the existence of Amanda's dream world and her own inability to face reality, a lack of understanding exists also between Amanda and her children. "The mother, Amanda Wingfield, is trying to hold the family together and to steer her children into more practical paths than those she has followed herself. . . ."⁴ But Amanda's struggle to find unity with her children is a vain one merely because Amanda rejects the world of the present and lives only in the past. Her own feelings of loneliness anxiety, though they have helped her to become grimly realistic, perhaps even exaggeratedly so concerning the lives of her children, has also pushed her still deeper

into the world of unreality. Her children cannot join her in that world and hence she finds that they cannot accept her guidance for it is tainted by her own life of which Williams says, "She is not paranoiac, but her life is paranoia." Amanda's active domination of her children works against her because of the rebellion it causes. Each time her ideas or plans are rejected she again realizes her loneliness, perhaps a little more vividly than the time before, and again must seek a way to eliminate that loneliness. Facing reality is her only hope, but Amanda cannot.

Amanda's daughter, Laura, is a very shy, sensitive, and delicate young girl. She is handicapped by a crippled leg. Amanda loves Laura but finds her a constant source of disappointment and anxiety. Laura did not finish high school and were anything to happen to Amanda she would have no means of support nor would she have anyone to care for her except perhaps, her brother, Tom. The first of Amanda's known schemes that came to nought was Laura's enrollment in business college. Her disappointment with Laura is great when she finds that Laura has quit going. This does not, however, stop her from formulating new plans for Laura's future. "Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man...Sister, that's what you'll do!" Thus she begins her campaign seeking gentlemen callers and possible husbands for Laura. Laura's reaction to this is, as it always has been, mere passivity. This causes
Amanda some anxiety and she tells Tom, "She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along." Amanda is alone in her fight for a future for Laura and this bothers her. She has, however, entirely missed the chance to really help her daughter and find unity with her. To Laura, being crippled has always been a problem and a source of anxiety. Amanda, on the other hand, cannot see any problem because she will not or cannot admit even to the existence of Laura's handicap. Thus Amanda cannot offer Laura the smallest crumb of understanding but only makes life more difficult for Laura. As Amanda continues to push Laura, Laura continues to withdraw into the delicate world of her glass menagerie. Amanda is fully aware of Laura's withdrawal and experiences loneliness anxiety because she sees she is losing someone she loves but does not know how to combat the loss.

Amanda's relationship with her son, Tom, also courts loneliness and anxiety for Amanda. She has thrust upon Tom the responsibilities that would ordinarily belong to his father, but at the same time she seems to have taken away his rights. Amanda believes that it is Tom's duty to provide security for his sister and mother while it is her duty to watch over and guide him. However, her guidance is not tolerate nor does it leave room for Tom's own personal development but rather it is an authoritarian and restrictive guidance. Tom, unlike Laura, is a healthy, normal human.
being and his rebellion is open and active. Tom's insolence never ceases to be the cause of amazement, hurt and bewilderment for Amanda who does not realize that she has brought it upon herself. "The continual friction between this young man and his mother indicates her lack of understanding."5 Amanda drives Tom too hard, expects too much of him and will not give of herself or of her understanding. For instance, immediately following the departure of the gentleman caller, Jim, a friend and fellow-worker of Tom's who accepted his kind invitation to dinner, Amanda, almost hysterically, berates Tom for bringing the young man at all since he was engaged. She accuses Tom, most unfairly, of knowing about Jim's plans for his future and bringing him home on purpose merely to hurt and upset her.

AMANDA. It seems very peculiar you didn't know your best friend was engaged to be married!

TOM. The warehouse is the place where I work, not where I know things about people!

AMANDA. You don't know things anywhere! You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions! (TOM starts for door.) Where are you going? Where are you going?. . .

TOM. I'm going to the movies.

AMANDA. That's right, now that you've had us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparations, all the expense! The new floor lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura! All for what? To entertain some other girl's fiance'. Go to the

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movies, go! Don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job. Don't let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! Just go, go to the movies.

Amanda is, indeed, one of Williams' "...genteel women who had outlived a tradition in which charm was their greatest asset;..." However, a question is vividly brought to mind during this last scene with Tom. Does Amanda really have the charm she alludes to? Certainly not while she is screaming at Tom. At the end of the tirade, Amanda tells Tom to go ahead and go to the moon and then calls him a "selfish dreamer." But is it not Amanda who is the selfish dreamer? Did she ever possess the charm which is so important to her or was she always a dreamer? Were Amanda's dreams and her inability to face reality the primary factors in her life of loneliness anxiety? Certainly the emotion she experiences is anxiety as compared with fear, for neither can she account for the rejection by those she loves nor does she know what to do to combat this rejection. Amanda's hysterical outbursts are fairly typical coming from someone who is lost emotionally in anxiety.

Amanda's loneliness drives her to extreme lengths to find a way of eliminating it but none of the answers she seeks are the proper ones and thus anxiety sets in. Each time a new solution is tried and fails, a new and greater loneliness anxiety enters into Amanda's life. Amanda,

6 Ibid., p. 163.
however, unlike Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, retains her respectability for, though she vividly recalls and frantically clings to her past, she can endure the present. Amanda's life is destroyed partly because of the brutal circumstances which surround her but mostly due to her own inability to face reality and the inability of others to offer her their understanding. Amanda, in turn, aids in her own destruction and also destroys to some extent the lives of Tom and Laura by her own inability to understand. She herself says, "In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is --- each other. . ." This is the truth, however blindly spoken. Were Amanda to have realized that love entails "understanding", whereas need merely means "use", the relationships she could have had with her children might have been sincere and meaningful. As it was, those relationships, shallow and almost meaningless, served only to bring about her loss of both Tom and Laura and enhance her own loneliness.

**Blanche DuBois**

Blanche DuBois, the protagonist in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, embodies the individual search for a way of redeeming a shattered universe. Williams wrote this play at a time in his life when he thought he was soon to die and so he strove to have it say all he wanted to say to the world. Thus he created the famous character of Blanche --- a woman driven by her needs for security and understanding.
Blanche, like Amanda, was once a member of the genteel and glorious world of the southern aristocrat. At the tender young age of sixteen Blanche found love and married. This time for her was bright and happy. Gradually, however, she found that the boy she married was reaching out to her for help. When she learned of his true nature, his homosexuality, and of his need she found herself unable to help him in any way. Because of her lack of understanding and pity, she condemned him and her husband committed suicide. Erich Fromm describes mature love as the "...union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality." He goes on to say that this real love implies giving, care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. This is the true love which demands knowledge of self in order to reach fulfillment, for each of the partners in such a relationship must give of himself. Blanche and her husband never knew this mature love nor the happiness and fulfillment of a meaningful interpersonal relationship. Each was looking to the other to provide some missing element in their lives and neither really knew himself well enough to give to the other. The boy married Blanche for security and perhaps he even felt the marriage might bring an end to his problem. Blanche seems to have been somewhat more mature in her love,

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however, she too was searching for security. Under these circumstances, when the bitter truth was revealed to Blanche, her disappointment, youth, and self-concern all figured in the condemnation of her husband and thus his death, for which she later assumed personal responsibility. This is not to say that Blanche should have accepted the situation but she should have been able to offer understanding and forgiveness rather than condemnation.

The death of her husband brought Blanche feelings of guilt and loneliness anxiety — anxiety because she was trapped, alone, and did not know where to turn. In desperation, Blanche reached out to sex to erase the emptiness she felt. "After the death of Allan --- intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with..." She went from one man to another hunting in panic for protection and security and fulfillment. But since sex was only able to provide her with a temporary unity she remained a lonely and frightened person.

During this period in her life Blanche was also forced to stand by and watch the final decay and death of the world she loved --- the cultural world of the southern aristocrat with all its finesse and delicacy. Because she is one of the delicate and soft people, she felt, within

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herself, every blow that contributed to the final end of Belle Reve. She suffered untold misery and loneliness as she felt part of herself dying with her beloved home. Her last link with the world was dissolving before her eyes and loneliness anxiety was eating at her heart. Her loneliness was worse than ever before because this new and different crisis merely added to the loneliness she already felt. Thus began an even more bitter struggle to overcome her loneliness — a struggle which resulted in nymphomania.

"...Blanche's sexuality, we are given to understand, is, paradoxically, a product of her delicate moth-nature — a neurotically defensive reaction to the suicide of her husband (for which she is partially responsible) and the loss of her aristocratic family's fortune and social position. She masochistically embraces, out of deep self-hatred, the very behavior she abhors."^{9}

Blanche is finally run out of the town in which she lived and in desperation she turns to her sister hoping to find help and the old world again.

It is here that the play begins. Blanche goes to her sister, Stella's, home and unexpectedly finds the coarse new world that she is attempting to escape. Blanche is marked by a background of conflicting roles — schoolteacher, Southern belle, poet, sister, savior, and prostitute — and the circumstances she finds surrounding Stella's home and life do not offer her the refuge she seeks but

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^{9}Fedder, p. 86.
rather force her to play out these roles. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as Elia Kazan notes,

'We are shown the final dissolution of a person of worth, who once had great potential, and who, even as she goes down, has worth exceeding that of the 'healthy', coarse-grained figures who kill her.'

Since Blanche cannot find the refuge she seeks she turns into herself and fashions a dream world much like that of Amanda's. She fancies herself as a high-bred, sought-after, and strait-laced member of the southern aristocracy and does not admit to the truth of her existence. She tries valiantly to appear special and different and to have the rest of the world see her as she would like to be. When Stanley corners her in Act III she rambles on about special virtues:

A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding can enrich a man's life immeasurably! I have those things to offer, and this doesn't take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart --- and I have all of those things --- aren't taken away, but grow! Increase with the years!

Her personal appearance becomes a matter of extreme importance and throughout the play her obsession with cleanliness, her figure, her manner of dress, and the age that might show in her face continues to grow. She even goes so far as to cover the light bulb in her room with a paper lantern to soften the light and refuse to go out with Mitch

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10Tischler, p. 138.
until after dusk. This is no mere reaction brought on by vanity, rather it is an attempt to avoid the real world by which she is surrounded. By these means Blanche is able to dim out the world of reality, the world of crudeness and decay that she is too delicate to withstand. Blanche finds one other refuge outside of her dream world that dims and soothes the pangs of loneliness and the pain of reality, that of liquor. Not much reference to it is made in the play except by Stanley who objects to her drinking so much of his liquor all the time. Though these things --- her dream world and her drinking --- do not directly cause her final downfall, they do contribute to the destruction of Blanche for they are refuges that cannot offer her the total security she seeks nor can they give understanding.

Blanche's sister, Stella, is a stronger person than Blanche in some ways. One of the first things Blanche sees in Stella at their first meeting is the old self-control that Blanche always envied somewhat because of the peace it seemed to bring to Stella. Because of this sense of peace and because Stella is not one of the soft people, Blanche has turned to her for help. Stella has come to certain terms with reality. She has found a certain amount of security in the crass, brutal and primarily sexual world that Stanley has given her. However, in Blanche's eyes Stella is somewhat of a traitor and is wrong to accept this kind of life when there is a better one. Right or wrong, Stella has
chosen to lead her life this way and with her husband, Stanley, and her choice has kept her from going down the same path that Blanche is following. This situation, in itself, adds to Blanche's loneliness because she eventually realizes that she and her sister cannot join forces against the world as she had hoped. When Blanche comes to Stella for the help and understanding she needs and sees the world Stella has accepted she also becomes aware of the grim fact that Stella may not be able to help her after all. And, in truth, Stella cannot. Stella makes room for her sister in her home, waits on her hand and foot, but she cannot understand Blanche. She does not realize that Blanche's loneliness and need for understanding cannot be helped by mere companionship. Even when Blanche, out of desperation, practically tells Stella the truth about her life and tries to tell of the fear and anxiety that she faces because she does not know how much longer she can go on, Stella's incomprehensive reply is, "I don't listen to you when you are telling the truth!", because, indeed, Blanche is a threat to Stella's security. Blanche tells Stella the story of the rape but Stella refuses to believe her and, as Blanche is being taken to the sanitarium, Stella's position is made clear as she and Eunice talk ---

STELLA: I don't know if I did the right thing.
EUNICE: What else could you do?
STELLA: I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.
EUNICE: Don't ever believe it. Life has got to keep going.
Blanche is aware of Stella's position shortly after the play begins but she cannot really accept it because of the loneliness it brings her and instead she fights until the bitter end to get her sister to relinquish that position. The final blow comes when Stella will not believe her story concerning the rape and this is one of the things that contribute to Blanche's descent into madness. At that point she knows she is entirely alone and she is too tired to fight the loneliness any longer except with madness.

There is one person in the play who offers Blanche a new life, a new start. That is Mitch, one of Stanley's friends and fellow poker players; but, like Blanche, he does not really belong with these people. He is a more sensitive human being than they and he, too, is lonely. This loneliness proves to be a common bond which brings the two people, Blanche and Mitch, together. Each reaches for the other out of loneliness with the hope of finding happiness and security. Mitch, unlike the others, is a gentleman and treats Blanche with kindness. He seems to be able to offer her his understanding and love to a point. There can, however, be no reservations if the love between two people is to survive and reach fulfillment. Strangely enough, the story of the love between Mitch and Blanche parallels the love between Blanche and her deceased husband, only the tables have turned. This time it is Blanche who is reaching out for help and almost begging for a place to hide and to find peace.
Not unlike her own condemnation of her young husband, when Mitch is told the truth he rejects Blanche and her illusory world, the world to which she had been driven by loneliness anxiety. Perhaps, had Blanche been able to face herself, her loneliness, and also discard her dream world when she first felt there was a possibility of a true interpersonal relationship with Mitch, she might have conquered her loneliness and her past and felt the joy of love and giving at last. Though her inability to do so contributed to the destruction of their relationship, Stanley's "truth-telling" certainly didn't do it any good. From the moment of Mitch's revelation of his knowledge of the truth, Blanche begins her descent into final dissolution primarily because she has lost the last hope she had for the love and understanding she so badly needed to be able to cope with her unbearable loneliness.

Speaking of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, "Williams terms the play 'a tragedy of incomprehension.'" And nowhere in the play is this more evident than in the relationship between Blanche and Stella's husband, Stanley. These two people live at opposite ends of the world, so to speak, and neither of them recognizes the other as even being a true member of humanity. Stanley is one of Williams' virile, very masculine, brutes. Blanche is repulsed by him but tries,

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for Stella's sake it seems, to fight back her repulsion. There is even one point when it is hinted that she might even be able to accept the man, given time, when she says, "But maybe he's what we need to mix with our blood now that we've lost Belle Reve and have to go on without Belle Reve to protect us. . ." Even in Stanley, Blanche looks for some signs of protection. However, he is too coarse, too brutal and, finally, too much a symbol of the world she is struggling to ignore. One of the finest speeches Blanche utters is her description of Stanley which labels him as "common", "bestial", and even "sub-human."

He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something -- sub-human -- something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something -- apelike about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is ---

Stanley Kowalski --- survivor of the stone age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And --- you here --- waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and the other apes gather! There in the front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking! His poker night! --- you call it --- this part of apes! Somebody growls --- some creature snatches at something the fight is on! God! . . .

There never is, nor can there be, any understanding between these two people. They are, as fox and moth, too different to be able to exist together in peace. Blanche, as moth, can actively do nothing to destroy her foe except, behind his back, to condemn him verbally. Stanley, as fox,
can and does actively work to destroy Blanche after he becomes aware that her intrusion in his home is a threat to his happiness and well-being. He makes the truth of her sordid past known to others and finally he, himself, faces her with his knowledge. The final scene between Blanche and Stanley, often referred to as the "rape" scene, actually symbolizes the stripping of all truth; and Blanche, forced by Stanley to face this truth, is left, pathetically, with one last refuge --- insanity.

One sympathizes with Blanche but one must also pity Stanley for he, too, is trapped by circumstances and he only does what he knows best to do to save himself and his home. Stanley is not alone to blame for Blanche's destruction. In fact Blanche, herself, must carry most of the responsibility for her own downfall. Stanley was merely the catalyst that touched off an already smoldering keg of dynamite. The empty and powerless feelings Blanche experienced led her to painful anxiety and despair. Instead of trying to correct her situation Blanche merely made it worse by trying first to subdue and then to ignore it. But, as Dr. Rollo May points out,

"The great danger of this situation of vacuity and powerlessness is that it leads . . . ultimately, if it is not corrected, to futility and the blocking off of the most precious qualities of the
human being. Its end results are the dwarfing and impoverishment of persons psychologically, or else surrender to some destructive authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{12}

Blanche stands alone amid the outer confusion of upheaval in society and, feeling an inner void, she naturally reaches out to others to give her some sense of direction or at least some security and comfort in knowing she is not alone in her loneliness and anxiety. However, since her husband's anxiety was greater than her own, since sex gives only a temporary feeling of unity, since her sister has found a way of surviving in the new world, but most of all since Blanche, herself, refuses to face reality and her own being as a self, she can offer nothing to others; she can only take and not give and thus she finds no fulfillment, no relief that is lasting from loneliness anxiety.

Alma Winemiller

The struggle between the mind and the flesh, between order and anarchy, although not so clear-cut as the artist pictures it, is a universal human conflict. There is a haunting in its portrayal of the vain human search for complete communication. In the delicate suggestiveness of the meetings, when each seeks something intangible, ineffable, and impossible from the other, Tennessee Williams is at his best.\textsuperscript{13}

Alma Winemiller is the daughter of a minister. Her mother is a neurotic woman who has reverted to childhood in order,}


\textsuperscript{13}Tischler, p. 156.
as Alma says, "... to escape the responsibilities of a rectory." Mrs. Winemiller's behavior has a definite effect upon the formation of her daughter's character. Even as a child in the prologue of the play, there is a certain air of dignity, delicacy, and spirituality surrounding Alma. It seems she has matured far beyond her years and her attitude, which is strange to the rest of the children her age, makes it difficult for them to accept her. Apparently Alma has never really known the true and responsible love of a mother, and her defense seems to have been merely to change places with her mother whose childishness is so prevalent.

For any child, not having a mother is a lonely experience. The absence of a mother's unconditional love and infinite understanding, the absence of the feeling of being loved merely because one exists, most often creates sensations of bitterness and a certain amount of unhappiness with the world. Alma is not one of the exceptions to the above statement, rather, she is one of the world's most bitter and lonely examples largely because she does, in the physical sense, have a mother. The fact of Mrs. Winemiller's physical existence as against that of her non-existence where the mother-functions are concerned has made the child's life just that much harder for Alma to accept and a good deal

\[14\] All textual quotes are taken from: Williams, Four Plays, *Summer and Smoke*, pp. 155-228.
lonelier. Thus Alma shies away from the normal childhood and instead begins to build her life upon what she thinks her mother's should have been. This attitude, this aloofness tends to make life even lonelier for Alma because the children of her own age cannot understand her and thus, because of their youth, neither can they offer her love or companionship. The entire situation, Alma's relations with her mother being the basis of the conflict in Alma's life, bespeaks of the fundamental breach between what Alma is and what she pretends to be. As a child, Alma battles a child's fear. As an adult, however, the fear becomes loneliness anxiety which, eventually, because of her inability to face her loneliness and know herself, destroys Alma.

Alma Winemiller, in her substitution of self for mother during her youth, finds John Buchanan, Jr. the perfect object of love. He, like Alma, has been denied a mother's love and care. Unlike Alma, however, he is not plagued by this denial nor driven to undeterminable amounts of anxiety; his mother is dead and not alive to be a constant reminder of what should be. Certainly there is loneliness involved for John but he does not face the severe fear and consequent anxiety that Alma does because of the lack of a mother. Alma, under the circumstances, sees a common bond between John and herself and wishes to give him the mother's love that she herself cannot have. In a way, if accepted, this action would offer Alma a certain fulfillment and
satisfaction. Thus, when she sees John wiping his nose on the sleeve of his dirty sweater she takes it upon herself to buy him some handkerchiefs and tells him, "I was only thinking how handsome you'd be if your face wasn't dirty." But John is embarrassed by her actions and cannot graciously accept her gift which one imagines has been only one among many such occurrences during the childhood of these two people. John, as every child, must hurt Alma back to get even with her and does so by playing upon her feelings. Though he finally takes the handkerchief, there is little satisfaction or stilling of her lonely fears, for John succeeds in making Alma even more aware of her differences and almost in making Alma regret the love she offered him by making fun of it.

Alma's childhood attraction to John Buchanen, Jr. grows as the two grow older and the next meeting between the two that Williams chooses to show occurs after they have reached adulthood, though it is a rather immature adulthood. At this meeting, prompted by the gallantry of John when Alma is frightened by the unexpected explosion of a firecracker which unbeknownst to Alma was thrown by John, it becomes evident that the relationship between John and Alma has not progressed much beyond the in comprehension of their childhood. Alma, at first, is somewhat afraid of meeting and talking with John because her feelings toward him leave her vulnerable with no defense against his
off-handedness. Alma's love, however, gives her some hope that his attitude toward her might well have changed with time and she welcomes his company although with some trepidation. Her hopes are dashed as once again she experiences the old hurt and bewilderment at the actions and words of John.

You threw that firecracker and started a conversation just in order to tease me as you did as a child. You came to this bench in order to embarrass me and to hurt my feelings with the report of that vicious imitation.

John, however, has grown up enough to realize that the way he intentionally and childishly treats Alma does, indeed, inflict real pain and thus he makes an effort to soothe the pain and finally offers to take her riding in his car. Once again, however, as time goes by, Alma's hopes are thwarted as it becomes evident that John has forgotten the promised ride.

In her loneliness Alma offers her love to John but at every point it is blocked. Alma is described as being bothered by nervous laughter, by swallowing air when she laughs, and by her inability to talk naturally with young men. All of these things contribute to a medical diagnosis of a type of hysteria and "part of her hysteria arises from frustrated love for young doctor John Buchanen."\[15\]

Besides the hysteria, however, John's rejection of her love

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\[15\] Falk, p. 91.
also brings loneliness. Indeed, the young doctor is aware of Alma's loneliness --- he tells her he hears a little voice inside her heart saying, "'Miss Alma is lonesome!'", --- but he is not aware that he is the cause of some of that lonesomeness. John is not aware because of the incomprehension that exists between himself and Alma due to the extreme opposite worlds that they live in.

Alma Winemiller, unlike either Amanda or Blanche, does not cling to a world of the past. She does, however, have a dream world of sorts founded in a deeply spiritual nature which, at times, gives her life totally unrealistic airs. Alma tries to base everything in her life on the spiritual and thus her material likes and dislikes are relatively unimportant. Even as a child the spiritual has great emphasis in her life and its importance is revealed in the Prologue along with the significance of the stone statue. The name inscribed at the base of the statue is "Eternity" and Alma explains the meaning of that word as well as her own attitude toward life, when she says,

'It's something that goes on and on when life and death and time and everything else is all through with. . . It's what people's souls live in when they have left their bodies. My name is Alma and Alma is Spanish for soul.'

As a child, Alma finds a certain amount of comfort in being able to relate to the statue and what it stands for. Unhappily the statue is Alma's best "friend", the only friend
she can turn to for comfort, and though the concept of "soul" is of extreme importance to self-knowledge, Alma does not explore this concept thoroughly enough to give her anything but a "surface" spirituality, a sort of "blind faith". This spirituality drives Alma to strive for the world of perfection --- a world that asks too much of herself and of others. Alma compares the spires of a cathedral and other things that seem to be reaching to something beyond attainment to human existence. "To me --- well, that is the secret, the principle back of existence --- the everlasting struggle and aspiration for more than our human limits have placed in our reach..." But this type of spirituality brings only frustration and is merely ineffectual idealism at best. It is this that John cannot accept and when she makes her brave stand against the carnal attractions of the young doctor by explaining that love is only what one brings to it and that she can also bring her soul, John is left with skepticism and doubt. He knows the world she lives in and wonders whether Alma would be capable of bringing both soul and body to love. It is because of this spirituality and because of Alma's inability to speak of her love that John is never really aware of the extent of her love for him.
"This sincere expression of man's reaching for perfection, a theme that hovers around the edges of a number of Williams' plays, seems to be the essential quality of the character of Alma Winemiller."16

When John, seriously or sarcastically, suggests that Alma join him in an upper room at Moon Lake he unknowingly destroys that part of Alma that she refers to as soul. After the death of John's father and after an intensely physical anatomy lecture given to Alma by the distraught John, Alma finally reveals her love for him and in this revelation she speaks of the soul which John has denied as a part of the human being ---

Yes, that's not shown on the anatomy chart! But it's there, just the same, yes, there! Somewhere, not seen, but there. And it's that that I loved you with --- that! Not what you mention! --- Yes, did love you with, John, did nearly die of when you hurt me!

Though John, at this point, becomes aware of part of his mistake, he is not aware of the intense anxiety and loneliness that Alma is now struggling with. John merely adds to the loneliness anxiety when he informs Alma that he really did respect her and was, as usual, only trying to upset her. He tells her, "I'm more afraid of your soul than you're afraid of my body. You'd have been as safe as the angel of the fountain --- because I wouldn't feel decent enough to touch you..." Alma is stunned and hurt by this statement

---16Ibid.
possibly because of the blow to the feminine ego of her secret self and possibly because at this point she realizes that the mere fact that he asked that question meant a great deal to her. Alma begins to wonder if all along she was wrong and she does not realize that what it essentially meant was that John was never sincerely a part of the brutal world he seemed to represent. Alma does not know which direction to turn and so she withdraws from the world she cannot quite cope with, and from the man she does not understand. This withdrawal undoubtedly causes an even greater anxiety for Alma because she cannot face her loneliness.

As Blanche becomes attached to liquor to soothe the pain of existence, Alma finds solace in the sleeping pills that Dr. John gives her. At first she used them properly but after her spiritual facade is destroyed she begins taking them regularly to dim the world she cannot face and to dull the pain of her loneliness. She refers to them as one of life's "little mercies." As seen, previously, however, this type of escape can only provide a temporary relief and more often than not eventually will lead to more trouble than it clears.

John gives a name to Alma's loneliness anxiety when he tells her she has a "doppelganger" which means another self. This secret "other self" is another cause of the physical signs of hysteria mentioned previously because it is in conflict with the public self Alma chooses to present.
This conflict is also one of the basic causes of the loneliness anxiety which Alma experiences. One incident revealing Alma's true self takes place when John attends one of the weekly cultural meetings Alma invites him to. Soon after his arrival he excuses himself under the pretext of having to visit a patient. Alma is stunned and when her friends begin speaking badly of John and making nasty remarks she becomes furious with them.

Stop it! . . . I won't have malicious talk here! You drove him away from the meeting after I'd bragged so much about how bright and interesting you all were! You put your worst-foot forward and simpered and chattered and carried on like idiots!

For the first time Alma speaks of their snobbery and maliciousness with truth. She reveals the way the inner person, the real Alma, feels about these people. Afterward, however, she is driven to shame by her outward facade and refuses to face the truth of what she has said. She subdues the real Alma by burying her once again in rejection and causes herself the pain of loneliness anxiety.

Alma's struggle after her spiritual world is destroyed by the mutual incomprehension between herself and John goes nowhere but downhill. She, like Blanche and Amanda, is instrumental in her own destruction for rather than face herself, her loneliness, and reality, she loses herself in a new unreality --- the extreme opposite to her spiritual unreality. When John returns, having successfully
completed his father's business, Alma still is in the throes of indecision concerning her life and refuses to see him. When she finally does see John, Alma tells him that the girl who said "no" to him no longer exists, died last summer,

...And she said to me when she slipped this ring on my finger --- 'Remember I died empty-handed, and so make sure that your hands have something in them!' ...I said, 'But what about pride?' -- She said, 'Forget about pride whenever it stands between you and what you must have!'

For John, as for Alma, the extreme represented escape but John could not carry his world of unreality to completion and instead found that he must, finally, face reality and himself. Alma tells John that she finds "...the tables have turned with a vengeance! You've come around to my old way of thinking and I to yours..." Alma still does not comprehend that the world in which she was living was not reality nor does she see the difference between that world and John's new world. John's new thinking corresponds only partially to Alma's old way of thinking for it is tempered by reality. Alma has, however, completely accepted the world that John spoke of in his anatomy lecture. This reversal is another way of escape for Alma from her loneliness and anxiety, only it, too, is doomed to the failure that any escape mechanism must inevitably bring. As the play comes to a final end, Alma's actions bring about the question, "Has
she really turned her back on the Angel? Is this a prologue to *Streetcar Named Desire*?"^17

**Margaret 'Maggie' Pollitt**

Tennessee Williams created a new and different kind of character when he wrote *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. She, Maggie, is the first really whole person he has used as a main character in any of his plays --- the first to be truly void of mental neuroticism. Maggie is, as were Amanda, Blanche, and Alma, faced with certain loneliness but it is not the same kind of loneliness as theirs, nor does it reach the same depth of loneliness anxiety. Maggie is a vital personality and she has charm and wit as well as common sense. These things give her the strength that the others lack --- a strength which enables her to face reality and loneliness and thus conquer both. Unlike Amanda, Blanche, and Alma, the loneliness anxiety that Maggie experiences is not a product of her own creation but that of the circumstances which surround her. She is frustrated by these circumstances ". . . but we sense that she has the tenacity and strength to triumph."^18

Among the material forces that drive Maggie is her

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^18Tischler, p. 214.
obsession with getting her fair share of Big Daddy's estate. Maggie assigns a great importance to monetary security and she chides Brick with, "It takes money to take care of a drinker and that's the office I've been elected to lately."

This certainly is one of the causes behind Maggie's campaign but it by no means completely explains her attitude thoroughly. The main reason is that Maggie knows what it is to be poor because her youth was spent in the dregs of poverty and she hated every second of it.

Always had to suck up to people I couldn't stand because they had money and I was poor as Job's turkey. You don't know what that's like. Well, I'll tell you, it's like you would feel a thousand miles away from Echo Spring! --- And had to get back to it on that broken ankle . . . without a crutch! That's how it feels to be as poor as Job's turkey and have to suck up to relatives that you hated because they had money and all you had was a bunch of hand-me-down clothes and a few old moldy three per cent government bonds.

Maggie is truly frightened by the prospects of a future without money because she is frightened by the loneliness anxiety which, for her, is a part of being poor. It has been mentioned previously that loneliness anxiety results from a basic alienation between man and his nature. Poverty, for Maggie, created that basic alienation because she was forced to make up to people she hated, to wear hand-me-down clothes, and to watch society pass her by --- all

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19 All textual quotes are taken from: Tennessee Williams, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (New York: New Directions Book, James Laughlin, 1955)
of which are against her nature. Maggie is a cat but she is not a member of any of the more common species. She is a thoroughbred Siamese and she fears for her future. Maggie is trapped but, because she knows herself, because she is well aware of her own need for monetary security, she also knows which direction to take to do something about alleviating this threat. Her solution will be discussed later in this chapter.

"The two qualities in Maggie which appear in other women characters of Williams are her frankly sensual nature and cunning mercenary drive."20 Maggie's sensual nature, which is closely paralleled with that of Big Daddy although she is not promiscuous, is another of her characteristics that is being frustrated by circumstances. She is a sensual and sensitive individual trapped by her love for Brick, her husband. She tells him, "I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just see you." The life that Maggie is living now, a life void of the natural marital relations between a man and his wife, has become intolerable to her because, once again, it is a life that goes against Maggie's very nature. Sex, as she remembers, between herself and Brick had always been a very fine thing. The act of love was a daring, and for Maggie and Brick, a successful plunge into the experience of union; and to Maggie this type of

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20Falk, p. 104.
union is natural between a man and a woman who love. To state this even more clearly, Maggie's nature, her very existence calls for the physical union and the fulfillment it brings. She is proud of her personal physical beauty and elated to find other men, even Big Daddy, attracted to her because of it; for to her it is a natural and pleasing sign of appreciation. It is not part of her nature, however, to find fulfillment with just anyone and so she faces loneliness and anxiety because Brick has denied her the physical union she desires, needs. This denial is the one Maggie finds most conducive to loneliness anxiety. She is forced to live, against her nature, a life of married celibacy and, because of the apathy of her husband, she is not certain where to turn to find an answer. But her drive to do so plunges her forward in a kind of trial and error fashion and eventually reveals some hope.

The circumstances which surround Maggie's life, and the relationships with others that she has, tell more about the loneliness of Maggie's life than any other single thing. The two people who threaten Maggie's security most are Mae and Gooper. Maggie's attitude toward them consists of feelings of envy and disgust. Maggie is fully aware of the intentions of these two people and of the reason which prompted them to bring all their children to the plantation with them. She knows that Mae and Gooper have started a campaign to cut Brick out of his father's estate because he
drinks and has no children and that she must thus fight even harder to obtain the security she needs. Maggie is disgusted by these people and when, in the last act, she watches them turn on Big Mama so unsympathetically, her disgust turns to open hatred. Since she is a sensitive individual Maggie is startled and repelled by their lack of understanding and compassion, especially in their dealings with one of their own.

The second emotion mentioned as a result of this relationship was envy. Mae and Gooper have five children and are using them in their campaign. Maggie, filled with jealousy, calls Mae a "... monster of fertility..." for she is hungry for children of her own. She has even gone to a gynecologist to make sure she can conceive and to find out the best time for doing so. Naturally, one of the reasons she wishes to have children is that it will ensure her a share in Big Daddy's estate but also she knows that children are a natural manifestation of love. The male-female polarity is also the basis for interpersonal creativity. This is obvious biologically, and psychically there is no difference. In the love of man and woman for each other they are reborn and this rebirth manifests itself in a new being, their child. The man and woman are fulfilled within each other and within the child, and the feeling of loneliness takes a back seat. Thus, watching Mae and Gooper and their children Maggie does feel alone for it is the fulfilling union that
she does not have that she sees.

Of all those people Maggie is in contact with during the play, perhaps the one she understands most and feels closest to is Big Mama. Maggie finds that she and Big Mama have a common bond and that, though they are of different ages and levels of experience, they are somewhat equal concerning their unreturned love for their husbands. Maggie is aware of the loneliness Big Mama experiences because of her own loneliness and so she is able to offer her understanding and compassion where others have failed. There is one difference, however, and Maggie sees this too. Big Daddy and Big Mama have merely been living a lie and since neither would admit the truth, the lie was never made known as such and thus the situation could never be corrected. Maggie, on the other hand is aware of the truth and has a chance to correct the situation as it stands in the play. Her awareness and knowledge are two of the things that push Maggie to strive with everything she has and is for the ultimate and fulfilling interpersonal relationship between herself and Brick.

Maggie's relationship with Brick is, by far, the most important and the most complicated. Maggie is totally and completely in love with Brick and he is, undoubtedly, the largest and most consistent source of loneliness anxiety for Maggie. Maggie knows that in her relationship with Brick lies all the answers to her problems. She knows how
Brick feels about her and why, she knows of the incompre-
hensive relationship between Brick and Big Daddy, she knows
and understands the lie that Brick is living, and she finds
it even clearer that she must be the one to straighten out
the mess their lives are in. The big question for Maggie
is, "How?" Maggie, knowing that Brick is Big Daddy's favor-
ite son, begs Brick to be kind and offer understanding to
Big Daddy but to no avail. She cunningly tries all the
womanly wyles she knows to get Brick to take an interest in
sex once again, even though it may mean embarrassment for
both of them. Again she fails. Maggie is conscious, how-
ever, of the fact that this cannot be the end of her cam-
paign for, even if she were to succeed in getting Brick to
bed with her, all would not necessarily be well. The transi-
tory union accomplished through orgiastic fusion is not what
Maggie is looking for. She finds, then, that her greatest
and best weapons are truth and understanding. Maggie has
seen the worlds of illusion that each member of the Pollitt
family is somehow involved in and notices that even when
mutual need forces them into unity it is only a temporary
unity because of its lack of reality and understanding.
Maggie can also see the tragic waste and possible disaster
this might bring to the family. Thus, whatever the truth
might be, Maggie finds she cannot live in the world of
illusion and pretense as the others do for she knows that
herein lies no understanding and no compassion for others
as well as loneliness. For this reason Maggie struggles desperately to have Brick recognize and face the truth. She feels that if Brick can face the truth of his relationship with Skipper, knowing that she understands, of what happened to Skipper, and of the reasons concerning Maggie's actions toward Skipper, he would once again be able to face the world and reality and also find his love for her. Brick, however, either cannot or merely will not respond to anything Maggie says or does even when it concerns his own father's birthday and death. In a way she even envies him for his coolness and detached quality because he does not seem to feel his loneliness. In any event, she continues to search for some sign of recognition from Brick because she knows that the only lasting and really worthwhile unity lies in the mature love (between two people) that is based on understanding and giving. This driving need in Maggie, to at last end her loneliness and any threat to her future, enables her not only to face the truth but to stand up to it and make the best of it no matter how ugly it is.

This time I'm going to finish what I have to say to you. Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a little bit closer to you. You see, you son of a bitch, you asked too much of people, of me, of him, of all the unlucky poor damned sons of bitches that happen to love you, and there was a whole pack of them, yes, there was a pack of them besides me and Skipper, you asked too goddam much of people that loved you, you --- superior creature! --- You godlike being! --- And so we made love to each other to dream it was you, both of us!
Yes, yes, yes! Truth, truth! What's so awful about it? I like it, I think the truth is --- yeah!

Loneliness for Maggie stems basically from a communication problem which causes a lack of understanding. It is not her communication problem but the unwillingness of those around her to face reality and truth. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Williams is making a plea for the recognition of sensual individuals; for the rights of individual sensitivities. He shows that many are incapable of communicating to one another their strengths and weaknesses --- the lack of objective communication in the world. Williams himself says in the preface to Cat:

It is a lonely idea, a lonely condition, so terrifying to think of that we usually don't. And so we talk to each other, write and wire each other short and long distance across land and sea, clasp hands with each other at meeting and at parting, fight each other and even destroy each other because of this always somewhat thwarted effort to break through walls to each other. As a character in a play once said, 'We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins.'

It is this solitary confinement that Maggie is struggling so hard to break through both for herself and for Brick. She finds herself entirely alone and completely excluded from Brick's world and the torture of this is unbearable. But Brick "... is much too remote to appreciate the desperate humor of her conversation."21 He, like Amanda, Blanche, and

Alma, has found an escape mechanism in liquor. This has enabled him to escape to some extent but not to the degree to which he would truly like. In liquor Brick has found his coolness and detached quality and through its use has been able to back Maggie down and ignore her existence again and again. Maggie receives no compassion in her lonely world even from Big Mama and neither does she find understanding. She herself points out, "Living with someone you love can be lonelier --- than living entirely alone! --- if the one y' love doesn't love you. . . ." She cannot, however, live alone because she does love and that love will not allow such a thing. Then loneliness anxiety would really find a place in Maggie's life. She knows herself, she knows her situation, and she knows she must fight it if she is to really live.

In her loneliness and desperation and in her self knowledge and ability to face the truth Maggie finds that the truth can have many sides and different levels. She finds the final solution to her problems in what Brick calls the "desperate truth." "This is the truth that comes to be because it must come to be --- truth in the service of life." Maggie's desperate truth is the truth that she is determined to establish and in it she hopes to find life and love for others as well as for herself. And indeed, in this

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strength that lets her face her loneliness and reality and tell a desperate truth, she finds there may be a glimmer of hope. After the announcement of the forthcoming child "...sired by Brick, and out of Maggie the Cat!", Brick does not contradict her nor does he stop her. Indeed, in a way, he stands up for her against Mae and Gooper and it seems that he may be beginning to understand Maggie after all. This is the first time Williams does give some hope for the salvation of the lonely individual, of the sensitive and sensual individual and, in essence, for the world itself. Maggie also, though she offered Brick some understanding throughout the play, gains more understanding of the type of person he is and of his needs. This is revealed in her final speech.

Brick, I used to think that you were stronger than me. But now, since you've taken to liquor --- you know what? --- I guess it's bad, but now I'm stronger than you and I can love you more truly.

Oh, you weak people, you weak, beautiful people! ---What you want is someone to --- take hold of you. --- Gently, gently, with love! And --- I do love you, Brick. I do.
CHAPTER V.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Tennessee Williams, through the medium of the theatre, has chosen to reflect primarily upon the relationships of man. Out of the compassion born of his own discovery of the ultimate loneliness of the human individual experience Williams has derived a theory concerned with loneliness and the ability of mankind to overcome its forces for himself as well as to aid others in doing so. Williams, himself a victim of circumstances and surroundings during his youth, has based his theory on understanding and compassion and once said,

'Every artist has a basic premise pervading his whole life, and that premise can provide the impulse to everything he creates. For me the dominating premise has been the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstance.'

There are two types of loneliness which man experiences: (1) existential loneliness --- the individual's piercing awareness of his own isolated existence which eventually aids in the awareness of self, and (2) loneliness anxiety --- the result of a basic alienation between man and man, between man and his nature. Clark E. Moustakas

says that, "... a solitary state gives the individual the opportunity to draw upon untouched capacities and resources and to realize himself in an entirely unique manner."\(^2\)

Williams, however, would probably add to this statement with "only if he is strong and capable of searching himself."

The question remains, "What of those who are not in themselves capable of doing so?" These are the people with whom Williams is concerned. Tennessee Williams has presented his audiences with the sensitive, fragile, and beautiful characters that are somehow the broken and the misfit in today's world. He surrounds them with incredibly brutal and yet terribly real circumstances. He, Williams, does not say that the world should remain apathetic to these people, nor does he say that they deserve their plight. Rather, he makes a plea for their recognition as individuals of worth and suggests that with the help of understanding and compassion from others as well as among each other, they might be saved from the inevitable crippling and destruction of their lives that is the result of loneliness anxiety.

Amanda Wingfield (The Glass Menagerie), like Blanche DuBois (A Streetcar Named Desire), married only to find that between her and her husband the lack of understanding was a destructive one. She is finally deserted by her husband and

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left with two children who are, perhaps, Amanda's only saviors when speaking of complete destruction. Amanda has retreated into a world of the past and is living what Williams has often referred to as a "life-lie". She cannot cope with the brutal reality of the world in which she finds herself; however, she is aware of some reality where her children's behavior is concerned. Because of this semi-reality she does retain some respectability and her destruction is not complete. The lack of understanding which is inherent in the relationships Amanda has with both son and daughter does, however, destroy the possibilities of the saving and fulfilling inter-personal relationships within the family. She loses her son as she lost her husband and she succeeds in helping her daughter to destroy her life. Laura is perhaps the one person whose sensitivity somewhat parallels that of Amanda and yet neither can offer the understanding the other needs. Thus Laura is destroyed and Amanda is doomed to a life of loneliness and anxiety.

Blanche DuBois' life, though similar to Amanda's is different in that her "life-lie", her rejection of reality, is complete. The outside world, to her, is sordid and ugly —- so much so that even in Mitch she only sees a place to hide. Blanche has never known understanding nor has she been able to cope with loneliness. In this story of her final downfall Stella, perhaps, is the person whose lack of understanding Blanche suffers from the most, even
though she offers Blanche some consolation and companionship. Blanche, on the other hand, cannot give understanding to Stella either and thus her development and understanding of self is incomplete, and fulfilling interpersonal relationships is almost impossible. Blanche's total destruction is brought about cruelly and decisively by the symbolic rape which Stanley, in his brutality, forces upon Blanche in a final effort to unveil truth. The fact that Blanche is an individual of worth shows this to be entirely wrong and Williams has nothing but pity for those who must destroy in order to live. The brute destroyers, too, are weak people fighting loneliness in the best way they know how; but there is no happiness, no freedom from loneliness, and finally no freedom from self-destruction in their methods.

Alma Winemiller (Summer and Smoke), like Blanche and Amanda, lives in the world of illusion though it is not a dream world of the past. Alma's is a spiritual illusion that drives her to strive for a perfection beyond the grasp of the human being. This creates a major conflict and becomes a major source of loneliness anxiety for Alma primarily because those with whom she would share her life cannot understand nor can they reach the world she aspires to. Alma, as well as John, reaches for the fulfillment of the meaningful interpersonal relationship that will still their cries of loneliness, but to no avail. Neither understands the other because neither can relate to the substitution
the other has made for mature love. Alma's destruction is due to her own inability to cope with reality, to offer understanding to John, and finally to John's inability to offer understanding to Alma. John, the stronger of the two, is finally able to face himself and reality and thereby straighten out his life. Alma, the sensitive misfit, cannot, however, do anything to help herself and instead reaches for solace into the old world of John Buchanen which only points down the path to self-destruction.

Maggie (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof) is not a member of Williams' misfits or broken. She lives only in the world of reality and she knows herself as well as the problem that threatens her. Maggie is strong, determined, and capable of the giving that is demanded of an interpersonal relationship that brings meaning, fulfillment, and joy to human life. Maggie is made miserably unhappy by the circumstances which surround her life and also by the lack of understanding which exists between her and her husband, Brick. Neither of them is able to communicate strengths and weaknesses to the other, and Brick, one of the broken people, has given up entirely on life. Maggie, on the other hand, cannot and will not give up but instead fights valiantly for life and the joy that can be found in the embrace of mature love. For the first time in a play Williams unveils a ray of hope as he acknowledges the dawning of understanding between these two people.
"...the self is always born and grows in interpersonal relationships." This, perhaps, provides the key to the knowledge of the necessity of understanding between people. Understanding is necessary to meaningful interpersonal relationships and therefore to the knowledge and growth of the self. The sensitive people can be helped, as Brick was, by the understanding of the stronger people. Their position is not weakened by such understanding; rather, it is strengthened because with it comes a greater knowledge of self and a truer relationship with another human being. Through the offering of understanding the stronger person's life is also enriched, as was Maggie's, when her own understanding and self-knowledge was enhanced by the new and clearer knowledge concerning the life and loneliness of the weaker person. By this more meaningful interpersonal relationship brought about by understanding, the weaker individual may even be helped to eventually see and understand the significance of the lonely experience which is so beautifully expressed by Kahlil Gibran in the following poem:

Defeat, my Defeat, my solitude and my aloofness:
You are dearer to me than a thousand triumphs,
And sweeter to my heart than all world-glory.

Defeat, my Defeat, my self-knowledge and my defiance,
Through you I know that I am yet young and swift of foot
And not to be trapped by withering laurels.
And in you I have found aloneness

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And the joy of being shunned and scorned.

Defeat, my Defeat, my shining sword and shield,
    In your eyes I have read
That to be enthroned is to be enslaved,
    And to be understood is to be levelled down,
And to be grasped is but to reach one's fullness
    And like a ripe fruit to fall and be consumed.

Defeat, my Defeat, my bold companion,
    You shall hear my songs and my cries and my silences,
And none but you shall speak to me of the beating of wings,
    And urging of seas,
And of mountains that burn in the night,
    And you alone shall climb my steep and rocky soul.

Defeat, my Defeat, my deathless courage,
    You and I shall laugh together with the storm,
And together we shall dig graves for all that die in us,
    And we shall stand in the sun with a will,
And we shall be dangerous. 4

Loneliness anxiety, the destroyer, is one result of
the lack of, or an inadequate knowledge of, self. It provides
a defense against a world void of understanding, an unloving world; a world that makes one feel as though the pain of isolation and the yearning for security and tenderness is a weakness instead of an intrinsic condition of human existence. Williams does not ask for the acceptance nor the condemnation of the actions or lives of others. He merely points out life as it is in its ambiguous human relations and builds a satisfactory case which suggests that "the only satisfactory thing we are left with in life is the relations — if they're

4Moustakas, p. 51.
sincere --- between people." Sincerity implies understanding and understanding, both from within and without, implies, eventually, the elimination of the destructive forces of loneliness anxiety.

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