

**AN OBJECT RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYSIS  
OF SELECTED  
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS PLAY TEXTS**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

of

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

by

**PAUL TOSIO**

January 2003

## Abstract

Tennessee Williams is a playwright of great psychological depth. This thesis probes some of the complexities of his work through the use of Object Relational Psychoanalysis, specifically employing the theories of Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn and Donald Winnicott.

The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and The Night of The Iguana are analysed from this theoretical stance. All of these plays display great perceptiveness into the human condition, accurately portraying many psychological relational themes.

Certain Object Relational themes become very apparent in these analyses. These themes include, Dependency (especially in The Glass Menagerie), Reparation (particularly in A Streetcar Named Desire), Falsehood (notably in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof), Idealisation (evident in The Night of The Iguana), Honest Empathetic Relations (apparent in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and The Night of The Iguana) as well as Guilt, Object Loss, Sexual Guilt, and Obligation (recurring throughout these plays).

It is advanced that Williams' plays possess an honest and insightful understanding of human relations and, as such, are of contemporary value.

This Thesis is not only an academic study, but also has practical applications for dramatists. With an increased understanding of the intrinsic tensions and motivations within such plays, offered by such psychoanalytic strategy, performance and staging of such work may be enhanced valuably.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to the following for their contribution to this thesis:

First and foremost to my Supervisor Professor Reza de Wet. More than anyone I have ever known, Professor de Wet intellectually balances creative expansion with analytic focus and conceptual honing. I am still grappling with merging these two principles – and Reza evidences so clearly that they are not diametrically opposed, but can – and in valuable work I now think *should* – be married. All of her supervision to me has challenged me to do more, and to be more creative in my approach. Yet, it has simultaneously made my approach more clear-cut and direct. I am indebted to her for this.

Thank you to the Rhodes University Drama Department (and especially Professor Gary Gordon) for allowing me the opportunity of reading for this degree, which I have enjoyed so thoroughly.

Many appreciations to my whole family (To my parents and, in alphabetical order, Brian, Cleo, Grandma, Heather, Margie and Thuli) for their continued support throughout, for letting me use the computer at inconvenient times, for making me ‘poppy-seed tea’ when they could see the veins in my temple throbbing, for listening as I sprouted all my ‘drama-stuff’ and ‘psycho-babble’ so excitedly, and most of all for your ubiquitous Love.

To Delyse, thank you for all your help, constant encouragement and support. Never was there a more generous, caring and Loving woman. We are all very fortunate to have you in our lives.

Thanks to all my friends who have been similarly encouraging. Thank you to Claire, Joan, Keryn, Natasha, Shannon and Tracey (alphabetically organised) for letting me share your homes this year every time I jaunted down for supervision and research. For the memorable times this year - thanks to Albert, Cams, Joan, Keryn and Mark especially in that regard (also alphabetical).

I Love and hold my friends very dear to me. Whoever said that blood is thicker than water clearly does not appreciate that since Christ turned the water to wine, and since the wine is now His blood – then there need be no difference between the two elements at all. At this point I must especially mention Craig, who is a brother given from God - if not from the womb.

Grateful thanks to Dr Kathy Angus for last minute notes.

Thanks especially to Maureen Stewart (one of Rhodes G.E.Ms – and easily one of the best lecturers) of the Rhodes University Psychology Department for early, and copious, note giving.

Thanks to Margaret Anema for her extreme empathy, Love and encouragement in 2001 - you are a very special woman.

Thank you to Jane Wiles for teaching me everything and nothing I know (which Jane will understand). God bless you and give you strength.

I must express gratitude towards Camilla and Kate Stegs for their quick editing. You may be most flattered that I thought of you guys first for this dubious honour (I thought of you too Mark, you were further to walk to).

VERY ESPECIALLY, thanks to my mother for repeated, protracted and methodical editing, I know you say it's very interesting Mom – but I'm sure much more would kill you!

To Rhodes University – a truly incredible place – for giving me what have been the most fantastic five years of my life.

And of course, thank you posthumously to Tennessee Williams (with whom I have fallen passionately in cognition) for giving the world some truly stunning texts.

In short (which, I admit, I am not good at) thanks to everyone and *everything* that has aided me in this dissertation. I am humbly grateful for your care and for this opportunity.

Sincerely

Paul Tosio

## Table Of Contents

Cover page	Page i
Abstract	Page ii
Acknowledgements	Pages iii - v
Table Of Contents	Pages vi - vii
Introduction	Pages 1 – 2
Chapter 1: Tennessee Williams: Brief Biography	Pages 3 - 8
Chapter 2: Object Relations Theory: An Introduction	Page 9
Chapter 2.1: Melanie Klein	Pages 10 - 16
Chapter 2.2: W.R.D.Fairbairn	Pages 17 – 21
Chapter 2.3: Donald Winnicott	Pages 22 – 27
Chapter 2.4: Projective Identification	Pages 28 – 34
Chapter 3: Analyses	
3.1. The Glass Menagerie: “What is there... but Dependency?”	Pages 35 - 47
3.2. A Streetcar Named Desire: “Death... The Opposite is Desire.”	Pages 48 – 64
3.3. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof: “Mendacity... Lying and Liars!”	Pages 65 - 79
3.4. The Night of the Iguana: “Regression to... The Infantile Protest!”	Pages 80 - 98

Chapter 4: Conclusion	Pages 99 – 103
Bibliography	Pages 104 – 109
Appendix	
Glossary: Important Psychological Terms	Pages 110 - 114
Synopsis	
<u>The Glass Menagerie</u>	Pages 115 - 116
<u>A Streetcar Named Desire</u>	Pages 117 - 119
<u>Cat On a Hot Tin Roof</u>	Page 120 - 121
<u>The Night of the Iguana</u>	Pages 122 - 125
Chapter 16 of Lao Tzu’s Dao De Jing	Page 126
Donald Winnicott: Transitional phenomena	Pages 127 - 130
Addition to Klein: Development of Selected Pathologies	Pages 131 - 132
W.R.D. Fairbairn: Developmental Stages in Object Relations	Pages 133 – 134
Attenuation Of Analyses in Relation To Williams’ Personal Psychology	Pages 135 - 144
Quotes from the prescript of <u>Cat On a Hot Tin Roof</u> and D.W.Winnicott	Page 145
Supplement to Biography: Later Significant Life events	Pages 146 - 148

## Introduction

Tennessee Williams is one of the most significant playwrights of the twentieth century, and almost certainly the most important of American Southern Dramatists. He frequently deals with intricate relationships among individuals, as well as neurosis and psychological disintegration. Williams' characters seem frequently to be fractured and insecure, relating dysfunctionally without intimate connection to others or confident self-identity.

Understanding the complexities of the human condition is of paramount importance in Williams' agenda. Adler expresses this as follows, "In virtually all of Williams' work during the 1940's and 1950's, delineating and probing character psychology takes precedence over all else"<sup>1</sup> whilst Heilman says; "Failures of personality are a special theme of ... Williams" and also "(Williams' early) plays deal with hypersensitive characters who, from weakness or disability, either cannot face the real world at all or have to opt out of it"<sup>2</sup>.

Psychoanalysis has found a marriage with literary interpretation almost since it began. To quote, "Psychoanalytic literary criticism was conceived at the precise moment in which Freud... made a connection to two plays and thus gave us a radically new approach to reading literature. Writing to his friend Wilhelm Fliess in 1897, Freud breathlessly advances the idea that 'love of the mother and jealousy of the father' are universal phenomena of early childhood. He referred immediately to the gripping power of Oedipus Rex and Hamlet for confirmation..."<sup>3</sup>.

Among the various psychoanalytic schools, object relations theory offers a particularly encompassing outlook of how the individual relates to his or her world. This theory maintains that there is a fundamental human drive to relate (to have a relationship with something). Particularly, the relationship between baby and mother (and infancy generally) are seen, chronologically, as the locus of psychological development. Within the infant's primal relationship to the mother (as well as some

---

<sup>1</sup> Adler, T. American Drama 1940 – 1960. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Stanton, S. Tennessee Williams. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1977.

<sup>3</sup> Shapiro, B.A. Literature and the Relational Self. New York: New York University Press, 1994.

secondary relationships) it establishes the templates for later psychological functioning.

Considering this, it would seem that object relations theory is an apposite tool for investigation into Tennessee Williams' (deeply psychological) plays. Indeed, in her research into Williams Cecilia Petit notes "...the application of Psychoanalytic principles... provided a deeper reading of ambiguities left unresolved by the interpretive strategies of the critics"<sup>4</sup>.

Because of the depth and psychological complexity of Tennessee Williams' plays, and the vast theoretical scope of object relations theory, it would seem profitable to utilise this psychoanalytic theory in the scrutiny of Williams' work.

The following work does this. Four texts (The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and The Night Of The Iguana) are examined from an object relational perspective. Specifically, the theories of Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott and W.R.D.Fairbairn (seen as the three most significant developers of the paradigm) as well as the concept of projective identification are employed.

From these analyses, not only does the thesis offer a possible psychoanalytic understanding of the texts but also reflects on how such insight can aid in the dramatic understanding, production and staging of Williams' work. An understanding of the texts being deeply psychological demonstrates the dramatist to be more than just a 'period-piece playwright fixated with the South'. Rather, it offers a view of Tennessee Williams as a writer who perspicaciously penetrates and explores universal themes of human relations and psychology – and therein demonstrates his work to be of contemporary value.

---

<sup>4</sup> Petit, C. "Trauma on stage: Psychoanalytic readings of contemporary American drama". Humanities and Social Sciences Journal, New York, May 2000.

## *Chapter 1: Tennessee Williams - Brief Biography*

As many critics have pointed out, Tennessee Williams' work is so autobiographical that some knowledge of his life is essential for deeper understanding of his drama. For instance, The Glass Menagerie is an intensely autobiographical play in which Tennessee even chooses to name the main character Tom (his own real name).

The following section details his early life (which seems to have been the main period influencing his later work), mostly focusing on those elements that are of importance to this thesis. Reference is made throughout as to how Williams' life potentially impacted on his dramatic work. Focus is given to the relationships he shared with significant family members, as this is centrally important from an object relational psychoanalytic viewpoint.

### *Tennessee's family*

Tennessee Williams was born Thomas Lanier Williams on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1911 in Mississippi in The United States. His father was Cornelius Williams, a travelling salesman who eventually obtained a senior position in a shoe warehouse. Williams' mother, Edwina, was the daughter of a Southern Episcopal minister who, as a result of good looks and the status her father's clerical position attracted, had enjoyed a youth as a socialite Southern belle. He also had a sister – Rose – to whom he was extremely close, and a brother eight years younger than himself - Walter Dakin.

Of these immediate family members, three had an obvious impact on his later work, namely his father, mother and most significantly of all – his beloved sister Rose.

Tom, as Tennessee was still called, had a difficult relationship with his father who favoured his youngest son Walter to his other children. Cornelius Williams was a distant, even absent, parent. His travelling sales job frequently had him working away from home. Even when Tom did share time with his father, their relationship was harsh and unloving. Cornelius was openly hostile toward Tom's sensitivity, nicknaming him 'Miss Nancy' (Cornelius was so opposed to his son's sensitivity that he suggested Tennessee join a fraternity at the University of Missouri where he was

studying journalism, feeling this would ‘make a man’ of his - unacceptably sensitive - son).

Having such a distant and judgmental father would presumably significantly have impact on the young artist, especially considering his battle to come to terms with his sexual identity (Williams eventually openly admitted his homosexuality). Indeed it is a very plausible contention that much

of the ‘fugitiveness’, which Williams felt throughout his life, as well as his ubiquitous sense of sexual guilt - was severely compounded by this paternal disapproval. Guilt evidences itself throughout Tennessee’s work – featuring prominently in all four plays analysed in this thesis. Specifically, this guilt is often of a sexual nature – as is demonstrated in three of the plays in this discussion (A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and The Night of The Iguana).

Undoubtedly Cornelius’ condemnation of anything gentle and seemingly feminine within his son would have compounded Williams’ sense of sexual guilt. When this is placed in conjunction with Cornelius’ frequent absences, this is even more apparent (as Williams could easily psychologically ascribe his father’s absence to this disapproval).

Tennessee’s mother, and her family, played a more overtly significant role in his psychological (and dramatic) life. Several of his most famous characters seem to be inspired by her – most notably of all Amanda in The Glass Menagerie. Edwina (Dakin) Williams was fiercely and proudly Southern (as is Amanda) after enjoying a socially privileged youth in Mississippi, “...Edwina, had the beauty and social inclination of a Southern belle and, if not the wealth, the status the Episcopalian ministry held in the small cotton center of Clarksdale, Mississippi”<sup>5</sup>.

She was apparently an overwhelming woman, fixated on the South and viciously opposed to the materialistic nature of the North to which the family had moved in 1918 (Specifically to St. Louis). “Here Edwina felt herself a nobody and, with a sort

---

<sup>5</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

of reverse snobbery, impressed on her children that in St. Louis only money and status mattered”<sup>6</sup>. Tennessee adopted her dislike for this materialistic and socially fixated element of the north, finding it to be intrinsically conformist. The impact that this attitude, learnt from his mother, had on the playwright is apparent, as he himself stated in a letter to Audrey Wood in 1939, “I have only one major theme for my work which is the destructive impulse of society on the sensitive non-conformist individual”<sup>7</sup>.

Not only did Edwina have an impact on Tennessee, but the effects of growing up with her parents are also evident throughout Tennessee’s work. “Reared in the rectory of his grandfather, the Reverend Walter Dakin, he felt both the prestige and burden of being called ‘the preacher’s son’”<sup>8</sup>. This ‘prestige and burden’ presumably compounded his general sense of guilt, and especially his sense of sexual guilt. Christian themes and motifs recur throughout his work (For example in, The Glass Menagerie, The Night Of The Iguana, The Rose Tattoo and Sweet Bird of Youth). His maternal family undoubtedly contributed to the overwhelming sense of guilt imbuing much of his work.

As Fritscher points out, “Williams’ conception of guilt is markedly Christian”, substantiating this by using a quote cited by Tischler, “Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt. If there exists any area in which a man can rise above his moral condition, imposed upon him at birth and long before birth, by the nature of his breed, then I think that at least below the conscious level, we all face it. Hence the guilty feelings, and hence defiant aggressions, and hence the deep dark of despair that haunts our dreams, our creative work, and makes us distrust each other”<sup>9</sup>.

(Significantly, Williams became a Roman Catholic towards the end of his life, having chosen this faith because it sufficiently satisfied his personal sense of guilt)

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Fritscher, J. Love and Death in Tennessee Williams. Loyola University Library, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Fritscher, J. Love and Death in Tennessee Williams. Loyola University Library, 1967.

Considering this, perhaps the greatest impact of his maternal family on Tennessee was an inculcation of guilt, as well as a sense of duty and responsibility. These occur as strong themes throughout Williams' work, and are especially significant in The Glass Menagerie, which is intensely autobiographical (and especially examines his relationship with his mother).

Of all of his family, however, it was his intimate affection with Rose that had the greatest impact on Williams' work. The two, only sixteen months apart in age, shared a fiercely close bond that is beautifully described by Harry Rasky, "Tom and Rose were like Siamese twins joined at the heart"<sup>10</sup>. The two were so close that if one became ill, the other would feel symptoms - and they were named 'the couple'<sup>11</sup>.

In 1937, when Williams went to freedom at the University of Iowa, his beloved sister Rose went into confinement in a mental institution. From this time, Williams became anxious that he himself may become mad and wrote furiously to ward off his own 'blue devils' (from which Hannah in The Night Of The Iguana seems to borrow the term). To quote, "Whereas writing before had been an escape from the reality of home, from now on it would be his escape from the fear of insanity. There was insanity on both sides of the family, and Tom's psychological balance was always precarious. His journals of these years show his struggles with depression, his 'blue devils'"<sup>12</sup>.

Considering Rose's institutionalisation alone had been traumatic for Williams, her eventual lobotomy (fallaciously assumed to cure her schizophrenia) can possibly be viewed as the most dramatically significant event of his life. The operation left Rose, whom Williams had adored for her vivacity, virtually without personality. Tom had lost the person to whom he was closest.

This is possibly why the theme of loss is so prevailing throughout his work. The central characters of his plays are frequently the sufferers of extremely intimate loss.

---

<sup>10</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Blanche DuBois has lost Alan in A Streetcar Named Desire, Chance Wayne has lost Chastity in Sweet Bird Of Youth, Brick has lost Skipper in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, Serafina delle Rose has lost Rosario in The Rose Tattoo, almost all the characters in The Camino Real are disillusioned at losing their personal fantasies, Leona in Small Craft Warnings has lost her brother, in Baby Doll the title character's father has recently died and Tom loses his loved Laura in The Glass Menagerie – the list is virtually endless.

The impact of Rose on Williams (especially his loss of her) was so overwhelming that Adler states, “Without Rose Williams, there might never have been a Tennessee”<sup>13</sup> and further points out that, “Yet if his art is a way of possessing her, it involves as well a violating of her as his subject. Paradoxically, it also becomes a means of atonement by memorializing her forever”<sup>14</sup>.

Williams' family had a tremendous impact on many of the themes within his work. The frequent absences of Tom's father, as well as his strict persecution of all (seemingly feminine) sensitivity within his son, contributed to his sensation of being an outsider (or fugitive) and compounded his sense of sexual shame. Not only did his mother instil in him a deep reverence for the South and its feminine principle, but also a deep sense of obligation and guilt because of her religious upbringing. Probably more significant than any other relationship, Tom's bond with his sister Rose left him devastated and guilt-plagued when he 'lost' her to a lobotomy.

#### *Conclusion: Early Biography*

Thomas ('Tennessee') Lanier Williams' biography offers a valuable insight into certain recurring themes within his work, including guilt and obligation, loss, the civilised vs. the barbaric etc. His family relationships were especially significant in this regard, among which his love of Rose is central. Tennessee essentially lost this most loved person (object) when she had her lobotomy, as it took from her the vivacity he adored and rendered her passive to an infantile degree. Following on this

---

<sup>13</sup> Adler, T. American Drama 1940 – 1960. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

event, 'Tom' wrote copiously in a frantic attempt to keep his own 'blue devils' at bay and preserve his precarious seeming sanity. Within this work, he seemed to gain an opportunity for expression that was, at least to some degree, personally therapeutic and redemptive.

## **Chapter 2: Object Relations Theory: An Introduction**

The following chapter provides the basic theoretical information required to appreciate the analyses made of the play texts. Object Relations Theory is conceptually vast, being one of the most comprehensive psychoanalytic theories in existence. For the purposes of this thesis, key theorists and concepts have been selected as they illuminate what is felt to be most significant.

The three theorists generally regarded to be the most significant to object relations theory are discussed in depth. Melanie Klein is the first, with emphasis placed on the psychological positions (Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive) through which an infant passes in psychological development. Thereafter W.R.D. Fairbairn's contribution is elucidated – specifically his notion of endopsychic development (and the endopsychic situation) and incorporation of objects as dynamic agents. Donald Winnicott is the last of the theorists. A focus is made on his concepts of the False Self (and the True Self). Finally, a fairly detailed explanation of the notion of Projective Identification is given.

*Notes:*

*A glossary of central psychological terms appear on pages 110 - 114 in the appendix for ease of reference in case a term's meaning is unclear at any point in this thesis.*

*In describing the infant's relationship with the mother the infant is often referred to as 'he'. This is a common convention in object relational writing and is not intended as sexist (all processes described by the theorists occur to the infant whether male or female). Since the mother occurs in almost all such interactions, the use of male pronouns in describing the infant is to avoid unnecessary confusion arising from double feminine pronouns (for example, 'it is her role to look after him' is less linguistically and conceptually confusing than 'it is her role to look after her').*

*The unusual spelling of the word 'phantasy' is an object relational convention suggesting the internally psychological nature of the individual's personal 'fantasy'. Though some authors (e.g. Cashdan) do not universally adopt this convention, it is the norm in object relational writing.*

## **2.1. Melanie Klein.**

Klein is the mother of Object Relations Theory as Freud is the father of Psychoanalysis. Her groundbreaking theory was based largely on her ambition to understand the psychological workings of the child and her inferential observations of children. They discuss the relationship between mother and child and how this forms a template on which future relationship structures may develop, as well as the means by which the inner psychic world of the child comes to be an interplay between objects. The following discussion expounds the main principles of the theory, explaining how the child's interaction with its mother leads to its psychological development (healthy or pathological), and briefly describing the genesis of borderline personality disorder.

Klein's theory argues that the infant is born with certain innate images (e.g. of a mother who will provide, of her breast etc). Though Klein never adopts Jung's term her description closely resembles what he terms 'archetypes'. As well as these innate images the infant has an ego, albeit extremely undeveloped. This ego is caught between two conflicting drives, the first libidinal and the second the death drive (destructive and ferocious). The child possesses a defensive inner phantasy world ("The inner life of the infant involves a world of phantasy... that is present from birth"<sup>15</sup>) by which means it can deal with the fear and urges these drives illicit.

In an attempt to control it, the infant projects the death drive onto an external object. This is usually the mother's breast (because this is usually the main object thus far encountered, it is the 'project-upon' object of necessity rather than choice). This projection, however, leaves the child faced with fear that the outer world - now containing the content of its destructive impulses - will destroy it. Bad external experiences and traumas (like being hungry, wet etc) are seen as confirmation of the malevolent forces in the world threatening to destroy the infant<sup>16</sup>. A further defensive mechanism must therefore be employed, and an element of libido is projected so that the 'created' outer world is both good and bad, rather than purely bad and persecutory. These external objects are thereafter (re)introjected as another defensive

---

<sup>15</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 b.

strategy in which the child, scared of what is now outside of it, attempts to control the externally destructive forces from within.

The infant cannot deal with the ambiguity of an object being both good and bad because of the fear elicited by the death drive (that makes it believe that anything containing bad is destructive). Hence it splits experiences into good and bad to avoid excessive anxiety. Because the infant's psyche is constituted of the objects that it has internalised, there is always a corresponding split in the ego structure when splitting of objects occurs.

To further explain these processes, Klein divides the development of the child into 2 positions namely, The Paranoid-Schizoid position and The Depressive position. Both of these positions are associated with different modes of object relating, anxieties and defensive strategies (and therefore pathologies) and are important elements of her theory.

#### Paranoid-Schizoid Position (0 – 3 or 4 months)

From birth the child experiences anxiety due to the death instinct. ("...the infant is born with the aggressive drive, giving rise immediately to annihilation anxiety"<sup>17</sup>). Birth, coupled with the loss of inter-uterine security, is the infant's first trauma (Stanislav Grof argues that birth alone causes relational templates and psychic structuring<sup>18</sup>). Bad experiences, including birth, are perceived as a persecutory environmental attack, hence the term 'paranoid' in describing this position<sup>19</sup>.

The infant's first significant object relation is the breast (thus far seen as a part-object, rather than perceived as a whole external object). This relation may be frustrating (bad) or pleasurable (good). (As a result of this - bad or good - object experiences (that may be environmental, may not involve the mother etc.) may simply be referred to as - bad or good - breast experiences. This term may be understood to mean any environmental experience, not merely with the breast). Through this object relation,

---

<sup>17</sup> Summers, F. Object Relations Theory and Psychopathology. Hillsdale, N.J: The Analytical Press, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Grof, S. The Holotropic Mind. San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 b.

the child makes sense of his inner drives. Thus, both oral libidinal and oral destructive impulses are directed at the breast. Recurrent experiences (of gratification or deprivation) stimulate these impulses further. It is therefore important that the mother provide many 'good breast experiences' so that the child's destructive urge may be somewhat mitigated. Klein, however, argues that the degree of children's aggression differs genetically. Even a very good mother cannot control all of the aggressive impulses a child experiences and projects.

During a good feed/hold (known as a 'good breast experience') the infant in phantasy incorporates the good experience into itself in order to have the loved object internally resident. Around this good object core, the child's ego develops. Such experience strengthens trust, love and therein the ability and desire to introject further good objects.

During a bad feed the infant experiences frustration, which is perceived as an attack upon self. These are attributed to the split-off bad object (breast) and the child can 'rightfully' retaliate (in 'self defence') against it, by externalising its aggression. In phantasy (and to some extent reality) it bites, tears, destroys and devours the bad object (the bad breast).

Because the infant is so far unable to cope with the ambiguity that the good and bad breast (object) are one and the same, splitting of the object occurs, as does coincident ego splitting. Therefore if bad experiences outweigh good ones, severe fragmentation of the ego results<sup>20</sup>.

Klein argues that without deprivation (environmental impingements) an ideal state of tension exists. Privation reinforces aggression, resulting in greed. The infant experiences an urge to devour completely. This cyclically increases the aggressive urge. However, there is now greater anxiety that the 'greedy', 'destructive' breast (a phantastic product of projected death drive) will mount a retaliatory attack. This persecutory anxiety is somewhat counteracted by good breast experiences.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ivey, G. An Introduction to Object Relations Theory. Durban: Unpublished Paper, 1990.

Regardless of the real experiences, however, (good or bad) the infant's perceptions of these experiences are largely influenced by their projected internal phantasy. This is exaggerated and the good breast becomes omnipotent, all-gratifying and idealised. Idealisation comes about out of a libidinal desire to avoid annihilation and a need to have a powerful protector.

During this the child is using the defensive mechanism of wish fulfilling hallucination, allowing him to believe that he has omnipotent control over (internal and external) objects. This is emphasised by physiological control experienced, "Control of the sphincter proves to him that he can control inner dangers and internal objects"<sup>21</sup>. This allows for omnipotent denial of the bad object and omnipotent idealisation of the good object that is itself imbued with omnipotent protective power (denial of the bad breast correspondingly denies the self-structure that has been established in relation to this split). Idealisation and denial hence reduce persecutory anxiety. However, the omnipotent hallucination cannot adequately sustain itself because bad experiences will inevitably occur, and the child cannot satisfy itself indefinitely with its phantasied satisfying breast. Therefore, frustration occurs and aggressive impulses must be turned to the outer world.

Projective Identification is therefore used to reduce anxiety. A cycle of Projection and Introjection / Identification is initiated in which the child fearfully expels bad, and then reincorporates it in an attempt to control it internally. Sometimes the good experiences of the real world modify the negative projection, allowing the child to introject good (in opposition to the bad initially projected). This cycle largely forges the self. Good mothering can be seen as attentiveness to the infant's needs, allowing the child to introject more good than bad which encourages less splitting.

Ego development is therefore determined by the interaction between projection (mediated by drives) and introjection (modified by environmental experience). By the mother providing good experiences, psychic protection against the bad is supplied and there is no longer a need for excessive splitting to occur. Ego integration is therein promoted and persecutory anxiety lessened - with the infant perceiving both its

---

<sup>21</sup> Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 b.

internal and eternal worlds in a more objective light. This allows entrance into the next position – the Depressive position.

#### The Depressive position (4 Months - 2 Years)

The child's world is now enlarged and more realistic. Hence other relationships can be incorporated (e.g. with the father) as well as relationships with whole objects rather than part-objects. Integration of the splits in the ego allows for the initiation of the Depressive position and with this comes the painful realisation that the good and bad are in fact one object. The mother is now seen as a whole object containing both good and bad rather than 'either or'.

The infant recognises the unity of good and bad within the loved object, and so realises that its aggression and (phantastic) destructive impulses have also been directed at the good object (breast). He fears that he has destroyed the (loved) good object. He would die if this were the case, as the good object is his psychic source of love, nourishment and support. Extreme guilt and fear of object loss is initiated (this the reason for the term 'depressive anxiety'). The child truly loves and is indebted to the mother and her goodness and fears that if it has destroyed her, then his love – and his self - is intrinsically bad. Ironically the result is an increase in greed as the infant frantically tries to discern either that he has destroyed or not destroyed the good object. The ego responds by inhibiting desires (possibly leading later to an inability to accept and or to enjoy food).

A drive towards reparation is initiated. Wishing the survival of the object leads to stronger identification with it, facilitating the capacity for empathy (as the child truly feels sorry for another object) and more mature object relating. At this juncture the mother must be seen to survive (through attentiveness, love and non-retaliation) as this reduces destructiveness and instils trust and self-faith (including a valuation of one's love and ability to repair). If the child doesn't perceive his love as greater than his hate, his world will become riddled with dead and dying objects, signifying his imminent destruction and badness. If this is so, a horrified retreat back into the Paranoid-Schizoid position (accompanied by fragmentation and continued ego splitting) is probable. If the child introjects the reality of the mother's survival,

healthy development ensues. He emerges feeling security rather than persecution. The capacity for reparation thereby means the later ability to form lasting relationships based on preservation and love rather than hate and destructiveness<sup>22</sup>.

Klein sees health not as an end point but rather as constantly found and lost. The psyche of adults and infants is fluid and dynamic due to the constant operation of libidinal and destructive impulses. Good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant are inevitable consequences in life and so depressive anxiety is a given. 'Depressive' functioning is regarded as the healthy means of functioning - as it implies the ability to love, empathise and relate to whole objects rather than internal part objects.

### *The Development Of Borderline Personality Disorder.*

This disorder is characterised by unstable impulse control, self-image, moods and interpersonal relationships. Recurring qualities of the disorder include desperate attempts to avoid abandonment, identity disturbance, potentially self-damaging impulsiveness, possible suicidal and self-mutilating thoughts, severe mood reactivity, chronic feelings of emptiness or boredom, inappropriate or uncontrollable anger (and displays of temper), brief paranoid ideas or dissociation associated with stress, and relationships which oscillate extremely between idealisation and devaluation<sup>23</sup>.

"The basic cause of these developments [severe object fragmentation] in borderline patients is their failure to integrate the libidinally and aggressively determined self and object images"<sup>24</sup>. According to Klein the reason a person cannot integrate self-parts and marry their aggressive and libidinally determined self / object images, is because there is insufficient integration late in the Paranoid-Schizoid (or early in the Depressive) position. In the healthy individual this is facilitated by maternal provision of good breast experiences that environmentally modify projected 'bad' impulses and return them as 'good' introjected objects – facilitating a sense of security to integrate splits (by good outweighing bad) and moving into the Depressive position ("If development during the Paranoid-Schizoid position has not proceeded normally ... the

---

<sup>22</sup> Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 b.

<sup>23</sup> Morrison, J. The DSM iv Made Easy. New York, Guilford Press, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

infant ... is not capable of working through the Depressive position<sup>25</sup>). From a Kleinian point of view, borderline patients are the victims of mothers who are not attentive enough to allow them to introject good objects (through good experiences) and heal split parts. This explains their erratic behaviour, since they are obliged to respond to internalised, non-integrated splits - often diametrically opposed.

### ***Conclusion***

Klein is virtually indivisible from object relations theory. Her discussion on the nature of psychic splitting, and the processes which an infant undergoes in development, in many ways formed the basis for the school's conceptual development. As such her central beliefs, specifically on splitting, infantile relation with the mother (her breast) and developmental positions have been discussed.

---

<sup>25</sup> Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 b.

## 2.2. W.R.D. Fairbairn

Fairbairn began his writings on object relations theory at roughly the same time as Melanie Klein. Extraordinarily, the two theorists have many theoretical points and beliefs in common despite the fact that they did not have any contact with one another for many years and worked initially without the influence of one another's findings.

Fairbairn is perhaps most significant because his theory is the 'purest' object relations model, meaning that, "Of all those who have written about object relations, Fairbairn fashioned a model of object relations that is... free of a biological emphasis and purely psychological"<sup>26</sup>.

The following discussion lays out the basics of Fairbairn's model, emphasizing his 'endopsychic situation' most specifically. It foregrounds his valuable explanation of how different psychological introjections dynamically operate within the psyche, and how repression within the ego occurs, particularly repression of the libidinal ego by the anti-libidinal ego (also called the 'internal saboteur'). This is done to lend depth to the psychological analyses of the play texts.

Fairbairn holds that people's primary motivation is to enter into (and maintain) relationships with other people. This constituted a significant break from Freud, who saw the human condition essentially as an attempt to relieve frustration and libidinal energy. "Fairbairn said that humans have a basic drive toward relating with other people... Fairbairn thus understood motivation in terms of the ego striving for a relationship with an object, not merely seeking satisfaction"<sup>27</sup>. The natural consequences of this primary motivation make up the body of Fairbairn's theory.

### Development of Endopsychic Structure

Fairbairn's theory believes the infant's endopsychic structures to be built up as follows:

---

<sup>26</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

“Firstly, the infant splits or mentally separates the mother into two part objects”<sup>28</sup>.

The infant is cognitively and psychologically incapable of identifying the mother as good and bad. (“An immature personality cannot tolerate a good object that is simultaneously bad”<sup>29</sup>). At this point it simply relates to a presenting object and interprets it according to the sensory experience the object provides. A good feed is attributed to the good breast, a bad feed to the bad breast etc.

The infant’s inability to cope with the frustrations it experiences throughout the vicissitudes of early life, and its accompanying aggressive reaction, oblige it to act defensively, calling upon the psychological coping mechanisms of splitting as well as internalisation. “...The experience of frustration... calls forth the infant’s aggression toward its libidinal object... From an emotional point of view the child experiences frustration as a lack of love from, or even rejection by, the mother. This being so, it becomes dangerous for the child to express hatred for her; this would make her reject the child more. Yet the child also cannot show its need for her, because this might result in the humiliation and depreciation of the child’s feelings. How the child responds to frustration is to become aggressive and take in or internalise the problematic object”<sup>30</sup>.

Secondly, “The infant...tries to transfer the traumatic factor in the situation to his own inner reality, where the situation appears to be more under the infant’s control... The problem...is not so easily resolved by this... internalisation, for the unsatisfying object continues to be unsatisfying... nothing is really changed except the location of the problem or the troublesome object”<sup>31</sup>.

The child would rather have a world of good objects as this is less persecutory and anxiety provoking. Therefore, it uses its ability to internalise (phantastically) bad external objects. By adopting his only immediate line of defence and taking these

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

objects into himself - the child believes - he will better be able to control the tensions associated with them. “The only power a child has to change or improve a terrible problem in that environment is to change herself. The child attempts to control the troublesome object in her world by splitting the object into good and bad aspects and then taking in or internalising the bad aspect. What this accomplishes is to make the environment good and the child bad”<sup>32</sup>.

Thirdly, “This inner, unsatisfying object has two facets. It frustrates as well as tempts and allures”<sup>33</sup>. Internalisation does not alter the elements of the objects that cause the problem and so is not an ultimately successful defence. Rather, the objects now cause tension either because they excite or because they reject and the infant must cope with this.

To defend against the bad, the child must split the object. This may be seen as both tacit (because of the child’s inability to discern full objects) and active in that the child defensively denies this simultaneity by attaching experiences to one of two endopsychic structures which are created in the initial split. “The ego is essentially bound up with objects, ego and object are inseparable”<sup>34</sup> and so the child forms its ego through its relations with object. Because of this, splitting of the object into exciting and rejecting components is of necessity accompanied by a splitting of the ego.

An anti-libidinal ego forms as the core to which the rejecting object (or relational experience) attaches itself. The libidinal ego is also formed, and the exciting object (experience) attaches itself to this, “Whenever an object gets split, the ego splits and relates to different parts of the object”<sup>35</sup>.

(Both of these sensations - excitement and rejection - are derivatives of a bad object experience. The central ego, distinct from both of these, has only good object experiences at its base.)

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

Finally in the establishment of endopsychic structure, “The infant then represses both of these objects by aggressive repression. Associated with both of these inner objects are the split-off and repressed parts of the ego... the libidinal and the attacking ego”<sup>36</sup>. The anti-libidinal ego and the libidinal ego are sources of discontent for the central ego and so it represses them. “This means the internal saboteur represses the libidinal ego, and the central ego represses both...”<sup>37</sup>.

The anti libidinal ego aggressively represses the libidinal ego (which is needy and fears persecution), in an attempt to control its need/excitement for another object.

Broadly speaking, this dynamic between central, libidinal and anti-libidinal egos forms what Fairbairn calls “the endopsychic situation”.

#### Relational functioning of internalised (bad) objects

It is of cardinal significance to Fairbairn’s theory that he posited internalised bad objects as forming dynamic structure that may independently relate. “Objects taken within the psyche become dynamic structures ... Fairbairn considered objects to be not merely internal figures... but agencies capable of psychological activity”<sup>38</sup>.

This offers an explanation of how previous relationships resurface in later relating. For instance, an abused child may internalise the abuser/s and situation as objects so that the external environment is safer (this internalisation is explained in the second point listed on the formation of endopsychic structure). Once the abusive situation (the abuser/s) are internalised they become linked to both the rejecting and exciting elements that correspond to the anti-libidinal and libidinal egos respectively. For instance, the abuse may be exciting in that it offered attention, whilst it is rejecting in that it inflicted hurt and is an impinging bad-object experience. In later life the child may play out the template laid down by the experience either by pursuing similar experience (for instance abusive relationships) or by purposefully abrogating it (e.g. by becoming power hungry and domineering).

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Fairbairn's view of independent dynamism of internalised objects offers a means to understand (unconscious) actions later in life. Consequently it is significant for literary and dramatic analysis.

### ***Conclusion***

W.R.D. Fairbairn is indisputably one of the most significant of object relations theorists. His main contribution to the discipline is probably his provision of a 'pure' object model that, unlike Freud and Klein, sets itself up as a purely psychologically motivated system. Though he perhaps avoids drive-theory to an unnecessarily heated degree, his resting his theory on the structure of the ego as it forms in relating to environmental objects (and experiences) affords useful insight.

Essentially, his theory states that in response to environmental experience the infant develops a libidinal ego (correlating to exciting, bad objects or experiences), an anti-libidinal ego (correlating to rejecting, bad objects or experiences) and a central ego (formed through good object relating). The objects introjected and attached to these ego structures form dynamically functioning structures, usefully explaining many of the actions evident in (adult) behaviour.

(See appendix pages 103 - 104 for his theories on (infant) relative dependency)

Because of his body of thinking, as well as the historically significant place he occupies in the paradigm, Fairbairn is another extremely valuable theorist for object relational analysis.

The final theorist who will be discussed for the purposes of this thesis, is Donald Winnicott.

### 2.3. Donald Winnicott

Donald Winnicott completes the triad of significant object-relations pioneers and his ideas have had an immeasurable effect on this psychological school of thought. Possibly his two most valuable contributions are his ideas on what are known as 'Transitional Phenomena', and his conception of the 'False Self' (and herein, by implication, the 'True Self').

Winnicott's ideas are not systemic (as are Klein's or Fairbairn's) but are valuable for their different foci that are developmentally important. To quote, "Winnicott did not build a formal system but primarily devoted his attention to areas of child development"<sup>39</sup> and "though (Winnicott's ideas) do not constitute a system, they provide original insights into the development of children"<sup>40</sup>.

The following section briefly discusses his concept of False/True Self, (Transitional Phenomena are discussed on appendix pages 98 - 100) rather than describing his work in unnecessary depth.

#### The True and False Self

Perhaps the most substantial of Winnicott's theories is that of the False and True Selves and how they develop. The following discussion describes True Self / False Self genesis in early object relations and their effect in later (relational) life.

Infants are born, Winnicott's theory holds, with the potential to become a True Self, a spontaneous and creative being. However the theory offers two possible developmental paths. The one leads to a spontaneous and gratifying True Self, while the other leads to a False Self structure in which one interacts with internal objects and lives out a compliant, empty and non-creative being.

#### The Development Of The True Self

---

<sup>39</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

This is dependant on the infant receiving Good-Enough-Mothering. The mother must adapt well to the physiological and psychological needs of the infant. This is aided by what Winnicott terms 'primary maternal preoccupation', a term referring to the exceptionally intense degree of attachment the mother shares with the infant for the first few months<sup>41</sup>. "The good enough mother... starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs"<sup>42</sup>.

To use a Winnicottian term the mother must 'hold' the child - both mentally and physically. In doing so a sense of physical security as well as psychological well-being can be instilled. The good enough mother responds to the infant's spontaneous gestures by maintaining eye contact and smiling as well as by meeting physiological needs (feeding, changing clothes etc). Such gestures must be 'mirrored', as they are the infant's expression of True Self. "Periodically the infant's gesture gives expression to a spontaneous impulse; the source of the gesture is the True Self, and the gesture indicates the existence of a potential True Self"<sup>43</sup>. In mirroring her child and meeting needs, the mother validates the spontaneous gestures the child demonstrates (reflection of the True Self), thus validating the child's authentic self and giving him a sense of self-continuity or 'going on being'. The mother protects the child from environmental impingements and complications that are beyond his understanding (due to his infantile inability to distinguish 'me' from 'not me').

If the mother does this, the infant experiences an omnipotent sense of creativity and control. Since the child does not yet psychically realise that the mother is responsible for his care, he presumes that he is the author of his relief and pleasure. He is wet and, as if by magic, he is dry. He is hungry and, mystically, he is fed. The child, unable to think of anything other than self, assumes that he is responsible for these things, and so feels omnipotent. "The good-enough mother meets the omnipotence of the infant and to some extent makes sense of it. She does this repeatedly. A True Self begins to have life..."<sup>44</sup>. This omnipotence is the genesis of creativity in the child. Through it he comes to experience a sense of omnipotent creativity and control. This forms the basis

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Winnicott, D. Playing and Reality. London: Tavistock, 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Winnicott, D. The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment. London: Hogarth, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

of his later ability to cathect (psychically incorporate) external objects, and the ability to symbolise.

Through the mother being good enough the infant feels not only omnipotence but also a sense of affirmation, love, safety, security and protection from anything bad. "(If the) mother's adaptation is good enough ... in consequence the infant begins to believe in external reality which appears and behaves as if by magic"<sup>45</sup>. The mother mirroring the child particularly mediates this.

It is centrally important to Winnicott that the mother allows controlled impingements, as through them the child develops a sense of otherness gradually, "...As time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure"<sup>46</sup>.

Based on an ensuing sense of security, the child can discover the environment with relative safety - confident that it will not be annihilated in doing so. Thus it is offered the opportunity to establish the me/not-me barrier gradually – enabling it to move away from relating with subjectively conceived objects (a term which relates to Klein's notion of internal object) to discovering - and psychically creating - the object objectively perceived. This phenomenon of realising self / not-self is aided by the limited amount of (controlled) impingements that are allowed by the good enough mother, because controlled and limited external impingements challenge omnipotence whilst not shattering it traumatically. This acts as proof for the infant that there is something outside of it (objectively perceived objects), since omnipotently, the infant would not allow such intrusions.

If the process as described above occurs, a True Self is allowed to develop. The infant may experience spontaneity and creativity and therein is allowed the opportunity to adaptively cathect external objects and symbolise. It feels genuine and so can relate to people in a real way. This, ultimately, is the key to (and the product of) healthy development and the maturational process.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Winnicott, D. Playing and Reality. London: Tavistock, 1971.

## The Development of the False Self.

By contrast, it may happen that the mother is not 'good enough'. If she fails to adapt sufficiently to the environmental needs of the baby, the infant is left insecure about the (perceived) persecutory elements in its environment that disturb it (e.g. draughts, being wet, hungry etc). If the mother repeatedly fails to respond to the infant's spontaneous gestures and does not maintain eye contact or smile (i.e. if she fails to mirror her child) she will probably substitute her own gestures for those of the infant. Her failing to mirror and protect the child from external complications and impingements has the effect of leaving the child fearful that it will be destroyed. Such failure of maternal validation disrupts the child's sense of self-continuity, "... intrusions or 'impingements' interrupt the child's personal sense of 'going on being', that is, his sense of permanence and continuity of existence over time"<sup>47</sup>. Therefore the infant is obliged to become compliant in a frantic attempt to preserve self (including, of central importance, its True Self) from annihilation.

The infant whose mother is not-good-enough, rather than feeling omnipotence and creativity, feels persecutory anxiety. Yet the child is not destroyed in actuality - it continues to exist, falsely. Its self-defensive strategy is to become compliant to the mother with a False Self structure in order to preserve its existence, "[The False Self's] defensive function is to hide and protect the True Self"<sup>48</sup>.

"If the environment is not safe, the infant may respond with compliance. This compliance could lead to the isolation of the infant from its own spontaneous and life giving core"<sup>49</sup>. A mother's repeated failure to comply with the child's needs (physical and psychological) necessitates the formation of a False Self to supplant its True Self (no longer able to develop). "Winnicott feels that the cumulative trauma resulting from repeated maternal impingements make it necessary for the... child to develop a defensively split sense of self consisting of a 'True Self' and a 'False Self'"<sup>50</sup>.

---

<sup>47</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

<sup>48</sup> Winnicott, D. The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment. London: Hogarth, 1965.

<sup>49</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1986

<sup>50</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

In this case, external objects are inadequately realised in the infant and he is unable to symbolise or adequately cathect that which is without. Cut off from his spontaneous and life-giving core (the True Self), he is left vulnerable and isolated. "When the mother's adaptation is not good enough, the cathexis of the external object is not initiated, and the infant remains isolated and lives falsely"<sup>51</sup>.

Therefore a False Self forms. The infant is unable to distinguish between itself and the outside world and is obliged to live out in terms of a False Self construct and flawed internal objects. Its False Self hides its spontaneous True Self and relationships are developed accordingly in an empty and false manner. Many experiences of the person's life are disavowed - deepening the wound of un-authenticity. "The formation of a False Self personality organisation forecloses the development of significant aspects of what might have become oneself"<sup>52</sup>.

For healing to take place, the person must be acknowledged for their feeling of unreality, as in many ways they don't exist. Their authentic spontaneous self is underdeveloped, yet longs to be nurtured and to grow. It is thus essential that they be provided with the good-enough mothering they did not receive from their real mother. This may be given by someone mirroring, acknowledging the person's 'lack of existence', allowing evidence of an external reality, sometimes allowing the person to regress to the point of failure at which point reparations may begin. This allows what the not-good-enough mother did not - an opportunity for a True Self structure to explicate itself. This allows for genuine interactions with people, the ability to cathect external objects, a potential to symbolise and an opportunity to feel secure, full and real.

#### Conclusion: The True and False Self

From Winnicott's perspective the interaction between the mother and child leads to either a False Self (if she is not-good-enough) or a True Self (if she is good-enough).

---

<sup>51</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

<sup>52</sup> Winnicott, D. The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment. London: Hogarth, 1965.

Through the mother engaging and validating the child's authenticity and spontaneity, and limiting (controlled) environmental impingements, she facilitates the maturation of individuality and the True Self. This allows for an ability to love, a feeling of security and the capacity to symbolize and cathect external objects. If, however, the mother is not-good-enough (failing to validate and allowing excessive, uncontrolled, impingements) a child is left obliged to being false and compliant in order to survive. In doing so they interact with internal objects that are false, forming correspondingly false relationships, the result of which is a feeling of emptiness and un-authenticity.

Much of this is expressed in the following quote by Ogden, "Winnicott envisioned the infant as born with the potential for unique individuality of personality, which can develop in the context of a responsive holding environment provided by a good enough mother. However, when a mother substitutes something of herself for the infant's spontaneous gesture (e.g., her own anxiety over separateness for the infant's curious exploration), the infant experiences traumatic disruption of his developing sense of self. When such 'impingements' are a central feature to the early mother child relationship, the infant will attempt to defend himself by developing a second (reactive) personality organisation (the False Self organisation). This False Self vigilantly monitors and adapts to the conscious and unconscious needs of the mother and in so doing provides a protective exterior behind which the True Self is afforded the privacy that it requires to maintain its integrity"<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>53</sup> Ogden, T.H. The Matrix of The Mind. Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc, 1986.

## **2.4. Projective Identification**

(Projective identification – or PI - is vitally important for object relations theory. It is not specific to a single theorist - though Klein arguably discussed it first, emphasising its role in infantile defence<sup>54</sup>. Therefore this discussion is separate to those regarding the theorists themselves)

Dysfunctional relationships caused by upsets in development are centrally important to object relations theory. Though the paradigm discusses severe pathology, it is also very concerned with the faulty interactions occurring between people on a day-to-day basis. Such defective relational patterns can often be explained through the concept of projective identification.

PI is initially used as an infantile defence. The infant projects something into the outer world and thereafter introjects the reality-modified form of the projection. If the introject differs substantially, a new manner of relating may establish. For example, a child may dispel aggression attempting to rid itself of the death drive and associated persecutory anxiety. It does this tangibly through such means as biting or aggressively sucking the mother's breast etc, whilst phantastically devouring and tearing it. The mother's response is important. If she responds aggressively, the child may take this as confirmation of his anxieties. If she does not retaliate, the infant is given an opportunity to introject a non-aggressive experience that may modify his aggression.

In later life PIs plays a different role. Cashdan says, "Projective identifications are patterns of interpersonal behaviour in which a person induces others to behave in a circumscribed fashion"<sup>55</sup>.

PIs typically occurs in three-steps; (1) The projective phantasy (2) Behavioural inductions and (3) The response of the recipient <sup>56</sup>, To quote, "... through projective

---

<sup>54</sup> Klein, M. Love, guilt and reparation, and other works, 1921 – 1945. London: Hogarth Press, 1975 a.

<sup>55</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

identification the projector has the primary unconscious fantasy of ridding himself of unwanted aspects of the self; depositing those unwanted parts in another person; and finally, recovering a modified version of what was extruded”<sup>57</sup>. The following discussion uses this framework, and gives an illustrative example.

#### Step 1: The projective fantasy

“... through projective identification the projector has the primary unconscious fantasy of ridding himself of unwanted aspects of the self...”<sup>58</sup>. In this initial step, the projector attempts to expel an internal object, either because it threatens to destroy them from within, or because it is somehow in danger of attack from other aspects of the self and must be safeguarded within another person.

In order to achieve this, the projector gives subtle messages known as metacommunications. Metacommunications are unconscious communications contained in body language, tone, inflection etc. and constitute the majority of the real manner in which we communicate. They are, as it were, the ‘between-the-lines’ communications we make. “The metacommunicative level... operates nonverbally and consists of messages that are more difficult to pin down”<sup>59</sup>.

Metacommunications are largely successful because they contain a threat that if the desired action is not made, certain negative consequences will follow. “For every projective identification, there is a Damoclean sword with an ‘or else’ etched on its blade. It is this hidden threat that keeps people in relationship even though they are being taken advantage of and manipulated... These coercive threats often are contained in hidden messages known as ‘metacommunications’”<sup>60</sup>.

For instance, in a sexual PI the metacommunications says that the projector will sexually complete the recipient. Therefore, if the recipient does not do what the

---

<sup>57</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

projector wants (usually to become aroused) they will lose out on the pleasure and opportunity of becoming sexually whole.

In PI the projector selects someone who is a suitable repository for this 'object-depositing'. For instance, someone who is using a PI of power will naturally choose targets who have low self-esteem as they will readily buy the projector's mettacommunications / disowned message (in the case of a power PI this message is usually 'you are incompetent').

Within a relationship in which PI is a part, the mettacommunicative level "More often than not... registers most accurately the emotional quality of the relationship"<sup>61</sup>. These messages tend to constrain the recipient to behaviour that matches the PI. This leads on to the second step of PI.

### *Step 2: Behavioural Inductions*

"Then there is a pressure exerted through the interpersonal interaction such that the recipient of the projection experiences pressure to think, feel, and behave in a manner congruent with the projection"<sup>62</sup>. Through the mettacommunicative messages within the relationship, the projector encourages the recipient to behave in a certain way in reality, "Projective identification... actually involves the behavioural and emotional manipulation of others"<sup>63</sup>.

In this stage the direct communications (especially verbal) may allow for the PI to be readily identified. For instance, people playing out a PI of power often communicate in orders and insults, degrading the person to induce the sensation of incompetence (therein inducing dependency).

As the projector encourages these actions, they are trying to induce the dispelled feeling in the recipient. Thus, "Without realising it, the target unwittingly becomes a repository for the feelings and inner representations of the person doing the projecting. The result is a relationship in which 'the recipient is pressured to think,

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

<sup>63</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

feel and behave in a manner congruent with the ejected feelings and self-and object-representations embodied in the projective fantasy”.

### *Step 3: The response of the recipient*

“Finally, after being ‘psychologically processed’ by the recipient, the projected feelings are reinternalised by the projector”<sup>64</sup>. This final stage of projective identification determines the PI’s fate. Often this does not present difficulty; because people form relationships with people displaying corresponding (and usually opposite) disowned aspects. For instance people who perform a PI of power (attempting to disown anxiety and dependency) often become involved with people performing a PI of dependency (intended to disown responsibility and be compliant). However, if this is not the case there is often a rejection since the recipient has probably been used to one degree or another, “Once a person is aware of what is going on, a typical response is anger or withdrawal. This confirms the original belief of the projector (that part of him is bad or undesirable) and perpetuates the pathology”<sup>65</sup>.

### The Origins Of PIs

PIs are the result of some faulty relational template being laid down in early life (usually in the infant’s relation with its mother). As Cashdan says, “Projective identifications, in sum, are the behavioural offshoots of projective fantasies whose origins lie in pathological object relations”<sup>66</sup>.

Individual PIs have different geneses (e.g. people with a sexual PI usually do so because, in early relations, they have learnt that they are valued for one particular thing – usually giving pleasure. Therefore the child learns that to maintain relationships they must give (sexual) pleasure to others.

To make this discussion more pragmatic, a specific PI is more closely examined.

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

### Example: A PI of dependency

If, in his (or her) early object relations, an infant receives excessive attention from a parent, he may not be permitted to become independent and self-sustaining. Therefore his extreme dependency on the mother is extended beyond the usual time, and the child receives a message that he cannot survive without help from someone else. The person may therefore disown self-regulation and responsibility and become compliant. The message that they cannot look after themselves may then be taken into future relationships to force people into looking after them. Once this has been laid down, the PI may occur in the following way.

#### *Step 1: The Projective Phantasy*

The projector discards responsibility and self-regulation. This is achieved through a series of metacommunications that “signal chronic helplessness”<sup>67</sup>. An example of metacommunication that signals dependency could be becoming breathless and tired quickly. This would signal that the person is in need of intervention since they cannot adequately function for themselves. Some other instances include being sickly, physically weak (unable to carry bags), unable to drive at night, etc.

#### *Step 2: Behavioural Inductions*

Through these metacommunications the person induces behaviour in which the recipient looks after them. For instance, if the person does become short of breath quickly, the recipient would be likely to perform the required physical action (e.g. carrying effects) for them.

Such behavioural inductions occur on many levels in the person’s life so that they are looked after whatever they do. As Cashdan says “individuals who relate in this way spend a large part of their lives inducing those closest to them into becoming caretakers, believing that interactions of this sort form the foundation for lasting

---

<sup>67</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

relationships”<sup>68</sup> because “Such individuals are convinced that the success of their relationships, particularly close ones, hinges on their ability to convince people that they cannot exist on their own”<sup>69</sup>.

The ‘or else’ contained within this message often plays on the recipient’s sense of empathy and guilt. It is often a statement, ‘or else, I will die (or fail)’. People employing this PI often choose recipients who are naturally sympathetic and caring as such people, often not wishing to feel the guilt associated with failing someone, provide a natural ‘lock’ for their dependency PI’s ‘key’.

### *Step 3: The response of the recipient*

In the case of a dependency PI, the result is usually abandonment of the projector by the recipient. This is because “It is very difficult to sustain a relationship where all the giving is one way. Persons who become the targets of dependency projective identifications eventually feel drained and exploited”<sup>70</sup>. This is not always the case, because the recipient may deal with disowned elements in a new way. However, abandonment is a virtual certainty because of the exploitation the PI inherently involves. Therefore the projector receives confirmation of their original belief (that part of him is bad) and perpetuates their faulty object relating.

### ***Conclusion***

Projective identification is exceptionally useful as a diagnostic tool for behaviour (and therein literary analysis). When someone (or a character) finds him or herself repeatedly in a similar dysfunctional situation, they are probably creating it through their metacommunications that are prompted by elements they have disowned due to prior faulty object relations. PIs are also quite easy to penetrate because the way the recipient emotionally feels and responds gives evidence of what is going on because

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

of the projector's (metta)communicative manipulations. As Cashdan says, "The countertransference... provides the diagnosis"<sup>71</sup>.

To conclude this discussion of PIs is the full quote by Ogden (portions of which have appeared during this discussion) describing the essential processes involved in this relational phenomenon:

"In a Schematic way, one can think of projective identification as a process involving the following sequence of events. First, there is the unconscious fantasy of projecting a part of oneself into another person from within. Then there is a pressure exerted through the interpersonal interaction such that the recipient of the projection experiences pressure to think, feel, and behave in a manner congruent with the projection. Finally, after being 'psychologically processed' by the recipient, the projected feelings are reinternalised by the projector"<sup>72</sup>.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

## Chapter 3: Analyses

### 3.1 The Glass Menagerie:

#### “What is there... but Dependency?”

(Note: A synopsis of the play appears on pages 115 –116 in the appendix)

#### ***Introduction***

Both historically and dramatically, The Glass Menagerie is one of Williams’ most significant works. It was the first of his plays to receive great accolade, and is still regarded as one of the most significant pieces of drama to emerge from America in the twentieth century<sup>73</sup>.

The Glass Menagerie centres principally on the personal machinations of the Wingfield family. The family of three (Amanda - the mother, Tom – the son, and Laura – the older daughter) find themselves living together in an apartment towards the rear of a building, “*one of those vast hive like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower like warty growths ... symptomatic of the impulse... to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism*”<sup>74</sup>.

The play is partially autobiographical for Williams, as it recalls his choice to leave his family and pursue an independent life. This decision was made particularly difficult because of his leaving his beloved sister Rose, even as Tom’s choice is complicated by his affection for Laura<sup>75</sup>.

Amanda is the central character of the play, an ageing Southern Belle who is clearly bitter towards her husband who has deserted her. Amanda lives primarily in the past, focusing imaginatively on her days as a beautiful and popular girl in Blue Mountain County. She often recalls her past suitors, lamenting her fate at having married her

---

<sup>73</sup> Adler, T. American Drama 1940 – 1960. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

<sup>74</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 1.

<sup>75</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

deserting husband when - she implies – she could have done better. Amanda seems chronically insecure and frightened, often giving reference to her anxieties about what the future holds for her and her children – especially Laura. She is financially reliant on her son Tom, and she constantly reminds him of her need for him (and Laura's).

Tom is the youngest of Amanda's children, a young man who dreams of a more interesting existence than the confines of the Wingfield apartment can offer him. He stays with his Mother out of a sense of duty, and with his sister from sincere affection and similar obligation. Tom works in a warehouse, a job he despises and does solely to support his family. Each night Tom leaves the apartment for some excitement, going apparently to the movies (the play leaves his 'movie-going' open to interpretation, by suggesting that Tom often goes drinking as well). His nightly exploits seem an attempt to rid himself of the mundane nature of his existence, and to find some exhilaration in his duty-bound life. By the end of the play Tom gives up and abandons his mother and Sister to go travelling – as his father before him had done.

Laura is the older of the two children, an extremely introverted young woman who is slightly crippled. Laura does little in her life, mostly focusing on tending to her collection of miniature glass animals – the glass menagerie for which the play is named. Thus, from soon in the play, a parallel is drawn between Laura and the glass menagerie – both being fragile and illusory. Laura's only sojourn from her inner world into reality comes with the visit of Jim ('The Gentleman Caller'), on whom she has had a crush since high school. Jim engages her in conversation and, seemingly, in human concern. Later Laura's already fragile-self fractures almost completely when Jim callously informs her that he is engaged to someone else, shortly after having kissed her.

A fourth member of the family looms large in the form of the Father, embodied in a large portrait that sits left of the arch (at stage centre). In terms of dramatic role, the portrait (father) is a powerful catalyst to the play's action - fuelling Tom's guilt as well as Amanda's insecurity. For Tom, the portrait acts as a constant reminder of the cowardice and self-centredness involved in leaving the home, which would be the abandonment of the family. Amanda is in perpetual fear that the same kind of

rejection she received from her husband may follow with Tom. This is apparent from the following statement she gives Tom; “Oh I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face! It’s terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! – Then left! ... And me with the bag to hold”<sup>76</sup>.

The tension evident in this forms the substance of Tom and Amanda’s manoeuvres around one another. Tom is guilt ridden yet desperate to escape; Amanda is wrought with fear and is desperate for Tom *not* to escape.

---

<sup>76</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 4

An object relational reading of the text yielded many significant themes. For instance, Amanda's defensive departure into phantasy (memory) and Laura's corresponding phantastic pathology and chronic shyness is prevalent. The constant metaphors in the text (especially the glass menagerie itself) seem to suggest that the characters function in a metaphorical world of transitional phenomena – none fully able or willing to become mature and psychologically whole.

It is the contention of this chapter, however, that the most significant theme within this work - from an object relational perspective - is Amanda's projective identification (also referred to as PI) of dependency. Her interaction with her children, especially Tom, reveals a fractured personality manipulatively defending itself from abandonment and fear through the use of PI.

The analysis of this play, therefore, focuses on the PI of dependency used by Amanda. In so doing it examines the distinct stages of PI as evident in the text.

That Amanda is manipulative of and dependent on her son is self-evident. Her constant reminders to him of his obligations to her and Laura point to this chronic dependency. Amanda's saying to Tom, "I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower! Don't fall down, don't fail"<sup>77</sup>, is a transparently manipulative statement – urging Tom to support her. Perhaps the most startling direct of all lines Amanda makes to this effect is her rhetorical question in scene two, "What is there left but dependency all our lives?"<sup>78</sup> for which this chapter is named.

Assuming that Amanda is a clingy and manipulative character from the outset, prompts an object relational evaluation of her actions to veer towards PI. This is because the concept of PI discusses, perhaps more adequately than any other concept in the paradigm, how precisely manipulations between people operate. The following analysis frames Amanda's action within the steps which constitute the PI of dependency.

---

<sup>77</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 4.

<sup>78</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 2.

From an object relational stance, Amanda's manipulations would probably have had their genesis in her infantile life in which her Mother looked after her excessively. As an infant, a dependent personality is looked after to such an extreme extent by his or her mother that they become acutely aware of their dependency on her - and ergo also of their inability to fend for themselves. To follow Winnicott's term, such children are the victims of a not-good-enough-mother, who does not permit controlled impingements into the child's psychic life. Initially the mother *must* adapt herself extremely to the needs of the child, but must slowly start weaning the child of this support, allowing it to become autonomous and at least partially self-determinant.

An explanatory quote by Winnicott: "The good enough mother... starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure"<sup>79</sup>.

To assume this about Amanda, though it may hold psychological validity, would be presumptuous. We are presented with insufficient information about her early life to leap to this conclusion, and therefore can meaningfully consider the possibility that her relational template of dependency may have originated in later life. This is possible because as Cashdan points out, "... early relationships are not the only ones that affect one's sense of self worth. Intervening internalisations can take place throughout life, making the self more than simply a mirror of what happened in the early years"<sup>80</sup>.

It is appropriate to examine Amanda's interpersonal relations as evidenced in the play. The obvious relationship that could account for Amanda's dependency is the one she shared with her husband. The abandonment Amanda suffered at the hands of her husband offers a very plausible alternative for why Amanda is utilising a PI of dependency. Being rejected by him and forced into taking on degrees of responsibility she previously did not have ("your father ... left ... And me with the bag to hold"<sup>81</sup>), may very well have caused a psychological split in which Amanda - out of fear and exhaustion - disowned her sense of responsibility.

---

<sup>79</sup> Winnicott, D. Playing and Reality. London: Tavistock, 1971.

<sup>80</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>81</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 4.

Associating responsibility and self-reliance with the traumatic event of losing a (presumably) loved object, would very possibly have caused Amanda to adopt a PI of dependency, attempting to ward off similar tragedy in the future. Because of this association, Amanda begins to structure her life in such a way as to oblige people (Tom particularly) to look after her, as it is the only means by which she knows she can maintain relationships. This is congruent with people labouring under a projective identification of dependency, as evident in the following quote, “Such individuals are convinced that the success of their relationships, particularly close ones, hinges on their ability to convince people that they cannot exist on their own. They consequently adopt the emotional demeanour of a young child and coerce (induce) those about them into taking care of them”<sup>82</sup>.

The latter portion of this quote (“They consequently adopt the emotional demeanour of a young child”), when applied to Amanda, explains her constant preoccupation with her past (treated as an ideal, almost infantile phantasy). She does not live as a psychologically mature adult in the real world, but rather confines herself to a child-like phantasy of memory.

There is yet another possibility. If one assumes that Amanda’s dependency has infantile roots, it is plausible that her husband’s desertion of her and the children was the natural consequence of her dependency PI, as played out on him, finally draining him too much. The typical response to PI’s of dependency is abandonment as a result of exhaustion since, “It is very difficult to sustain a relationship where all the giving is one way. Persons who become the targets of dependency projective identifications eventually feel drained and exploited”<sup>83</sup>.

Whether this is the case or not (the play offers little evidence to support or debunk this), it is evident that her PI takes a huge toll on her son Tom. The examination of the mechanism by which this PI plays out between these central characters forms the next portion, and bulk, of this chapter.

---

<sup>82</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>83</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

There are, generally speaking, three steps that constitute a projective identification. Cashdan calls these (1) The Projective Fantasy (2) The Behavioural Inductions and (3) The Response of the Recipient<sup>84</sup>. The following section frames Amanda's actions within these three steps.

*Step 1: The projective fantasy*

In this step the individual attempts to project a disowned/unwanted aspect of him or herself into someone else. Elements are disowned for one of two reasons, either because they threaten to destroy the person from within or because they themselves are in danger of destruction.

In Amanda's case, the first of these motivations seems apposite. As discussed, she negatively associates adopted responsibility and the pain of desertion, because of her husband's abscondence.

Since Amanda views responsibility as interconnected with rejection she tries to expel this bad object, believing falsely that in so doing she can maintain relationships and avoid abandonment – herein protecting herself from pain. “Individuals who relate in this way spend a large part of their lives inducing those closest to them into becoming caretakers, believing that interactions of this sort form the foundation for lasting relationships”<sup>85</sup>. The natural repository for this object is Tom, who has a degree of devotion because of his affection for Laura. Tom provides a lock (responsibility) for Amanda's key (renouncement of responsibility).

As in all PIs Amanda achieves this transfer of object-content to Tom through her communications and metacommunications. Constantly throughout the play she gives communicative signals that tell Tom how utterly dependant she is on him. For instance, Amanda tells Tom twice “We can't

say grace until you come to the table”<sup>86</sup>. She particularly plays on Laura's dependency of Tom saying such things as, “We have to be making some plans and

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 1 and Scene 6.

provisions for her (Laura)”<sup>87</sup>. She does this because she knows Tom’s affection for his sister to be his strongest obligator.

Perhaps her most blatant dependency communication is found in her last retort, “Go to the movies, go! Don’t think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister whose crippled and has no job! Don’t let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! Just go, go, go – to the movies!”<sup>88</sup>.

It is evident from this that Amanda focuses on the inadequacies she and Laura have (desertion in her case, unemployment and being crippled in Laura’s), as they are the rational justifications for her dependency. Rational reasons are usually essential to successful manipulative dependency PIs because the recipient must believe that their failure to comply with the demands given them *will* probably have a detrimental effect on the person initiating the PI. Because Tom knows the dire situation Amanda and Laura find themselves in, he feels guilty and is pressured into staying and providing. This therefore sees the initiation of the second phase of the PI, behavioural induction.

### *Step 2: Behavioural Inductions*

Amanda’s manipulations of Tom are visibly demonstrated in his actions. Perhaps the most notable actions he performs in the play are (1) his daily work – which he loathes, (2) his provision of a gentleman caller at his mother’s request, (3) his nightly movie-going and finally (4) his abandonment of Laura and Amanda at the end of the play.

Of these actions, the one that most prominently demonstrates his supplication to Amanda is his daily, begrudged, work attendance. The fact that he does not wish to do go to work at all evidences that some other motivation is at play. The play makes it explicit that his real motivation is guilt and obligation. “You think I’m crazy about that warehouse?... Every time you come in yelling that God damn ‘rise and shine’... I say to myself ‘How lucky dead people are!’... But I get up. I go!”<sup>89</sup>.

---

<sup>87</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 4.

<sup>88</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 7.

<sup>89</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 3.

It is worthwhile to note that Amanda frequently mettacommunicates - and directly communicates – that Tom *should* feel guilty and obliged to her. Amanda’s appearance is often pained, as seen in scene two, [*Amanda leans against the shut door and stares at Laura with a martyred look*]<sup>90</sup>.

It is apparent that Tom and Laura are aware of these mettacommunications, as demonstrated by Laura’s saying “Mother when you’re disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus’ mother in the museum!”<sup>91</sup>.

On a communicative level Amanda also manipulates (Tom) into feeling guilty. While Tom is apologising after their fight in scene three Amanda does not graciously accept his apology but rather says “My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children”<sup>92</sup>.

She not only induces his guilt by calling him to task for his failures but also directly communicates that she dotes on and cares deeply for her children (e.g. “No, I don’t have secrets. I’ll tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children”<sup>93</sup>).

(Considering that “The projective identification of ingratiation is made up of interpersonal patterns which contain strong elements of self-sacrifice”<sup>94</sup>, in the initial object relational reading of the play the prospect that Amanda performs an ingratiatory PI on Tom was considered. This was abandoned however, as her actions do not sufficiently support Tom for this to be a possibility. In ingratiatory PIs the projector performs concrete actions that are self-sacrificial. In Amanda’s case she merely says that she does this, and her actions are more reliant than ingratiatory. Therefore, it is concluded that Amanda’s ingratiatory-type comments are not sincere but are rather given to lend body to the guilt and obligation on which the success of her dependency PI with Tom rests).

---

<sup>90</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 2

<sup>91</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 2.

<sup>92</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 4.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 5.

<sup>94</sup> Cashdan, S. *Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship*. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

Through the guilt Amanda induces in Tom, she forces him into compliance with her wishes. As the play moves on, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that his compliance is not heartfelt. His commenting, “I’ll rise – but I won’t shine”<sup>95</sup> is a thinly veiled statement to this effect. Amanda is aware that Tom is becoming exhausted by her demands on him, as he himself says such things as, “Look! – I’ve got no thing, no single thing... in my life here that I can call my own!”<sup>96</sup>.

In Scene IV, as Amanda realises the waning effect her manoeuvres are having on Tom, and that his leaving is likely, she asks a final compliance from him: “Oh I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face! It’s terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! – Then left! ... And me with the bag to hold... I know what you’re dreaming of... Then do it! But not till there’s somebody to take your place... as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her... why then you’ll be free to go wherever you please...”. Tom tries to comply with this demand by presenting Jim, ‘The gentleman caller’.

Unfortunately, fate and Laura’s crippling lack of confidence conspire to ensure that this is a failure as well. Laura has been used in her mother’s dependency PI for so long that she is utterly introverted and reliant on others. She even asks Amanda, “What shall I wish for, Mother”<sup>97</sup> when Amanda encourages her to wish upon the stars. Such compliance inevitably has the consequence that Laura cannot authoritatively cope with Jim’s visit and shies away from it, “There was a Jim O’Connor we both knew in high school! – [*Then, with effort.*] If that is the one that Tom is bringing to the dinner – you’ll have to excuse me, I won’t come to the table”<sup>98</sup>.

To compound this problem, Jim is already engaged – a fact he only reveals shortly before his departure. Despite an extraordinarily successful interplay with Jim following dinner, ultimately Laura cannot compete with this fact. She is too shy and

---

<sup>95</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 4

<sup>96</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 3

<sup>97</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 5.

<sup>98</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 6.

reclusive a girl, too reliant on others, to be sufficiently attractive to win Jim's romantic affections ultimately.

When this last effort on Amanda's and Tom's part is unsuccessful, Amanda again tries to apply guilt to Tom by pointing out what a failure his efforts turned out to be, "That's right, now that you've made us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparation, all the expense! The new floor lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura! All for what? To entertain some other girl's fiancé!"<sup>99</sup>.

This attempt proves to be the straw that breaks Tom's back. Since he was assured that finding a replacement would mean freedom, he cannot deal with the continued manipulations of his mother. Consequently he responds, entering the final phase of the PI in which Amanda has him locked.

### *Step 3: The Response Of The Recipient*

The final response Tom gives to Amanda's projective identification is a fulfilment of her fear – he abandons her. This is the typical outcome of such PIs because of their exhausting nature, "Once a person is aware of what is going on, a typical response is anger or withdrawal"<sup>100</sup>. The first of these options – anger – has been Tom's response until this final point at which he can take no more, and so he opts for the final option – withdrawal – by leaving. Such a response leaves little likelihood that Amanda's pathology would improve, since her fear has been confirmed, "This (withdrawal or anger) confirms the original belief of the projector (that part of him is bad or undesirable) and perpetuates the pathology"<sup>101</sup>.

Precisely how Amanda responds following this event is not offered us in the play, which terminates at this point. The overwhelming feeling the play leaves at its conclusion is a deep sense of despair, because Amanda has so successfully performed her PI of dependency that we the audience are left with a firm conviction that she and

---

<sup>99</sup> Williams, T. *The Glass Menagerie*. Scene 7.

<sup>100</sup> Cashdan, S. *Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship*. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

Laura can in fact not survive without Tom. Hence we, the audience, feel for a moment the emotion that Amanda – and perhaps Williams – is trying to be rid of, utter despair and helplessness.

### Tennessee Williams' projective identification

The fact that we undergo this emotional response at the end of the play suggests that we are being affected by a PI ourselves. The nature of the PI may be simply ascertained by evaluating what the nature of our response (countertransference) is, since “The countertransference... provides the diagnosis”<sup>102</sup>. The overwhelming feeling is one of guilt, despair and powerlessness to help.

Considering this to be our response, it is reasonable to assume that these are experiences (and inner object relations) which Williams is trying to rid himself of. “... through projective identification the projector has the primary unconscious fantasy of ridding himself of unwanted aspects of the self; depositing those unwanted parts in another person; and finally, recovering a modified version of what was extruded”<sup>103</sup>.

The means by which Williams achieves this, as in all projective identifications, is through direct communications and subtle mettacommunications. We are left with a sense of guilt and despair because Williams has constructed this throughout the play in the form of its stage directions, character descriptions (these constitute subtle mettacommunications) and blatant communications evident in the play's dialogue. Though imaginatively these occur to Tom alone, we are privy to all of what occurs (metta)communicatively on stage, and so absorb all of its communications. It is thus reasonable to assume that we may undergo a similar emotional experience to him.

Since we, unlike Tom, are unable to respond physically and help (as we are projectively encouraged to), the dynamic cannot easily fall into the category of a dependency PI. Since we are powerless, the dynamic superficially resembles a PI of power (we are given the message ‘you are helpless’). This ultimately does not hold

---

<sup>102</sup> Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.

<sup>103</sup> Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: N.J, 1982.

water. Since this powerlessness is a product of distance between audience and play action, and is also inextricably tied in with messages of dependency, we are led to conclude that what Williams is depositing in us is his own sense of guilt.

Autobiographically, this makes sense, since The Glass Menagerie is based on Williams' desertion of his family and an accompanying sense of guilt that plagued him the rest of his life<sup>104</sup>. Thus there is a beautiful poignancy in the manner in which Williams has constructed the play to take us, as well as Tom, into feeling anxiety and guilt. This leaves us receptive to the emotive line Tom makes in closing, "Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be"<sup>105</sup>. In this emotional receptivity we become the repositories of Williams' own anxiety and guilt - allowing his play, through us the audience, to be an emotional catharsis for him.

### ***Conclusion***

The projective identification of dependency is exquisitely revealed in The Glass Menagerie as Amanda Wingfield - the play's central character - tries desperately to cling to her son for a fear of abandonment. Whether this fear is prompted in her early object relations, or is a product of the abandonment she suffered at the hands of her husband is up to individual discretion. What is evident is that through Amanda's communications and metacommunications she rids herself of responsibility, inducing guilt and compliance in her son. These responses ultimately mature into Tom's anger and final abandonment accompanied by guilt. We, the audience, are taken into this phenomenon, feeling desperation for Amanda and Laura who are left alone in the dark literally, and figuratively also. Thus we act as repositories for Williams' own disowned guilt.

---

<sup>104</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Scene 5.

## 3.2. A Streetcar Named Desire: “Death...The Opposite is Desire”.

*(Note: A synopsis of the play appears on pages 117 -119 in the appendix)*

### ***Introduction***

A Streetcar Named Desire is arguably Williams most acclaimed play. He himself felt that it was his best, even stating, “It says everything I ever wanted to say”<sup>106</sup>.

The play centres fundamentally around Blanche DuBois, her sister Stella and Stella’s husband Stanley Kowalski. Blanche presents herself as an extremely cultivated and cultured woman, taking offence at anything even approaching indecency or vulgarity. She therefore clashes immediately with her new brother-in-law Stanley, a man who is acutely libidinal and sexual.

Blanche, however, is not as pure as she suggests. She finds herself with Stanley and Stella after being fired from her job as a schoolteacher because she seduces a seventeen-year-old pupil. This particular seduction was, however, merely the final amongst a string of affairs she has had with men following the loss of her ancestral home, Belle Reve (literally meaning ‘beautiful dream’).

Blanche’s conflict, between lost purity and her sexual yearning, seems to be as a result of the loss of her husband Alan. Blanche discovered Alan in bed with another man some time after they were married. Following on this, Blanche announces to him that he ‘disgusts’ her, and he kills himself.

The analysis made here of A Streetcar named Desire adopts 2 different theorists in its interpretation. These theorists are Melanie Klein and W.R.D.Fairbairn. Though the two are not in agreement on all elements of object relations theory, the differing

---

<sup>106</sup> Haley, D.E. Certain moral Values”: A Rhetoric of outcasts in the plays of Tennessee Williams. The University of Alabama, 1999.

elements of their theories used in this analysis are not mutually preclusive. Rather, they are felt to be complementary.

The following analysis argues that following the death of Alan (Blanche's husband and loved object) two significant events occurred within her psyche:

Firstly: Her Psyche split this bad experience into an exciting and a rejecting component (associated respectively to the libidinal and anti-libidinal egos). This corresponds to W.R.D.Fairbairn's notion of endopsychic structure and the endopsychic situation.

Secondly: The loss of the loved object (Alan) at a critical point in their relationship caused Blanche to seek reparation desperately. Having been married a relatively short time, Blanche may still have perceived Alan in part-object terms, oscillating to full-object relations as she attempted to cathect him psychically (M. Scott Peck, for instance, argues that cathexis typically requires eighteen months to complete, even in mature relations<sup>107</sup>). The juncture in a relationship where the interaction shifts from part-object to full-object relations parallels the infant's conflict as it attempts to enter the Depressive position. This follows Klein's theoretical viewpoint. The fact that Blanche's loved object has died (and seemingly because of her aggressive - and partially sexual - impulse) makes reparation essential. In the play, she tries to repair the loved object frequently through a variety of actions.

The following analysis examines both of these occurrences. Firstly the nature of her establishment of anti-libidinal and libidinal egos is discussed as it evidences itself within the play. This, essentially, makes use of Fairbairn's object relations theory. Thereafter, the means by which Blanche tries to repair the loved object is made, employing Klein's theoretical model. Finally, these two theories, viewed as complementary rather than competing, are attenuated in a summary of the play's analysis.

---

<sup>107</sup> Scott-Peck, M. The Road Less Travelled: The new Psychology of Love. London: Rider Books, 1988.

Blanche is introduced as a dichotomous character. She is very 'proper' in her appearance, to a sufficient degree as to make her look quite inappropriate in the setting in which she finds herself. Yet, within minutes of this she drinks fairly heavily, only to deny this moments later "No, one's my limit"<sup>108</sup> and "...I rarely touch it"<sup>109</sup>. Her drinking is a seeming contradiction to her character and her covering it up heightens this contradiction. It is obvious that Blanche is hiding something beneath her demure exterior. This becomes increasingly evident as the play progresses.

In scene five, Blanche shockingly kisses a virtual stranger. This fact seems especially absurd because the stranger in question is extremely young. Shortly afterwards we discover that Blanche entertained numerous men, seemingly as a prostitute. Possibly even more startling than this we learn that she has been discharged from her school following her seduction of a seventeen-year-old boy.

Constant statements are made to the degree of trauma she experienced as a result of the death of her husband Alan, and this seems the obvious cause of her difficulties. The play leaves little room for alternate interpretation as to what is the cause of Blanche's unusual, if not psychotic, actions. For instance, Stella justifies Blanche's behaviour to Stanley by saying of Blanche, "...when she was young, very young, she had an experience that – killed her illusions... She married a boy who wrote poetry... I think Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on... This beautiful and talented man was a degenerate"<sup>110</sup>.

Therefore it seems appropriate to examine the impact of Alan's death as a springboard for this analysis. Hereafter this is examined from Fairbairn and Klein's respective stances.

---

<sup>108</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 7.

### The Death of Alan (the loved / idealised object).

Alan's death is obviously of immense significance for Blanche. It is apparent that she doted on him, as evidenced in Stella's statement to Stanley (cited above). Alan is evidently a loved object – indeed an idealised object – for Blanche. Thus, even independently of the circumstances of his death, his dying would be understandably traumatic for her. Considering the nature of Blanche's involvement in his death it is easy to see how this trauma is exacerbated to an almost unbearable degree. After discovering Alan's infidelity (with another man) Blanche initially denies her shock completely, immediately going dancing with him (and the man in question). In the middle of a dance, her announcement that he disgusts her apparently results in his suicide. After this her life, she confesses, becomes almost meaningless. All of this is evident in the following extended quote from the play:

“When I was sixteen, I made the discovery – love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow... There was something different about the boy... He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of... Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty, but had two people in it... Afterwards we pretended nothing had been discovered... the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino... laughing all the way... We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out... A few moments later – a shot!... It was because – on the dance floor – unable to stop myself – I'd suddenly said – ‘I know! I know! You disgust me!’ And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again...”<sup>111</sup>.

### A Fairbairn interpretation.

---

<sup>111</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 6.

From Fairbairn's perspective, such a traumatic experience would result in a split within the psyche. Such a split would divide the bad experience into both exciting and rejecting components. The exciting component would attach itself to the libidinal ego, and the rejecting component would attach itself to the anti-libidinal ego. The central ego (composed of purely good object relations) would try to repress both of these structures, while the anti-libidinal ego (rejecting object relation) would also exert pressure on the libidinal ego (the exciting or needy object relation).

Applying this to Blanche, the traumatic event of Alan's death does seem to split into rejecting and exciting components. Blanche's disgust and rejection of him on the grounds of his sexual proclivity and infidelity seems to cause his death. Her psyche seems to split this experience into: firstly, a sensation of (sexual) dirtiness (the rejecting component, attached to the anti-libidinal ego) and secondly, desperate sexual longing (the exciting or needy component, attached to the libidinal ego).

The text offers numerous instances to support this contention. The fact that she feels dirty is apparent throughout the play. Blanche bathes repeatedly, as shown in the following quote:

STANLEY: "How long she been in there?"  
STELLA: "All afternoon"  
STANLEY: "Soaking in a hot tub"...  
STELLA: "She says it cools her off for the evening"<sup>112</sup>.

Her neurotic bathing suggests she is trying to rid herself of personal dirt and calls to mind Lady Macbeth's compulsive handwashing and pitiful lament, "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?"<sup>113</sup>.

Even as Lady Macbeth desperately seeks redemption for her crimes in this obsessive washing, so Blanche seems to want to heal herself by ridding the dirt that afflicts her following Alan's death.

---

<sup>112</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 7

<sup>113</sup> MacBeth Act 5 Sc 1, in Alexander, P. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. London: Collins, 1951.

This is suggested when she says, “I take hot baths for my nerves. Hydro-therapy, they call it”<sup>114</sup>.

Likewise the act of bathing, for Blanche, is indeed redemptive. “Hello, Stanley! Here I am, all freshly bathed and scented, and feeling like a brand-new human being!”<sup>115</sup>.

Blanche is frantic to cling to (or perhaps create) her psychic purity – compromised as it has been by the split caused with Alan’s death. She fears that this psychic ‘dirt’ (attached to an anti-libidinal ego) will destroy her: “I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day”<sup>116</sup>. So acute is her fear of her dirt being revealed (or of persecution by the anti-libidinal ego) that physical dirtiness terrifies her.

*[...Stella pours the coke into the glass. It foams over and spills. BLANCHE gives a piercing cry.]*

STELLA *[Shocked by the cry]*: “Heavens!”

BLANCHE: “Right on my pretty white skirt!”...

BLANCHE: “I don’t know why I screamed!”<sup>117</sup>.

Blanche is also terrified of physical (and psychological) exposure, as this would compromise her illusion of purity. Consequently, she makes sure only to be seen in dim light, affording her secrecy.

Her name speaks of purity; “It’s a French name. It means woods and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring”<sup>118</sup>. Still, even this seemingly pure image is tainted and mirrors Blanche’s problem. Though an orchard in spring is beautiful it is also rampant with sexual activity. Ultimately the resurgence of her sexual impulse, caused by the needy libidinal ego (established because of the sexual nature of Alan’s death) is the root of Blanche’s problems.

---

<sup>114</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 8.

<sup>115</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 2.

<sup>116</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 11.

<sup>117</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 5.

<sup>118</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 3.

The discussion of Blanche thus far has focused mostly on her fear of dirt associated with the rejection and aggressive repression associated with the anti-libidinal ego (whose functioning has largely been forged by the trauma of Alan's death and sexual 'dirtiness'). However, it is the conflict between these impulses and the needy impulses of her libidinal ego that causes her dilemma.

Libidinally, sex has attached itself viciously to her libidinal ego in the wake of Alan's betrayal and suicide. Though she fights it, because of her anti-libidinal repression of impurity, she is inextricably drawn to sex. The seeming incongruity we experience in discovering that Blanche has acted as a prostitute in Laurel points to this, as does her sexual relationship with a seventeen year-old boy. The most blatant way in which this urge evidences itself in the play is in her interactions with Stanley.

We are told that Stanley is a profoundly sexual person. This is made explicit in the following extended quote: "STANLEY...comes in... Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes. Since earliest manhood the centre of his life has been pleasure with woman, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence, dependently, but with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among the hens... He sizes women up at a glance, with sexual classifications, crude images flashing into his mind and determining the way he smiles at them"<sup>119</sup>.

Blanche finds Mitch "superior to the others"<sup>120</sup> because of his sensitivity and because he avoids dirt and impurity ("I am ashamed of the way I perspire"<sup>121</sup>). Yet, she is terrified of the raw sexuality that Stanley personifies. Stanley (in contrast to Mitch's self consciousness of sweat) often walks around the flat in a sweaty shirt, or shirtless. Being terrified of her plaguing dirt, Blanche fears Stanley who embodies dirt in the form of his overt sexuality. From their first meeting Blanche avoids him; (*BLANCHE [drawing involuntarily back from his stare]*: "You must be Stanley. I'm Blanche")<sup>122</sup>.

---

<sup>119</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 3.

<sup>121</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 6.

<sup>122</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

Stanley's effect upon Blanche is so powerful that she shouts, "Now that you've touched them I'll burn them"<sup>123</sup> when he handles her letters from Alan. This statement may be the play's most obvious anti-libidinal attack on the libidinal ego. When the loved object (the letters) comes in contact with overt sexuality (which is attached to the libidinal ego as unacceptable 'dirt' to be repressed) there is an aggressive anti-libidinal attack on the libidinal ego, manifested in Blanche's declaration that she will destroy the letters. She is prepared to sacrifice the loved object entirely so as to avoid the libidinal ties she has to it, evidencing that there is an intense anti-libidinal attack at play within her.

Blanche is aware of sexual tension between her and Stanley, though she desperately tries to deny it, "...perhaps in some perverse kind of way he- No! To think of it makes me..."<sup>124</sup>. Blanche sometimes initiates metacommunicatively sexual interplays with Stanley. When she says, "I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell over you"<sup>125</sup> it is ironic, since it is precisely this that she is attempting. She even admits to Stella shortly after that she has been flirting with Stanley as a defensive tool in their argument regarding Belle Reve, "Everything is all right; we thrashed it out. I feel a bit shaky but I think I handled it nicely ... I was flirting with your husband Stella!"<sup>126</sup>.

However, Stanley rises to her sexual bait ferociously. Shortly after he overhears Blanche slandering him to Stella in scene four, Stanley grins at her, "Hiyuh Blanche [*He grins at her*]"<sup>127</sup>. Since we have been told that he [*...sizes women up at a glance, with sexual classifications... determining the way he smiles at them*]<sup>128</sup> this suggests that he has relegated her to a sexual part-object.

The sexual fear Blanche has of Stanley eventually becomes a dreadful self-fulfilling prophecy, as he responds to her fear by raping her. "You think I'll interfere with you? ... Come to think of it – maybe you wouldn't be bad to – interfere with... [*He picks up her inert figure and carries it to the bed*]"<sup>129</sup>.

---

<sup>123</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 2.

<sup>124</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 6.

<sup>125</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 2.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 4.

<sup>128</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

<sup>129</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 10.

Blanche's attempt to preserve her (sexual) purity is mirrored in her teaching literature, suggestive of culture and the opposite of the primitivism Stanley represents (Stanley states that he "...never was a very good English student"<sup>130</sup>). Stanley's mock "Tiger – tiger!"<sup>131</sup> shortly before raping her, is thus a vicious psychological assault on her attempt to preserve her purity, by suggesting William Blake's poem 'The Tyger' (which begins, "Tyger, tyger burning bright, in the forests of the night"<sup>132</sup>).

Stanley represents, for Blanche, her undeniable libidinal ego – which is needy of sex. Though she hates it anti-libidinally, she is irrevocably drawn to it, as a moth to a flame. This aspect of her nature is perhaps suggested when Williams gives the following description of her, [*There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth*]<sup>133</sup>.

This unavoidable needy component of her psyche ultimately means that, try though she might, she is no longer (sexually) pure. This is why she desperately wants Mitch, yet fears he will not want her. When he rejects her on these very grounds, she therefore understandably screams as if tormented:

MITCH: "I don't think I want to marry you any more... You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother".

BLANCHE: "Go away, then. [*He stares at her*] Get out of here quick before I start screaming fire! ... Fire! Fire! Fire!"<sup>134</sup>

### ***Conclusion of the Fairbairn interpretation***

The fierce struggle between Blanche's libidinal and anti-libidinal struggles (in relation to the split into exciting versus rejecting objects, caused by Alan's death) is so central to the play that this chapter is named after it. When Blanche utters "Death... The opposite

---

<sup>130</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

<sup>131</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 10.

<sup>132</sup> Blake, W. *The Tyger* in Gardner, J. *A Kind of Glory*. Manzini, Macmillan Boleswa, 1985.

<sup>133</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

<sup>134</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 9.

is desire”<sup>135</sup> she suggests that there is an ultimate dichotomy wherein one must choose either to succumb to one’s passions (desire) or to fight them (and die or live as if dead). Ultimately, she cannot balance the tension between these two conflicting aspects of herself – the persecuting anti-libidinal ego seeking banishment of her ‘dirty’ sexuality (incorporated from Alan, her loved object) that is associated with a needy libidinal ego. The forces between these two contradictory essences within her ultimately overwhelm her entire being, and even her central ego is sucked into the conflict. Hence, she descends into madness.

### A Kleinian Interpretation

From Klein’s perspective, the loss of Alan (the loved / idealised object) would, without doubt, have caused a psychic split. Unlike Fairbairn, this split would simply have been into good and bad (Though such a split corresponds to a splitting within the ego, this is not differentiated into libidinal and anti libidinal egos). The following analysis looks at the psychological consequences of this event, demonstrating how they influence her behaviour throughout the play.

Considering that Blanche is at least partially responsible for Alan’s death, her situation calls to mind the infant’s anxiety at the juncture between the Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions. At this developmental point (where the child moves towards whole-object perception and relation) the child begins to realise that the aggressive impulses that they have directed at ‘the bad breast’ (a part object) have actually also been directed at the ‘good breast’, since both form part of the same mother (a full object). Extreme guilt is initiated as a response to this, and the child becomes desperate to prove that its impulses did not destroy the loved object (usually the mother). This desperation is fuelled by the fact that, if the infant has killed the loved object, not only is their love implied to be destructive and bad, but their inner object world would also become strewn with dead and dying objects.

Consequently the child attempts to ‘repair’ the loved object, proving the existence of the good, loved object (which it is worried it has harmed) and cathecting it as a positive element in the psyche.

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

For Blanche, Alan's suicide would seem to be a failure at this developmental stage. She vaunts him not only as a good object, but even as an ideal one (e.g. "I loved him unendurably"<sup>136</sup>). When she discovers that he has elements of bad as well (this embodied in his cheating on her and his apparently deceptive homosexuality) she is faced with the conflict of resolving these seemingly mutually preclusive things into her conception of him. Even as the infant battles to do this, she does too. Initially she maintains him as an entirely good object, laughing whilst driving to the casino with him (and the man he has slept with). However, such a simple dichotomisation is a doomed defence because Blanche's corresponding bad part of the split perceives him in purely bad relational terms and rears its head. Thus she angrily declares, "I know! I know! You disgust me"<sup>137</sup>.

Such a statement constitutes an aggressive attack on the loved object, because in part-object relations it has been perceived as bad (since it has provoked fear, anxiety, rejection etc.). In Blanche's case the infant fear that such action will kill the good object is realised. Before Blanche has had the opportunity of making sense of Alan in the light of this information, and before she has been able to reconcile him as being a whole object that is simultaneously good *and* bad, he kills himself. This gives evidence that she is intrinsically bad, implies that her love is destructive and leaves Blanche in a terrifying world in which her objects (and relations) are dead and dying.

The consequence of such an inner psychic world is unendurable, and so Blanche must attempt restoring sanity to her world, by restoring the loved object she has annihilated. She must repair the loved object. This she does in two most notable ways, firstly through the exercising of sexuality and secondly in her desperate attempts to cling to Belle Reve.

Blanche's rejection of Alan is on sexual grounds. Thus, when this rejection results in his death, it makes sense that she would try to repair him in a specifically sexual way. As the infant seeks to repair the object by proving that the element that supposedly destroyed it (its love) could not have, Blanche must try and prove that her sexual drive

---

<sup>136</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 6.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

is in fact good (this point relates to the Fairbairn interpretation given previously). Because of this it is unsurprising to discover that she has had many “intimacies with strangers”<sup>138</sup>. Blanche repeatedly enters into sexual encounters in an attempt to prove her acceptability and to repair the loved object that she fears she has sexually destroyed.

Blanche feels a compulsion towards shifting to whole object relations, even as the infant does at the crucial juncture between the Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions (since Alan’s death occurred at a point in their relationship which mirrors this conflict). Her seeking reparation, as is the case with the infant’s longing to repair, is an attempt to enter such (mature) object relations and perceive the world in whole object terms (as well as to be perceived in whole object terms). This is suggested in the following statement she makes to Stella, “People don’t see you – men don’t – don’t even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you’ve got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you’re going to have someone’s protection...”<sup>139</sup>.

If the (infant) psyche fails in its attempts to repair the object it will be doomed to a dying object world in which imminent destruction threatens. The latter portion of the above quote (“if you’re going to have someone’s protection...”) suggests that she needs good objects for her protection and so seeks (good) whole-object relations, through reparation, in a specifically sexual way.

Blanche’s seemingly acting as a prostitute in Laurel, as well as her seduction of a seventeen year old boy, serves as ample evidence that she is sexually disturbed (this disturbance is here being described in terms of attempts to repair). Perhaps of all the evidence we are given, the most viscerally confounding is her kiss with the young man who is collecting for the *Evening Star* in scene five. Blanche has thus far been shown as prim and proper. Because of this, the sexual intimacy she shares with this boy who is so obviously a stranger (and young) is extraordinary.

---

<sup>138</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 9.

<sup>139</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 5.

[*She goes close to him*] “You make my mouth water... has anyone ever told you that you look like a young prince out of the Arabian nights?... Well you do honey lamb. Come here! Come on over here like I told you! I want to kiss you – just once – softly and sweetly on your mouth”<sup>140</sup>.

The gesture, though tremendously forward, is still extremely tender. As she says, she merely wants to kiss him “softly and sweetly”<sup>141</sup>. This suggests an attachment and affection she has for him which does not make superficial sense, since she does not even know him. When one considers, however, that for Blanche he is a psychic representation of Alan, it is easy to explain. As she interacts with this young boy, she is again relating to the young boy she married and adored. Hence her kiss is soft and sweet – as she gently wants to repair Alan psychically. It is significant that this occurrence comes immediately before her date with Mitch, whom she wants “...very badly”<sup>142</sup>. She is entering a period in which she wishes to relate in whole object terms (with Mitch). Therefore this attempt to repair the beloved object immediately before the date makes tragic sense.

Sex is not the exclusive manner in which Blanche seeks reparation. She also desperately tries to cling to Belle Reve (indeed her internal ‘beautiful dream’). The fact that she loses it is an obvious cause of extreme distress and guilt for her, as she assumes prematurely that Stella condemns her for it, “Well, Stella – you’re going to reproach me, I know that you’re bound to reproach me... I knew you would, Stella. I knew you would take this attitude about it... You’re a fine one to ask me how it went... You’re a fine one to sit there accusing me of it!”<sup>143</sup>.

It is obvious that Blanche has suffered tremendously in trying to keep Belle Reve. She speaks in such immediate terms of how the place was lost that she almost internalises and personifies its passing. “I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body!”<sup>144</sup>. Not only does this ‘taking of blows to the body’ allude to her sexual misfortune after the

---

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 1.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

loss of her home, but suggests that the loss was internal, as if a significant portion of herself has been lost. This is because Belle Reve is her other significant loved object, and hence her losing it immediately recalls the loss of Alan, placing her at the psychologically precarious state between the Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions.

Consequently, Blanche's desperate need for reparation was logically triggered when she began to lose Belle Reve, and so it is unsurprising to be told that her sexual exploits occurred correspondingly. "I wasn't so good the last two years or so, after Belle Reve had started to slip through my fingers"<sup>145</sup>. Initially she used sexual means in a frantic attempt to ward off the loss of the object. When she had in fact lost it, she miserably began to try to prove that her love (embodied in sex) is in fact not bad. The loss of Belle Reve acts as devastating confirmation to Blanche of her intrinsic 'badness' (or as confirmation of the dirtiness discussed in the previous Fairbairn analysis).

Again Blanche's tragic captivity between civility and sexual impulse (fuelled by anxiety and attempts to repair) has an inevitably tragic consequence. She is perceived as bad and dirty – by others and fearfully by herself. Thus there is a latent aggression and self-loathing when she sarcastically alters the name of the hotel where she entertained her men, "Flamingo? No! Tarantula was the name of it! I stayed at a hotel called The Tarantula Arms... Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims"<sup>146</sup>.

We realise that the bind in which she finds herself is the almost logical consequence of the trauma caused by Alan's passing ("After the death of Alan – intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with..."<sup>147</sup>). Thus, instead of judging Blanche harshly, the sensation the audience/reader of the play experiences is one of pity and desperation towards her situation (such a response perhaps reminiscent of that previously discussed in relation to The Glass Menagerie).

---

<sup>145</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 5.

<sup>146</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 9.

<sup>147</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 9.

Blanche is desperate to repair the loved object so that her world is safe and she can attain a vestige of her lost love. If she fails in this, her life is desperate and miserable. This is shown in her naïve singing from the bath, “Without your love, It’s a honky-tonk parade! Without your love, It’s a melody played in a penny arcade...”<sup>148</sup>. It is thus tragic that we are aware, before she is, that her reparation attempts are doomed to fail. As discussed in the Fairbairn analysis, the sexual manner in which she seeks reparation inevitably provokes the vicious action Stanley takes in raping her.

### ***Conclusion: Kleinian analysis***

With her rape Blanche is tragically given final evidence that her reparation will not be successful. Alan, the loved object, *is* dead. Likewise Belle Reve, *is* dead too. Her sexual attempts at reparation result in disaster. Thus, she is forced to regress back into a state of immature, part-object relations (as an infant who fails at the stage between the Paranoid-Schizoid and the Depressive positions would be). She regresses to a Paranoid-Schizoid like state, and this is the devastatingly crippled situation we find her in the play’s last scene. Here she is insane and can hardly interact with external people at all. This is theatrically linked to Alan’s death due to the stage direction that *[As the DOCTOR comes to get her, (The ‘Varsouviana’ is playing distantly...)]*<sup>149</sup>. She is led out of the flat with this accompanying music, as though being led to an execution. In a sense this does constitute an execution for her, as it signals a life of internal part-object relations in which her good objects are dead because of failed reparation, and in which she is obliged to exist in a splintered Paranoid-Schizoid world of (bad) part-objects and destructive forces.

### **Attenuation of Fairbairn and Klein.**

The two theories used in this analysis are viewed as complementary. Drawing these two object relational perspectives together provides us with a complex and tragic picture of Blanche. Following on the death of Alan she frantically seeks purity (in line with an anti-libidinal ego) and yet is irrevocably drawn back to sexual action

---

<sup>148</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 7.

<sup>149</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 11.

(linked to the libidinal ego). Her sexual activities are simultaneously intended to repair the lost loved object (lost due to sexual forces). Her sexual machinations, motivated for these reasons, inevitably result in Stanley's ultimate rape of her, since he is fundamentally sexually motivated. Following the rape, Blanche is plagued by dirt and the fact that her loved objects have died. Consequently she implodes psychically – seeming to regress back to the Paranoid-Schizoid position in which she relates to part objects, and through psychic splits.

Thus in Blanche's interaction with Eunice in the final scene, she as much as admits that in spite of her appearance and efforts towards civility, ultimately she is unclean and injured.

BLANCHE: "...It's Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures. Are these grapes washed?"

EUNICE: "They're from the French Market"

BLANCHE: "That doesn't mean they've been washed. [*The cathedral bells chime.*] Those cathedral bells – they're the only clean thing in the Quarter..."<sup>150</sup>.

---

<sup>150</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 11.

## *Conclusion*

A Streetcar Named Desire presents a tragic picture of Blanche DuBois, a woman who seems doomed to lose in a struggle between civility and primitivism, purity and sexual longing – and most poignantly of all - between death and desire.

The loss of Alan and the circumstances surrounding this results in Blanche seeking purity, and yet simultaneously being inescapably drawn to sexual impulse. This is exacerbated by the loss of her ancestral home Belle Reve. The conflict between these opposites within Blanche is made almost unbearable by Stanley's raw sexual primitivism and aggression, against which her civility and purity (already internally compromised) cannot expect to triumph. Thus Blanche and Stanley have indeed, "Had this date with each other from the beginning"<sup>151</sup> as Stanley says immediately before violating her.

From an object relational perspective, using theory from Fairbairn and Klein, this analysis has shown how this act inevitably results in her complete psychological collapse. Blanche is left without the purity she desperately clings to following Alan's death, and also with absolute evidence that her reparation attempts towards her lost loved objects are futile. Thus she is left in a world of dead and dying objects, relating through severe psychic splits to a world of part-objects, as though caught in the traumatic Paranoid-Schizoid position of the infant.

---

<sup>151</sup> Williams, T. A Streetcar Named Desire. Scene 10.

### 3.3. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof:

#### “Mendacity... Lying and Liars!”

*[The Broadway version of the play, released months after the original, is used in this analysis. The rationale for this is twofold: Firstly, Williams made corrections at the advice of Elia Kazan, and acknowledged these to be worthwhile. Secondly, the Broadway version continues the character’s development to a degree one may suspect but not accurately predict from the initial version].*

*(Note: A synopsis of the play appears on pages 120 - 121 in the appendix)*

#### ***Introduction***

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is a play whose fundamental concern may be summed up in a single word, ‘mendacity’ – probably the most characteristic word in the play. The Oxford English dictionary defines mendacity as, “The quality of being mendacious (which itself is defined as ‘lying, untruthful or false’)”<sup>152</sup>. In the play, mendacity is defined more simply by Brick – who, sighting it as the source of the disgust for which he drinks, describes it succinctly as “... Lying and Liars”<sup>153</sup>.

It is evident that the great liar, the mendacious person towards whom Brick holds his aggression, is himself. Brick’s life is false. He has become, purposefully, an isolate who refuses to communicate with the world, as he perceives it as destructive and ‘bad’ following his friend Skipper’s death.

The problem of communication between people – or rather lack of communication – is hence also of central importance to the play and is inextricable with the theme of mendacity. This is because lack of communication ultimately produces falseness.

---

<sup>152</sup> Onions, T. [ed] Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.

<sup>153</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 2.

More even than this, such mendacity prompts a continued lack of communication. Hence these two themes, mendacity as well as lack of communication – exist symbiotically in a self-perpetuating, ouroboric cycle.

Tying these themes most notably together in the text is the relationship between Brick and Maggie, the play's central couple. Since the death of Skipper, Brick doubts Maggie's sincerity and perceives her as a bad, destructive object. Gradually as the play proceeds Maggie counteracts this perception of Brick's by being consistently true to her self, and brutally honest with him. The efficiency of this approach stems from the fact that in such honesty the option of (truthful) communication is continually offered Brick, which is a means towards True Self rediscovery.

The following analysis focuses on Brick's object relations, particularly with Maggie, and in relation to his lost loved (ideal) object Skipper. An investigation into the psychological impact of Skipper's death on Brick is given, followed by an explanation of his behaviours towards others in the play. It is concluded that Brick functions as a False Self, intentionally non-communicative, firstly because of the pattern of relating laid down between him and his mother and ultimately because of the psychological trauma and splitting he experiences at the loss of Skipper – his idealised object. Through Maggie's (and Big Daddy's) continual offering of opportunities for truthful communication, as well as her 'aliveness' (True Self-ness) Brick finds a means by which to overcome the False Self structure into which he has temporarily regressed.

#### Brick's relationship with his mother ('Big Mama')

In the play we are fortunate enough to have a clear picture of the relationship that Brick has with his mother. From an object relational perspective the primary caretaker (the mother usually) moulds the psychological templates on which later object relating in life is based. Therefore, even though Big Mama does not play an extremely significant role in the play – it seems apposite that we scrutinise the dynamic existing between her and Brick so that we can come to grips with the intricacies of his character, and can infer some of the motivations for his behaviour.

It is very apparent that Big-Mama dotes on Brick. Towards the end of the play she is almost frantic to get in touch with Brick for solace after discovering that Big Daddy is dying of cancer, “Where’s Brick? Where is my only son?”<sup>154</sup>. This latter quote shows that Big Mama’s preoccupation with her son does, in fact, seem somewhat different to typical maternal instinct by showing that her focus on Brick is, at least, far stronger than her concern for her other child, Gooper.

More startling than her preoccupation with Brick is the fact that Big Mama substitutes her gestures for his, possibly showing herself as a not-good-enough-mother. Winnicott, the progenitor of the concept of False Self (the central concept of this analysis), holds that the mother must mirror her infant, allowing it to discover its authentic self through unaltered experimentation of spontaneity. For instance, if a child cries the mother should facially convey that she knows it is distressed. Such mirroring responses give the child a sense of validation and acceptance, as well as an experience of ‘going on being’ (since their spontaneity is uninterrupted and their existence validated).

However, the mother may substitute her own gestures for the child’s. For instance, a mother who does not want her child to cry may smile and sing, giving the child an interruption to their spontaneous impulse and communicating that this particular experience (whatever it may be) is not acceptable. Rejection of any experience by the mother leads to an association that this particular experience threatens the child’s existence, because he is reliant on the mother for his survival and therefore does not wish to displease her. As a result the child complies with the mother by creating a False Self that is compliant and mother-adapted. This is a construction aimed ostensibly at preserving the potential True Self, by warding off maternal abandonment through compliance. In the split, the psyche ensures that one portion complies with (relates to) the mother, leaving the other able to relate subjectively to the vestiges of the True Self. Winnicott describes this beautifully in saying, “...the facilitation has failed in some respect and in some degree, and in the matter of object-relating the infant has developed a split. By one half of the split the infant relates to the presenting object, and for this purpose there develops what I call a false or compliant self. By the

---

<sup>154</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 3

other half of the split the infant relates to subjective objects, or to mere phenomena based on body experiences, these being scarcely influenced by an objectively perceived world...”<sup>155</sup>.

We are given several clues suggesting that Big Mama expects compliance of Brick and treats him in an infantile manner. If this is the case, it presents the possibility that Brick may be predisposed to a defensive False Self. For instance, she often refers to Brick as ‘baby’, as seen in the examples “Here he is, here’s my precious baby!”<sup>156</sup> and “OH! Here’s Brick! My precious baby...”<sup>157</sup>.

Significantly her interactions with Brick are compliance seeking. She makes demands of Brick that border on psychological impingement when she insists on coming into the room while he dresses. Though Maggie objects to this familiarity, Big Mama dismisses her concerns by simply saying, “That’s all right, it won’t be the first time I’ve seen Brick not dressed”<sup>158</sup>. The absurdity of this comment is self-evident. This liberty may be acceptable if Brick were an infantile son, but is sexually invasive considering his adulthood. She as much as states that she is an invasive parent by saying “I hate locked doors in a house”<sup>159</sup>, and refuting Maggie in the following exchange:

MAGGIE: “...people have got to have some moments of privacy, don’t they?”

BIG MAMA: “No ma’am, not in my house”<sup>160</sup>.

Such invasiveness and maternal substitution makes it highly possible that Brick could be prone to being a False Self, since the groundwork for this could have been laid down in his interactions with his mother. However, Big Mama does have the redeeming quality of honesty and genuineness

---

<sup>155</sup> Winnicott, D. In One’s Bones. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

<sup>156</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 2.

<sup>157</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 3.

<sup>158</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

as Williams points out in his character sketch (which describes her as ‘*very sincere*’<sup>161</sup>). Her desiring an open house, and lack of secrets also offer Brick the opportunity to be somewhat spontaneous. Therefore Brick would not definitely be a False Self. Rather, the play suggests, his regression to his false (mendacious) self is brought about by Skipper’s traumatic death. It is therefore essential to discuss Skipper’s role in Brick’s life and the implication of his death.

### Brick’s relationship with Skipper

Brick’s relationship with Skipper is thoroughly idealised. There are enumerable quotes throughout the play supporting this, including Maggie saying “You two had something that had to be kept on ice, yes, incorruptible, yes! – and death was the only icebox where you could keep it...”<sup>162</sup> and Brick’s comment that “Skipper and me had a clean friendship... It was too rare to be normal, any true thing between two people is too rare to be normal... It was a pure and true thing”<sup>163</sup>.

It is apparent that Skipper functions as an ideal object for Brick. It is important to note that idealised objects are created defensively. In infancy one creates the ideal, omnipotent, inexhaustible breast as a means of defending against the anxiety of destruction.

This must be considered in the light of the relationship Brick shares with his mother. As already discussed, in many ways Big Mama is a not-good-enough-mother. This often prompts the infant to comply with the mother, disowning ‘unacceptable’ self-elements to avoid maternal disapproval and abandonment. It seems that Brick, rather than immediately falling back on a False Self-structure, initially opts for the creation of an ideal breast. In later life this defence attaches itself concretely to an external object, namely Skipper (Brick does invariably lead a false life to at least some degree, yet it is closer to a True Self because of the protection provided by the idealised object).

---

<sup>161</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 2.

Taken in this context, Skipper's death is disastrous to Brick psychologically. Not only does it mean the physical destruction of the ideal object, but it also means the death of the ideal phantasy because of the way in which Skipper died. Skipper having committed suicide after sleeping with Maggie, represents not only sexual betrayal (possibly on two levels) but in its essence negated Brick's phantastic delusion of him as ideal. Consequently, Brick is left without the defensive mechanism he has utilised. He now needs to find another defence psychologically. Due to his infant development, he is left with little option but to choose a defensive False Self structure. The nature of idealising implies an extreme split into good and bad. With the death of the ideal object, the psyche is left with nothing but bad (persecutory) objects, thus the urgency for Brick to adopt the False Self-defence and the extreme degree of withdrawal accompanying it is obvious.

The False Self-structure, that Brick adopts, is purposefully non-communicative. He withdraws into himself regressively, shutting out the world that he perceives to be filled with (bad) objects. Brick is left separated from his spontaneous, life-giving core. Consequently his interactions and communications feel unreal. He is now not a True Self, but rather is a False Self. "...communication with the world as occurs from the False Self does not feel real... because it does not involve the core of the self, that which could be called the True Self"<sup>164</sup>. This explains not only his preoccupation with mendacity but also his statement that he has lied to himself, "I've lied to nobody, nobody but myself, just lied to myself"<sup>165</sup>.

Due to the death of Skipper, he regresses and becomes introverted in an attempt to reconnect, in silence, with his inner core. As Winnicott quotes Michael Fordham, "The over-all fact remains that the primordial experience occurs in solitude"<sup>166</sup>. Winnicott expands on this point arguing that in the purposeful non-communication of silence and solitude, the individual may come close to attaining the True Self. Hence Brick's withdrawal may be seen as an attempt to reclaim the True Self.

---

<sup>164</sup> Winnicott, D. *In One's Bones*. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

<sup>165</sup> Williams, T. *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*. Act 3.

<sup>166</sup> Winnicott: Winnicott, D. *In One's Bones*. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

This may refer to the ‘click’ that Brick desperately drinks to find. In it he finds silence, and in silence is the potential for a return to authenticity and self-connectedness. This is evident in the following two phrases, “You know what I like to hear most? ... Solid quiet. Perfect unbroken quiet... Because it’s more peaceful”<sup>167</sup> and also “I gotta drink till I get it. It’s just a mechanical thing, something like a... switch clicking off in my head, turning the hot light off and the cool night on and – all of a sudden there’s peace”<sup>168</sup>.

Ironically, therefore, the following interplay between Big Daddy and Brick may not be quite as sarcastic and absurd as it seems.

BIG DADDY: “Then why don’t you kill yourself man?”

BRICK: “Cos I like to drink”<sup>169</sup>.

Since Brick has the capacity, albeit assisted by alcohol, to find some degree of peace and self-truth, drinking may indeed constitute a reason for him to live, as its accompanying silence offers possible access into True Self-ness. This is, however, a very shallow motivation that happens to have the (limited) capacity of aiding Brick in finding his self once more. There is a healthier means by which Brick has the possibility of attaining his True Self again, and that is simply through honest and open communication – which Maggie offers him.

#### Brick’s relationship with Maggie

Almost as soon as the play opens we are introduced to the obviously strained relationship between Maggie and Brick. Maggie almost throws herself at Brick, desperate to elicit a response from him. Brick, however, is utterly distant from her, usually communicating in brief unemotional sentences and sometimes not at all. His lack of communication has been explained as a psychologically defensive retreat into a False Self, created to protect the vestiges of a True Self hidden within it.

---

<sup>167</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

We are told that Brick and Maggie are extremely physically attractive. Big Daddy's attention to Maggie gives testimony to her attractiveness, and she also proudly challenges Brick in saying, "... (Men) still see me, Brick, and they like what they see. Uh-huh, Some of them would give their – Look Brick! [*She stands before the long oval mirror, touches her breast and then her hips with her two hands*] How high my body stays on me! – Nothing has fallen on me – not a fraction..."<sup>170</sup>. The fact that Brick is still very good looking is implied by many comments that Maggie makes, such as, "I always thought drinking men lost their looks, but I was plainly mistaken"<sup>171</sup>.

Yet, the young couple have no sex life anymore. The extreme degree of physical attractiveness that they are both portrayed to have, in stark opposition to their not sleeping together, acts as a driving force in the play. Maggie explains that the reason she cannot endure either sleeping with someone else or not sleeping with Brick is because of how attractive he is:

MAGGIE: "I feel all the time like a cat on a hot tin roof!"

BRICK: "Then jump off the roof... Take a lover!"

MAGGIE: "I can't see a man but you... Why don't you get ugly, Brick... so I could stand it?"<sup>172</sup>

The fact that the play bears the title of this first line demonstrates the significance of the sexual denial within the play. The fundamental dynamic between the two – and Brick's main weapon of manipulation against Maggie – is his withholding sex from her, almost like a greedy child.

The extreme success of this manipulation (or torture) is seen in Maggie's statement, "You know, if I thought you would never, never, never make love to me again – I would go downstairs and pick out the longest and sharpest knife I could find and stick it straight into my heart..."<sup>173</sup>.

---

<sup>170</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

At first we are left wondering how the couple have reached such a level of communicative and physical estrangement. Allusions are made to the cause of this rift and it soon becomes apparent that an unusual event caused an immediate halt in their intimacies, “You know, our sex life didn’t just peter out in the usual way, it was cut off short, long before the natural time for it to”<sup>174</sup>.

It is only later in the play that it becomes evident that Brick has rejected Maggie (and the world) so completely because of the death of his best friend and idealised object – Skipper. Many commentators (e.g. Adler and Jackson<sup>175</sup>) argue that the relationship between Skipper and Brick was a homosexual one, and that Brick is very possibly homosexual. This theory is often argued as it explains Brick’s utter sexual rejection of Maggie after the event of Skipper death.

The play intentionally leaves this question open, but also offers information that makes this simple conclusion problematic. For instance Maggie’s reference to Brick’s complete sexual ease with her seems to imply a heterosexual comfort (and therefore inclination), “You were a wonderful lover...and I think mostly because you were really indifferent to it... Never had any anxiety about it, did it naturally, easily, slowly, with absolute confidence and perfect calm, more like opening a door for a lady or seating her at a table than giving any expression to any longing for her. Your indifference made you wonderful at lovemaking...”<sup>176</sup>.

From an object relational perspective, thinking of Brick as homosexual is not necessary to explain his sexual rejection of Maggie. The nature of Skipper’s death, and his role in Brick’s life, explains Brick’s absolute abjuration of Maggie on at least three levels:

Firstly, Brick rejects Maggie because he perceives her as a bad object. This is the same manner in which he rejects the entire world following Skipper’s death, since he

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Jackson, E.M. The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. Madison & Milwaukee: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1965.

<sup>176</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

is left without the defence of the ideal object and only has bad (part)objects internally with which to relate to the external world.

Secondly, Brick rejects Maggie because she seems to have played an active part in the death of Skipper. Her envy and greed towards Skipper (for his relationship with Brick) led to her seduction of him which, we are encouraged to believe, led to his suicide. From a Kleinian perspective, envy and greed are possibly the most prevalent of the infant's destructive forces<sup>177</sup>. The infant fears that it can destroy the good breast through greed, by devouring it. The illusory omnipotent / ideal breast is inexhaustible and therefore phantastically immune to this, a further motivation for it being employed as a defensive mechanism. Therefore the greed that Maggie visited upon Skipper should, phantastically, not have been able to destroy him, yet it did. For Brick, confusion and guilt would accompany such an event - as it should not, in his inner phantasy world, be possible at all.

(Also, Brick's intentional withhold of sex from Maggie approximates the greed and aggression that he perceives has destroyed the beloved object. Therefore his punishment not only serves the purpose of punishing her, but also of giving him a means to expel the guilt he wishes to be rid of)

Thirdly, Brick rejects Maggie on a sexual basis because the means by which she destroyed Skipper, the ideal object, was sex. Since the infant's aggressive impulses are libidinal (and often sexual) the accompanying anxiety and guilt Brick has surrounding the sexual destruction of the ideal object understandably precludes him being sexually intimate, most especially with Maggie.

However, there still remain unconscious connections between Brick and Maggie. For instance, on a metacommunicative level Maggie and Brick approximate having sex. Several of the interplays between them are playful or even sexual in tone. For instance the stage directions appearing in the middle of Act II instruct Brick to grin while fighting with Maggie, expressing a certain degree of good feeling between them, [*He breaks away from her and seizes the small boudoir chair and raises it like a lion-*

---

<sup>177</sup> Klein, M. *Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963*. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 (b).

*tamer facing a big circus cat... She stares at him her fist pressed to her mouth, then bursts into a shrill, almost hysterical laughter. He remains grave for a moment, then grins (my emphasis) and puts the chair down...]*<sup>178</sup>.

Before this the two mettacommunicatively enter into a fight that approximates sex, *[they are both speaking as breathlessly as a pair of kids... drawing deep exhausted breaths and looking at each other with faraway eyes, shaking and panting together...]*<sup>179</sup>.

The fact that Brick is not entirely disconnected from Maggie is also very apparent because his non-communication with her is very purposeful. This would not be necessary if he was functioning with her as a purely subjective inner (part)object. Winnicott says, “Insofar as the object is subjective, so far is it unnecessary for communication with it to be explicit. Insofar as the object is objectively perceived, communication is either explicit or else dumb”<sup>180</sup>.

Even Brick’s hatred of Maggie (because of the events surrounding Skippers death) offers evidence of a strong psychological attachment between them. “Adaptation failures have value insofar as the infant can hate the object, that is to say, can retain the idea of the object as potentially satisfying while recognising its ability to behave satisfactorily”<sup>181</sup>. The fact that he hates, rather than disregards or decaffects Maggie provides evidence that he acknowledges, on some level, that she is an object of potential satisfaction, although this is presently unfulfilled in their relationship.

It seems that there exists, albeit on an unconscious level, a good will and (partially) True Self relationship between the two – as well as sublimated sexual desire. It is Brick’s psychological assumptions that keep them apart. The assumptions Brick makes regarding Maggie are based on his inner psychic processes, especially his idealisation of his relationship with Skipper. These processes are not reality based however, and are therefore up for psychological re-incorporation and alteration. It is through Maggie’s consistent honesty and aliveness (True Self-ness) that she offers

---

<sup>178</sup> Williams, T. *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*. Act 1.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Winnicott, D. *In One’s Bones*. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

<sup>181</sup> Winnicott, D. *In One’s Bones*. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

Brick an alternative which he does eventually introject as a substitute for his previous inner perceptions, namely the alternative of objectivity through honesty and communication.

Maggie constantly fights for the truth to be told so that healing can occur, "...not facing a fire doesn't put it out. Silence about a thing just magnifies it. It grows and festers in silence, becomes malignant..."<sup>182</sup>. The most important truth Maggie wishes to explicate regards her sleeping with Skipper, and his consequent death. She insists on this because she knows that it is around this that Brick's own mendacity (False Self) has been formed. She argues repeatedly to speak about this subject, for instance when she says, "...it's got to be told and you, you! – you never let me!"<sup>183</sup>.

Maggie's famous retort, "I'm Alive!... Maggie the Cat is - alive!"<sup>184</sup> may be interpreted to mean that she is a True Self. Such an interpretation gains weight when it is considered that in the same interplay she also yells, "I'm honest! Give me credit for just that, will you please!"<sup>185</sup>. Likewise, Maggie is spontaneous and filled with energy – which is symptomatic of her being a True Self.

This interpretation offers an explanation for Big Daddy's and Brick's seemingly unusual support of her lie that she is pregnant at the end of the play.

MAGGIE: "A child is coming, sired by Brick, and out of Maggie the Cat! I have Brick's child in my body..."

BIG DADDY: "...Uh huh, this girl has life in her body, that's no lie!"...

BRICK: "...You heard what Big Daddy said. This girl has life in her body".

MAE: "That is a lie!"

BRICK: "No, truth is something desperate, an she's got it. Believe me, it's somethin' desperate an' she's got it"<sup>186</sup>.

---

<sup>182</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 1.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 3.

This follows a lengthy discussion of the hatefulness of mendacity, yet they support her lie (that Big Daddy would surely suspect to be a lie and Brick would know to be one). This may be because they acknowledge real mendacity to be a kind of False Self living. What they are acknowledging in Maggie is her True Self, evidenced by her spontaneity (that Brick labels her ‘desperation’).

It is towards the end of the play that Brick becomes receptive to Maggie, and at which point he can possibly discover or ‘create’ her as the object that she is. “...in health the object is created, not found... A good object is no good to the infant unless created by the infant... created out of a need...the object must be found in order to be an intermediate stage in healthy development”<sup>187</sup>.

The term ‘create’ means that not only does he find her, but that this discovery fits into a pre-existent need he has, enabling her to adhere psychically to this need as an object serving a function. Prior to his honest interplay with Big Daddy, and Maggie’s constant honesty with him, he needed (defensively) to be a False Self. Because of this, neither Maggie nor anyone else could serve any honest role for him initially. Thus, he could not create (and cathect) any good object until the intervention of honesty and communication facilitated his growth.

However, as the objective truth of his situation is given to him from the two parties of Maggie and Big Daddy, Brick slowly perceives his situation with objectivity. This counteracts the effects of the genesis of his False Self (the split into good and bad which occurred with Skipper’s death).

Brick’s rejection of Maggie until this point has therefore, paradoxically, been valuable. As Winnicott says, “there is an intermediate stage in healthy development in which the (patient’s) most useful experience in relation to the good or potentially satisfying object is the refusal of it. The refusal of it is part of the process of creating it”<sup>188</sup>. Brick’s refusal of Maggie has been necessary. He has needed to come to a point at which he is sufficiently integrated to find and thereafter ‘create’ her as a full object.

---

<sup>187</sup> Winnicott, D. *In One’s Bones*. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*.

His deliberate denial of her (which also implies an acknowledgement of the potentially satisfying, though as yet unsatisfying nature of her as an object) was therefore a preparatory process – ultimately leading to his integration.

Brick's final integration is signalled at the very end of the play by several statements and actions he makes. For instance, his command to Mae is particularly striking, "An' now if you will stop actin' as if Brick Politt was dead and buried, invisible, not heard, an' go back to your peep-hole in the wall – I'm drunk, and sleepy – not as alive as Maggie, but still alive..."<sup>189</sup>.

If one accepts the interpretation that 'aliveness' means True Self-ness, this constitutes a statement from Brick that he is regaining his True Self, albeit new and cloudy. Ultimately his admiration and implied sexual acceptance of Maggie, signals that he has indeed undergone a metanoia, and a psychological integration which will allow him to begin a True Self existence, rather than a False Self existence of 'mendacity'.

---

<sup>189</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 3

## *Conclusion*

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof deals ostensibly with themes of falsehood (mendacity) as well as failure in communication. From an object relational point of view the play, and these central themes, can most meaningfully be interpreted through the use of Donald Winnicott's concept of False Self.

Brick, as a result of his rearing by a caring, but overwhelming and gesture-substitutive mother finds himself predisposed to utilise the defensive mechanism of False Self. However, instead of this he initially opts for the defence of creating an ideal object – an inner object he identifies with his friend Skipper. Following Skipper's death, Brick undergoes a psychological split in which he perceives the world as ostensibly filled with bad objects. Robbed of his previously used defence (the ideal breast), he becomes a False Self, being predisposed maternally to utilise this defence.

Brick rejects Maggie especially, since she is partially responsible for the death of the ideal object. However, through her True Self-ness and continued honesty, as well as that offered by Big Daddy, Brick is offered an opportunity to move from subjective False Self object relating, to objective and communicative True Self relating. Once he does so, a corresponding reacceptance (in fact a phantastic creation) of Maggie occurs, and an integration of his previous split is achieved.

### 3.4. The Night of the Iguana: “Regression to ...The Infantile Protest!”

*(Note: A synopsis of the play appears on pages 122 -125 in the appendix)*

#### ***Introduction***

The Night Of The Iguana is significant amongst Williams' work. Following his massive critical acclaim throughout the 1940's and 1950's, Williams' work became less well received. The play in question was different in this regard. Released in 1961 it was positively received both critically and popularly. The play delves deeply within the contours of the human mind, particularly within the neurosis of the main character, the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon.

Shannon is obviously desperately internally tormented. After his seduction of a young parishioner he gives up his life as a Reverend and begins working as a tour guide in Mexico. He seems sexually disturbed, seducing someone (usually a very young girl) on virtually every tour he conducts. In the play we learn that the latest of these seductions is a choirgirl named Charlotte. Following this seduction Shannon rejects her, and we are led to believe that this is his common *modus operandi*.

Shannon is caught between the lasciviously attentive Maxine Faulk and Hannah Jelkes, a stranger of saintly character. Maxine is an old friend of Shannon's and the owner of the Costa Verde – the hotel in which Shannon takes refuge and in which the action of the play takes place. She is irrepressibly sexual and flirtatious towards Shannon. Considering the extent to which his sexual impulses have harmed him already, Maxine poses a potentially aggravating threat to his psychological well-being. Hannah occupies completely the other end of the psychic spectrum for Shannon. She is fiercely principled, sexually avoidant and deeply concerned for him as a fellow human being.

As he has before, Shannon has found himself at the Costa Verde in danger of psychological collapse. His interaction with Hannah is of greatest importance in the play. Through it, he seems to overcome many of his demons and moves toward a more mature mode of relating to others and toward himself.

From an object relational perspective Shannon's difficulties can be traced back to interactions he had with his mother. Specifically, we are told about a shocking event in his early childhood where his mother admonished him for masturbating. She did so not only on personal grounds, but also by telling Shannon that God Himself disapproves of such action.

Following on such a sexual rejection (and repression), Shannon's psyche would inevitably have been subject to a split - in relation to which he would be obliged to relate. From Fairbairn's perspective, this split would have seen certain object representations attached to an (rejecting) anti-libidinal ego as well as a (needy) libidinal ego. From Klein's perspective, this would have been simply into good and bad. This seems to be evident in the text, as Shannon relates to women and (most especially) to God in extreme, split terms. This is most evident in his split of his conception of God, in which he sees God as vastly powerful or magical, or alternatively as a senile and petulant old man.

Indeed, Shannon's 'either-or' manner of relation is so severe that it suggests borderline personality disorder. His degree of split is so extreme that his relations are immature, part-object and borderline in nature. This relational approach has been exacerbated by his seduction of a Sunday school teacher and the inevitable judgement that has emanated from his congregation thereafter.

Shannon desperately seeks the good (the awe inspiring God of nature) in an attempt to defend against the persecutory bad (the petulant, wrathful God he believes his congregants to worship). Indeed, his anxiety of persecution in relation to this split is so severe that he seeks an omnipotent object relationship (idealised breast relationship) towards God as a defence against it.

Because of these defences, set up in relation to a split caused by sexual persecution and associated guilt, Shannon is predisposed to regression into the Paranoid-Schizoid position (and therein is inclined to part-object relations and borderline behaviour). In

other words, Shannon is prone to the “regression to... the infantile protest”<sup>190</sup> for which this chapter is named.

Hannah presents an extraordinarily therapeutic figure for him. She has not his sense of sexual guilt or dirt, and so offers him an entirely different possibility for relating. Through her empathising with him, she offers him the form of ‘belief’ that answers her personal ‘need for meaning’ (which she identifies as his central problem). She shows him that in communication - and caring (whole object) relations towards other people, one can perhaps obtain some meaning in a world that may otherwise be the desperately lonely and scary place he fears. Likewise, she points out that there is good and bad in everything, and that his dichotomisation of these (complimentary) principles is a fallacy.

Through this, Shannon is given the opportunity to shift from his immature (part-object) relation towards mature whole object relations, and also from a borderline-like (Paranoid-Schizoid) mode of being, to a healthy mature relation (suggesting Depressive position relating).

The following analysis of the play uses elements from Klein’s and (to a lesser degree) Fairbairn’s theory. It examines the nature of the split Shannon would have experienced following his maternal sexual persecution, and explains how this would have led to his specific relational difficulties.

#### Maternal Persecution (Of Sexual Impulse)

Maxine Faulk extraordinarily insightfully identifies the genesis of Shannon’s psychological crisis. Recalling a conversation she heard Shannon having with her late husband Fred, she says: “You told him that Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you was ready to sleep – so you practiced the little boy’s vice, you amused yourself with yourself. And once she caught you at it and whaled your backside with the backside of a hairbrush because she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama, and she had to punish you for it so God

---

<sup>190</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

wouldn't punish you harder than she would... You said you loved God and Mama and so you quit to please them, but it was your secret pleasure and you harboured a secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls"<sup>191</sup>.

This event would undoubtedly have had a profound effect on a young boy. Maxine's lay-analysis of the repercussions of this is admirably perspicacious. Following on the assault of his sexual impulse by his personal good objects (his mother and God, since she included her persecution of him on religious grounds. The fact that these are personal good objects for Shannon is suggested in the statement, "You said you loved God and Mama") Shannon would split this experience.

From a Fairbairn approach this split would have seen object representations corresponding either to an anti-libidinal ego (if they were rejecting in nature) or to a libidinal ego (if exciting). Therefore, Shannon would have strongly repressed sex (as per the anti-libidinal ego's action) but still found that he had a need for it (as per the libidinal ego's action). The constant assault against his sexual urges would lead to a sense of frustration. Since these impulses were stopped by his mother and inferentially by God, resentment would develop towards his mother and God (as internal objects) for the deprivation they are inflicting on Shannon. Thus they too would be defensively internalised and attached (as rejecting objects) to the suppressive anti-libidinal ego, and (as exciting objects) to the needy libidinal ego. He would correspondingly find women and God either: a source of guilt and persecution or exciting and permanently appealing (in spite of aggressive repression dissuading this).

From a Kleinian perspective this split is similar but simpler. Angry with God and women (his mother) for denying his sexual impulse, Shannon splits his images of God and women into good and bad. He thus relates to women and God in either a compulsively adoring way or as bad and persecutory.

---

<sup>191</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

### Development of borderline-personality-disorder type symptoms

Shannon develops many characteristics of borderline personality disorder. In describing such pathology from a Kleinian perspective, Scharff says, "The basic cause of these developments [severe object fragmentation] in borderline patients is their failure to integrate the libidinally and aggressively determined self and object images"<sup>192</sup>. This indeed seems to be Shannon's core problem. He is unable to reconcile his neediness (of sex especially) with the aggressive repression of this neediness (exerted by his anti-libidinal ego). The two stand diametrically opposed to one another, seemingly irreconcilable. Hence, he must relate in either-or terms (in a borderline manner).

Shannon's statements through the play evidence such polarised functioning. When displeased with Mrs Fellowes, he somewhat theatrically declares her to be "...the leader of the insurrection"<sup>193</sup>. He has also stated that this particular tour has been, "Absolutely the worst party I've ever been out with in ten years of conducting tours"<sup>194</sup>. Though Mrs Fellowes seems difficult, considering that Shannon has seduced a sixteen year old in the group, the party does not seem unusually vicious towards him. Likewise when he meets Hannah, he is inclined to see her in purely good terms, "You are a lady, a real one and a great one"<sup>195</sup>. His effusive response to her giving him one of her last cigarettes is also quite extreme and overdone suggesting once more a borderline manner of operating. He vaunts his own virtue (ludicrously regarding how poorly he has treated the tour group), "...those ladies... have had... the advantage of... social contact, with a gentleman born and bred, whom under no other circumstances they could have possibly met..."<sup>196</sup>.

When he asks the question "Are you friend or foe?"<sup>197</sup>, we are given a glimpse into the extreme world of either-ors in which he lives, in which someone can only be a friend or a foe - and nothing between. As Hannah keenly apprehends, "That word 'fantastic' seems to be your favourite word, Mr Shannon"<sup>198</sup>, again pointing to his proclivity

---

<sup>192</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

<sup>193</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 1.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 2.

<sup>196</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 2.

toward relational extremity (in relation to the split set up by the psychic rift caused by his mother, and inferentially God, sexually persecuting him).

#### Aggravation of Shannon's Split: Seduction of the Sunday School Teacher

This borderline relational template is compounded by his seduction of the Sunday school teacher. At this particular point, his split towards women would probably be more severe than that towards God, because his mother had directly chastised him - and God's disapproval was only suggested. The obvious guilt he experiences following his succumbing to his sexual neediness, as well as his hateful split towards women, is apparent in his slapping the teacher he has seduced, and his calling her "a damned little tramp"<sup>199</sup> (herein attempting to disown his own sexual responsibility and phantastically deposit it within her).

Following this event, his congregation judge him (at least he believes so), confirming for him his split in relation to God (which holds God to be persecutory and disapproving of him sexually). This then becomes even more severe than his split towards women. He reacts angrily, with his fierce sermon denouncing the typical western conception of God: "So the next Sunday when I climbed into the pulpit, and looked down over all of those smug, disapproving, accusing faces uplifted, I had an impulse to shake them – so I shook them. I had a prepared sermon – meek, apologetic – I threw it away, tossed it into the chancel. Look here, I said, I shouted, I'm tired of conducting services in praise and worship of a senile delinquent...I shouted! All your Western theologies, the whole mythology of them, are based on the conception of God as a senile delinquent, by God, I will not and cannot continue to conduct services in praise and worship of this... angry, petulant old man..."<sup>200</sup>.

He deserts the church because his conception of God, previously a loved object perceived as 'good', has been split and established as 'bad'. The notion of a persecutory God is terrifying, resembling the infant's persecutory anxiety in the Paranoid-Schizoid position as it attempts to manage the ferocity of the death drive - and so Shannon must somehow defend against it. Within the text he does this by either seeking reparation of

---

<sup>199</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 2.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

his old conception of God, or by creating an idealised, omnipotent view of God to which he can relate. By his own admission it is for this latter end that he has become a tour guide (“I entered my present line... to prove it. Collecting evidence”<sup>201</sup>). These two defences against divine persecution, reparation and idealisation, will be discussed separately.

### Divine Reparation Attempts

Shannon tries, at several times during the play, to repair his original relationship with God. It is as if he is avoiding the difficulties he has experienced within his church, and is simply prepared to go back. A very notable instance of this is found in the very beginning of Act III where he has been writing a letter of apology to the Dean of his Divinity School. (“I’m writing a very important letter... (to) The Dean of Divinity School at Sewanee”<sup>202</sup>).

Perhaps his most extreme reparation attempt is his dressing in his old clerical garb after Miss Fellowes has accused him of being a defrocked minister (which, even if not semantically correct, is so near the truth as to make his exception towards it appear reactionary).

*[SHANNON comes out of his cubicle, like the survivor of a plane crash, bringing out with him several pieces of his clerical garb]...*

SHANNON: Because I’ve been accused of being defrocked and of lying about it... I want to show the ladies that I’m still a clocked – frocked! – minister of the...

HANNAH: Isn’t that lovely gold cross enough to convince the ladies?

SHANNON: No; they know I redeemed it from a Mexico City pawnshop...”<sup>203</sup>.

Likewise his redeeming his gold cross “from a Mexico City pawnshop...” shows a certain degree of wanting to repair his previous relationship towards God. However, the degree of his psyche’s split makes the success of such simple reparation attempts unlikely to succeed. Therefore, his defence of choice is idealisation of God, evidence of

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>203</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 2.

which is so ample throughout the play that it could arguably be called of central concern to the work. This will be discussed in greater depth.

### Establishment Of An Idealised Object Relationship Towards God

Shannon creates an image of God in stark contrast to the concept he is denying (of God as a senile and petulant old man). This is similar to the infantile defence of establishing an omnipotent, inexhaustible breast as a defence against the persecutory anxiety that is confirmed in bad breast experiences within the Paranoid-Schizoid position. By implication his choosing this defence keeps him in a primitive mode of (part) object relating reminiscent of infantile Paranoid-Schizoid relating.

His view of God is almost pagan. He finds God embodied within the raw force of nature. He constantly seeks tangible evidence of God in this form, revelling in the natural explosiveness (which seems to embody 'God') in the storm that ends Act II.

HANNAH: "...Here is your God, Mr Shannon"

SHANNON [*QUIETLY*]: "Yes, I see Him, I hear Him, I know Him. And if He doesn't know that I know Him, let Him strike me dead with a bolt of His lightning"<sup>204</sup>.

His response to this God (this storm) is ritualistic and redemptive in tone. He performs what seems a pagan baptism on himself at one stage, by bathing his head in the rainwater. Immediately after this, he seems to receive an almost transcendent divine approval in the form of a shaft of light. [*... he cups them to catch the water in his palms and bathes his forehead with it... the electric globe suspended from the roof goes out, the power extinguished by the storm. A clear shaft of light stays on Shannon's reaching out hands till the stage curtain has fallen, slowly*]<sup>205</sup>. This image strongly suggests Christ's baptism, "As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and

---

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 2.

lightning on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’”<sup>206</sup>.

We can see that Shannon’s maintaining an image of God as naturally powerful offers him a means of retaining God as a good object psychologically, and warding off his anxieties of Him as persecutory and vengeful. Likewise it serves a redemptive function - implying that, like Christ, Shannon has approval from God, allowing him to overcome his chronic sense of guilt and sexual dirtiness.

### Shannon’s Functioning in (and Predisposition to Regression into) the Paranoid-Schizoid Position

As said previously, this defence suggests that Shannon is either locked within the Paranoid-Schizoid position, or is predisposed to regressing into it. This contention receives confirmation in the play. As the infant in the Paranoid-Schizoid position, Shannon is terrified of persecution. He is constantly plagued by his ‘spook’ and his ubiquitous fear is evident when he says, “A man can die of panic”<sup>207</sup>.

The constant attendance of this ‘spook’ is apparent in an exchange between Shannon and Maxine

MAXINE: “Aw, the spook... you’ve got the spook with you again”,  
SHANNON: “... he’s the only passenger that got off the bus with me honey”<sup>208</sup>.

Nonno’s poem likewise offers an insight into Shannon’s plight:

“I have a little shadow  
That goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him  
Is more than I can see.  
He’s very, very like me, From his heels up to his head,  
And he always hops before me  
When I hop into my bed”<sup>209</sup>.

Shannon replies to this, “That’s the truth. He sure hops into bed with me”<sup>210</sup>. This again highlights the sexual nature of his ever-present guilt and fear of persecution. In

---

<sup>206</sup> Matthew 3: 14. In Barker, K.[ed] The NIV Study Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1985.

<sup>207</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>208</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 1.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

this regard, Maxine offers a compellingly difficult figure for him, as she wishes to satisfy him sexually. She embodies a self-indulgent sexuality, obviously interpreting her relationships sexually and disregarding her husband Fred's death casually by explaining, "Fred was an old man, baby. Ten years older'n me. We hadn't had sex together in..."<sup>211</sup>.

Such overt sexuality seems to be both intimidating and appealing for Shannon who, because of his split towards women, is doubtless fearful that this seemingly exciting sexual component in Maxine may be in some way dangerous, "I loved old Fred, but I don't want to fill his shoes, honey"<sup>212</sup>.

Not only does Shannon have constant anxieties of persecution, like the infant in the Paranoid-Schizoid position, but also like the infant so situated, he relates to people as part-objects as his immediate experience of them dictates. He almost deifies Hannah at times (for example calling her, "Miss... Thin-Standing-Up-Female-Buddha"<sup>213</sup>) during times that satisfy him and yet interprets her as aggressive the instant she dissatisfies him. "Why have you turned against me... when I need you the most? ...I thought you were sexless, but you've suddenly turned into a woman"<sup>214</sup>. This quote also suggests his part-object relating to her, since he has failed to acknowledge her femaleness except when it corresponds to his inner object representation of women (as cruel and binding).

His aggressive, pseudo-defensive impulses also offer evidence that he relationally operates from this primitive, infantile developmental position. His arguments with Miss Fellows are childish and defensive, culminating in his puerile act of urinating on the tour group's luggage, [*...he pisses on the ladies' luggage.*]<sup>215</sup>. Such an act is explicitly one of anal-urethro aggression in the infant. This is typically directed at the mother as a means of externalising destructive impulses linked to the death drive. Shannon's action suggests a primitive, infantile defence against these women (whom he narcissistically perceives as unjustly persecuting him, though their persecution seems very justified)

---

<sup>210</sup> Williams, T. *The Night Of The Iguana*. Act 1.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Williams, T. *The Night Of The Iguana*. Act 3.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

and offers further evidence that he operates in a fractured way from the Paranoid-Schizoid position.

Shannon's problems are therefore complex and deep. He is plagued by sexual guilt and dirtiness, lives in a splintered and fractured Paranoid-Schizoid world and functions correspondingly in a borderline manner. It is through Hannah's intervention that this begins to change.

#### Hannah's effect on Shannon

Hannah is immediately portrayed as being saintly and extraordinary, [*... HANNAH is remarkable-looking – ethereal, almost ghostly. She suggests a Gothic cathedral image of a medieval saint, but animated...She is totally feminine and yet androgynous-looking – almost timeless.*] <sup>216</sup>. From such an astonishing description it is suggested that Hannah will play an unusual and presumably significant - role in the play. Since she is described largely in spiritual terms, it may also be inferred that she will in some way aid Shannon in his religious (and personal) turmoil. This proves to be the case.

Of primary importance to Hannah's effect on Shannon is that she is sexually unashamed and seemingly pure, in stark contradiction to him. She has only had two sexual intimacies – both of which are so sedate that even calling them sexual is unusual. The first of these occurred in a cinema where an amorous seeming young man sat next to Hannah and pressed his knee against hers. She thereafter moved two seats away, and he followed and continued his affectionate gestures. She screamed and the man was arrested for molesting a minor (Hannah later got him out of jail).

That Hannah would even cite this (adolescent-type incident) as an example of a sexual encounter is extraordinary. Her second encounter is somewhat more sexual, but in an unusual way involves her in even less of a physical way. She recounts that on a trip she and her grandfather Nonno undertook to Singapore she went out on a sampan with an Australian salesman. She did this because the man had been generous to her and Nonno (by purchasing a sketch at increased price, giving Nonno money for a poem recitation

---

<sup>216</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 1

and also buying a watercolour from Hannah). When on the water the man asked Hannah to give him an item of clothing (presumably underwear) and in a way that is not made explicit, satisfies his desires with it. He does not look as she gets this piece of clothing, and she does not look at him while he satisfies himself with it. The incident is in this way quite pure, involving no actual physical contact between the two and seemingly not even any thought of lust from Hannah.

Hannah seems to have none of Shannon's dirty associations with sex. The encounter for her is not cause for guilt or disgust and nor was it lascivious. Rather, it was a connection that she shared with an unknown man in which she discovered a depth of loneliness she was previously unaware of.

SHANNON: "That... sad, dirty little episode..."

HANNAH: "Sad it certainly was – for the odd little man – but why do you call it 'dirty'?"

SHANNON: "How did you feel when you went into your bedroom?"

HANNAH: "...a little confused, I suppose...I'd known about loneliness – but not that degree or depth of it".

SHANNON: "You mean it didn't disgust you?"

HANNAH: "Nothing human disgusts me unless it's unkind, violent. And I told you how gentle he was... delicate about it"<sup>217</sup>.

The fact that Hannah is sexually un-dirty and non-guilty is why Shannon is so fascinated by, and receptive to, her. She has a completely different outlook towards people and in this possesses something that may be of help to Shannon. This outlook is the strategy of connection to others and communication between people as an approach to attain meaning, and it deserves further discussion.

Hannah identifies Shannon's central problem as being simply that he needs something to believe in, and argues that (at least for her) reaching out to others offers the opportunity for this.

---

<sup>217</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

SHANNON: “What is my problem, Miss Jelkes?”

HANNAH: “The oldest one in the world – the need to believe in something...”

SHANNON: “Your voice sounds hopeless about it”

HANNAH: “No, I’m not... In fact, I’ve discovered something to believe in”

SHANNON: “...God?”

HANNAH: “No... Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it’s just for one night only... One night communications between them on a veranda outside their... separate cubicles, Mr Shannon”<sup>218</sup>.

Her reaching out to Shannon may therefore be seen not only to be a means of helping him – but also as a means of generating meaning for herself. Yet, though such exchanges may be self-gratifying, they are not ultimately selfish and self-serving, but are rather sincerely concerned primarily with another person. Therefore when Shannon argues that birds do not make homes in impermanent places, and therefore people do not invest themselves in others if they do not imagine a degree of permanence, Hannah retorts: “I think of a home as being a thing that two people have between them in which each can... well, nest, rest – live in, emotionally speaking... I’m not a bird, Mr Shannon, I’m a human being and when a member of that fantastic species builds a nest in the heart of another, the question of permanence isn’t the first or even the last thing that’s considered”<sup>219</sup>.

She tells Shannon that she is able to help because she too has been through similar difficulties. Even as he has a ‘spook’ that plagues him, she once had a ‘blue devil’ tormenting her. Because of this, she knows that Shannon needs calm and quiet. “A long time ago... I had experience with someone in Mr Shannon’s condition, so I know how necessary it is to let them be quiet for a while”<sup>220</sup>. As in the case of Brick in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, such stillness offers the individual the possibility for encountering their personal authenticity and central (true) self. (As Michael Fordham says, quoted in Winnicott, “The over-all fact remains that the primordial experience occurs in solitude”<sup>221</sup>). Hannah is aware that Shannon needs to be calm in order to shift away from his preoccupation with himself – as such stillness would provide the answers to

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>221</sup> Winnicott, D. In One’s Bones. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

the questions that fuel this preoccupation. She affords him this by her still manner, non-judgmental observant character, and practically by giving him the poppy seed tea as a sedative.

Hannah argues that haunting bad objects respect people's attempts to avoid them (and therein to sink into their personal peaceful core), "...spooks and blue devils respect...everything we take to give them the slip, and so to keep on going... to... subterranean travels ... the journeys that the spooked and bedevilled people are forced to take through the ... the unlighted sides of their natures"<sup>222</sup>. Ultimately, however, Hannah contends that personal redemption from such demons lies in rising above them and focusing outwardly on other people. This is how she has overcome her 'blue devil', and it is the central advice she offers to Shannon. "...This occupational therapy that I gave myself – painting and doing quick character sketches – made me look out of myself, not in, and gradually, at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see this faint, very faint grey light – the light of the world outside me – and I kept climbing towards it..."<sup>223</sup>.

This is why she is saintly in her being. She is concerned with others, and views strangers as people worthy of concern (suggested by her argument that building an emotional nest does not primarily concern itself with permanence). Because of her extraordinary concern for others, as well as her seeming sexual purity, she offers Shannon an utterly different possibility for existing, one concerned with outer relation. In this way she encourages him to move from his inner (part) object relations – associated to a Paranoid-Schizoid mode of functioning, toward a mature (whole) object form of relating that is outwardly directed – associated to the psychologically healthy Depressive position.

The manner in which Shannon eventually communicates with Hannah suggests such a relational shift. He is asking more questions, seeming to be sincerely concerned and interested in what Hannah has to say. However, before he can adequately mature into Depressive position type relating he must reconcile his extreme split. Hannah offers him some advice that helps him to do this.

---

<sup>222</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

Shannon labours under a false dichotomisation of experience and objects, behaving in a manner which is correspondingly borderline in nature. Hannah points out to him that this either-or mentality is untrue by saying that “Everything in the whole solar system has a shadowy side except the sun

itself – the sun is the single exception”<sup>224</sup>. Therefore Shannon’s desperate quest to find God as a raw, powerful, one-dimensional being is a fallacy. Rather, Hannah is arguing, he must accept that life involves simultaneous good and bad in almost every experience.

(One may speculate that the reference to the sun as having no dark side represents God who lights all things. The possible validity of this interpretation is not disputed here, but the central message is felt to be that there is usually simultaneity of darkness and light, good and bad within experience and objects – and that Shannon typically denies this fact defensively)

Shannon’s compulsion to seek the extreme, the ideal, is even apparent as Hannah recounts the manner in which she overcame her own demon (‘blue devil’).

HANNAH: “I never cracked up, I couldn’t afford to... I nearly did once... But I was lucky. My occupation, this occupational therapy that I gave myself – painting and doing quick character sketches – made me look out of myself, not in, and gradually, at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see this faint, very faint grey light – the light of the world outside me – and I kept climbing towards it. I had to”

SHANNON: “Did it stay a grey light?”

HANNAH: “No, no, it turned white”

SHANNON: “Only white? Never gold?”

HANNAH: “No, it stayed only white, but white is a very good light to see at the end of a long black tunnel”<sup>225</sup>.

---

<sup>224</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

Shannon asks here if the light became gold because he is not seeking the good (white light) – he is seeking the perfect, omnipotent and (phantastic) ideal. Hannah simply and beautifully argues that white light is wonderful following a dark tunnel – and herein suggests that goodness is all that is required in life, not perfection or omnipotence as Shannon has falsely been assuming. In such stillness and non-effort, goodness (and therein God) can be apprehended. Through this, peace and freedom from anxiety is found.

(Such a dialectic synergism between seemingly competing - yet complementary elements - recalls several sections of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, including Chapter 16, which appears on page 133 in the appendix)

### Shannon's Whole Object Relations

With Hannah giving Shannon this teaching he seems able to shift towards whole object relations and mend his split (and borderline type functioning). He begins to relate empathetically to her as a full-object, which is perhaps most corporeally demonstrated in his insistence that she take his valuable gold cross, "Here... Take my gold cross...it's 22-carat gold..."<sup>226</sup>. Likewise, his communications with her eventually express genuine empathetic concern for her. He wonders what will become of her in the future, especially how she will feel when Nonno passes away, "How will it seem to be travelling alone after so many years ..." <sup>227</sup>. It is obvious that he wishes, because of this, to continue such contact with her, "How about wall-tappings between us by way of communication?"<sup>228</sup>.

In these events there seems great evidence that he is finally relating to her as a real person (a whole-object) suggesting that he has moved from infantile and fractured (borderline and Paranoid-Schizoid) relating to mature and integrated (Depressive) relating. His previous description of her as "Miss... Thin-Standing-Up-Female-Buddha"<sup>229</sup> suggests part object relating, but since she does not conform to his part-

---

<sup>226</sup> Williams, T. *The Night Of The Iguana*. Act 3.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

object assumptions of her (being female, thin and standing she is the opposite of the Buddha) he is gradually obliged to incorporate and relate to her as a whole object.

Hannah and he discuss that being with anyone in such a giving way is valuable, and it does not particularly matter who this person is.

SHANNON: “You mean that I’m stuck here for good... with the... inconsolable widow?”

HANNAH: “We all wind up with something or with someone and if it’s someone instead of just something, we’re lucky, perhaps... unusually lucky”<sup>230</sup>.

Thus his final decision to stay with Maxine is not necessarily an easy, shallow one, but may be seen as a mature decision to be of some service to her and himself. As previously discussed, his reluctance towards being with her may be because of his inability to reconcile his split towards women. He tends to see them as good or bad, and is anxious that her excitingly overt sexuality may be a mask for destructiveness, the persecuting bad that he fears. However, following his realisation that all things contain good and bad, this prospect is not so intimidating for him. Thus he is able to accept her as a potentially fertile good object, no longer needing for her to be an ideal, and can be with her as a whole external and potentially satisfying object. The overt sexual fecundity she presents is potentially something good (rather than ideal) being offered to him, and he too perhaps has the possibility of offering something good (himself) to her in a caring manner.

Eventually Shannon redeems himself psychologically, mending his chronic split. He is beginning to do so as he escapes from the hammock:

SHANNON: “Out! Free! Unassisted!”

HANNAH: “Yes, I never doubted that you could get loose, Mr Shannon”

SHANNON: “Thanks for your help anyhow”<sup>231</sup>.

---

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

His greatest redemptive act is the freeing of the iguana from its rope, this representative of himself and all people (who are inevitably caged). This ultimate action is, as Shannon puts it, “A little act of grace...”<sup>232</sup> and demonstrates a capacity for caring and empathy. Herein, it evidences that Shannon has integrated his split and successfully moved into whole object relations. This has been facilitated by him realising that good and bad can (and usually do) exist simultaneously rather than being diametrically opposed as his split originally dictated, and also his epiphany that concern for others (relating without) can produce the ‘something to believe in’ that he so longs for.

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

## *Conclusion*

Of all Williams' plays, The Night of The Iguana is one of the most profoundly psychological. It presents a portrait of the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon who is inwardly tormented.

From an object relational perspective, utilising theory from Fairbairn and more specifically Klein, this analysis has shown how the sexual chastising Shannon received at the hands of his mother (and inferentially by God) led to his psychic splitting. Such a split was set up in relation to sex, his mother (and therein women) and God. Initially his main problem has to do with women, but following his seduction of a Sunday-school teacher and an accompanying judgement from his congregation, his split toward God becomes even more problematic. Shannon thus finds himself either renouncing God as being like a senile old man, or vaunting Him as omnipotent and only embodied within nature. Likewise he is compelled towards women, seducing them regularly, but responds towards them with hatred after this. It is obvious that he relates in a borderline manner, in response to this split, to a splintered world of part-objects.

Redemption comes in the extraordinary form of Hannah Jelkes. Through her almost-angelic dealings with him she teaches him that his feelings of sex as dirty is unnecessary, and that dichotomisation of experience is fallacious since there is good and bad in almost everything. She also shows him that empathy and real (whole object) communication between people can provide him with meaning and something to believe in.

Because of these lessons Shannon is encouraged to move out of a self-centred internal (part-object) mode of relation towards external empathetic functioning - even as the infant is called towards psychological health at the juncture between the Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions. Thus Shannon is able to renounce his infantile (part-object) relations, integrate his split, and move into a mature and empathetic relational world, (at least initially with Maxine) should he so choose.

#### Chapter 4: Conclusion.

These analyses are intended to be of practical worth, as well as intellectual value. This brief conclusion attenuates the analyses and herein examines the implication that such analytic probing may have in terms of dramatic significance. It first adumbrates the object relational themes recurrently evident in the plays, and thereafter suggests how such insight can aid in the staging and production of Tennessee Williams' work. Following on this a brief account of how such psychoanalytic tools can be of general dramatic application is made. Finally, a discussion of how such an approach aids in dramatic understanding of Williams contemporaneously is given.

Within the analysed plays, and many of Williams' other works not scrutinised here, there are frequently recurring themes. From the object relational reading given, the most prevalent of such recurrences are felt to be: loss of the loved object, guilt (both through obligation and sexually) and empathetic communication as a solution or generator of meaning.

The loss of the loved object is an obvious theme in Williams' work. All four plays scrutinised here demonstrates this amply, Tom losing Laura in The Glass Menagerie, Blanche having lost Alan in A Streetcar Named Desire, Brick lamenting the loss of Skipper in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and Shannon having lost his pure image of women and God in The Night Of The Iguana. These are not the only Williams' works demonstrating such a theme – The Camino Real, Sweet Bird of Youth and Small Craft Warnings being only three more out of a long list of his plays to address this.

The next recurring theme in the texts is often inextricably linked with this first. Guilt, in Williams' texts seems to be frequently associated with either having lost the loved object or having harmed it in some way. Tom's guilt in The Glass Menagerie seems directly caused by his losing the loved object (Laura) through his abandonment of her. Blanche feels intense, crippling (sexual) guilt because her aggressive (sexual) impulse has destroyed Alan in A Streetcar Named Desire. Brick feels shame at having hung up on his beloved Skipper in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, ever after drinking in a desperate attempt to hear the 'click' of the receiver that gives him peace from his disgust at self-mendacity. In The Night Of The Iguana, Shannon is told that his sexual expression

displeases the loved objects of his mother and God, and so he lives in perpetual sexual guilt.

The plays offer some hope from these desperate human plights though, through suggesting that empathetic communications with other people may generate meaning and be worthwhile. Maggie and Big Daddy virtually vivisect Brick with honesty in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and Hannah's startlingly empathetic manner of relating to Shannon seems to be at least somewhat redemptive for him in The Night Of The Iguana.

These recurring themes are not merely of literary interest, but afford dramatists deeper understanding into how better Williams' work may be staged. Understanding that such themes are prevailing in his texts suggests a certain focus that the staging of his plays may adopt.

For instance, knowing at the outset that he is preoccupied with guilt produced by the loss or harm of a loved object (this very probably the product of his own loss of Rose – discussed within appendix pages 105 - 110 in greater depth) automatically suggests that such emotions should be emphasised by performers. It affords an immediate insight into the subtle motivations that seem to occur unconsciously within these psychologically deep characters. This allows for primary motivations to be explicit and in this the underlying significance and tensions driving the play may come to the surface with new clarity. Being aware of the implicit tensions that subconsciously drive a play beneath its surface is of great worth in its staging and production.

For example, from a Stanislavskian perspective, knowing what drives the characters on this deep psychological level not only instructs actors more precisely which emotional memories may be called on for authentic performances, but also what the potential superobjective, objectives and beats within the play may be. Such knowledge is of particular use to directors who try to penetrate the text as deeply as possible in order to present as three-dimensional a production as they are able.

To illustrate this practically, knowing that Blanche's fundamental motivation in A Streetcar Named Desire is to try repair (the loved object and her personal purity)

allows her dialogue to be understood in these terms. Thus, for instance, when she gives her famous speech to Stella in Scene IV (“There’s something downright – bestial – about him... He acts like an animal... Don’t – don’t hang back with the brutes!”<sup>233</sup>) one may understand it as motivated not simply by her disapproval of aggression, but rather by a terror that the raw sexuality embodied within Stanley’s aggression compromises her attempts at reparation (and preservation) of her purity. Thus the tone of this interplay, as but one example, may be interpreted as being subliminally self-fearful rather than simply righteously angry. Such knowledge would impact the tone of performance, as well as the stage devices used to convey mood. For instance, lighting would rather be weak and faltering than bright and impassioned, since Blanche’s fierceness deceptively guards her private terror.

To use another practical example, when *The Glass Menagerie* is seen in object relational terms, the memory devices of the play (projections on the walls etc.) may be understood as representative of Amanda’s psychological retreat into infantile relating as a defence against her fear of abandonment. Therefore, during such sequences it may be appropriate for Amanda to be almost caged by these images, suggesting an inner psychic retreat. This previous suggestion is well realised in Paul Newman’s 1987 film featuring John Malkovich and Joanne Woodward as the two main characters. During Amanda’s famous ‘jonquil speech’ the lighting, camera technique, music etc. produce the effect of complete internal focus on Amanda, suggesting a deep inward retreat in which she is effectively alone<sup>234</sup>.

Ultimately the staging of a piece of theatre is usually limited by the degree of understanding the dramatists, directors, writers, actors, producers, choreographers et cetera, have of the piece themselves (though this may not apply to an Artaudian view of theatre as existing beyond conception<sup>235</sup>). The insight afforded into text by object relational psychoanalytic technique means simply that there is a greater reservoir of understanding informing the specifics of production.

---

<sup>233</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 4.

<sup>234</sup> Newman, P. [Dir] *The Glass Menagerie*. 1987 Cineplex.

<sup>235</sup> Artaud, A. *The Theatre and its Double*. Cortini, V. [ed]. London: Calder and Boyars, 1970.

This naturally applies not only to Williams – though his work, being so profoundly psychological, is particularly well suited for such an approach. The application of such probing devices can inform understanding of a wide variety of dramatic texts (be these in dance, plays et cetera) that may otherwise be inaccessible and difficult to approach.

As cited in the introduction to this thesis, in her research Cecilia Petit notes that, “...the application of Psychoanalytic principles... provided a deeper reading of ambiguities left unresolved by the interpretive strategies of the critics”<sup>236</sup>. The opportunity for conceptualising ambiguities so as to portray them meaningfully is a useful one for dramatists of all sorts. Being able to view character conflicts as the products of distorted internal object relations is valuable, as the nature of such distortions suggest implicit motivations and psychological processes. Understanding such key psychoanalytic principles and using them interpretively has an obviously wide dramatic potential.

However, Williams’ work is a particularly appropriate object for such scrutiny. Since, as Adler notes, “In virtually all of Williams’ work during the 1940’s and 1950’s, delineating and probing character psychology takes precedence over all else”<sup>237</sup>, his work is of an exceptionally lucid psychological depth and clarity. This is useful as it offers a deeper understanding of his value as a dramatist – and specifically suggests that his value is universal rather than merely ‘period-set’.

Since Williams was preoccupied with the South and “the destructive impulse of society on the sensitive non-conformist individual”<sup>238</sup>, it is sometimes argued that he is ostensibly a period writer, reflecting on themes that are less applicable today. His portrayal of ‘sensitive’ women is sometimes seen as symptomatic of this concern and therein as rather ‘quaint’.

---

<sup>236</sup> Petit, C. “Trauma on stage: Psychoanalytic readings of contemporary American drama”. Humanities and Social Sciences Journal, New York, May 2000.

<sup>237</sup> Adler, T. American Drama 1940 – 1960. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

<sup>238</sup> Fritscher, J. Love and Death in Tennessee Williams. Loyola University Library, 1967.

Such may have been the case eventually if not for his intense devotion to portraying human psychology in a brutally honest and beautiful way. Since “Failures of personality are a special theme of ... Williams” and also “(Williams’ early) plays deal with hypersensitive characters who, from weakness or disability, either cannot face the real world at all or have to opt out of it”<sup>239</sup> he inevitably draws upon universal modes of relating, making him of contemporaneous value. Likewise the fact that his work is often autobiographical, or directly inspired by experiences he had and people he met, means that his portrayal of such ‘failures of personality’ and ‘disability’ is extremely accurate. His Southern women are not merely quaint, they are accurate representations of characters who may appear at any time and in any place. Amanda from The Glass Menagerie, for instance, rather than the inapplicable and antiquated character she may at first glance appear to be, is in many ways the logical product of abandonment and rejection (and possibly masculine dominance) and as such offers us insight into an element of the potential human condition.

Williams’ character depiction is exquisitely full of meaning, as evident in the ease and depth with which the texts may be probed psychoanalytically. His depth of observation and portrayal is inspiring and precious to the dramatic world. If, as Hamlet contends, the purpose of art is “...to hold as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature and scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure”<sup>240</sup> then Williams is a truly timeless and great artist, presenting a reflection of the human being existing in relation with others - and penetrating timeless relational themes in this presentation.

---

<sup>239</sup> Stanton, S. Tennessee Williams. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1977.

<sup>240</sup> Hamlet, Act III sc II in Alexander, P. The complete Works of William Shakespeare. London: Collins, 1951.

## **Bibliography**

### Plays:

Shakespeare, W. Hamlet. Alexander, P. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. London: Collins, 1951.

Shakespeare, W. Macbeth. In Alexander, P. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. London: Collins, 1951.

Williams, T. Baby Doll. London: Secker and Wallburg, 1957.

Williams, T. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957.

Williams, T. Camino Real. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958.

Williams, T. The Rose Tattoo. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958.

Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

Williams, T. Suddenly Last Summer. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958.

Williams, T. A Streetcar named Desire. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959.

Williams, T. Orpheus Descending. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961.

Williams, T. Sweet bird of Youth. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962.

Williams, T. The Milktrain doesn't stop here anymore. Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1969.

Williams, T. Small Craft Warnings. London: Secker & Warburg, 1973.

Williams, T. The Night of the Iguana. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Books:

- Adler, T. American Drama 1940 – 1960. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.
- Alexander, P. The complete Works of William Shakespeare. London: Collins, 1951.
- Arnott, C. File on Tennessee Williams. London: Methuen, 1985.
- Artaud, A. The Theatre and its Double. Cortini, V. [ed]. London: Calder and Boyars, 1970.
- Barker, K. The NIV Study Bible New International Version. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1985.
- Berne, E. Games people play. New York: Grove press Inc, 1967.
- Bronowski, J. The Identity of Man. Heinemann: London, 1966.
- Buckley, P. [ed] Essential Papers on Object Relations. New York, New York University Press, 1986.
- Cashdan, S. Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship. New York: W.W.Norton & Co, 1988.
- Fairbairn, W.R.D. Psychoanalytic Studies of The Personality. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1952.
- Foucault, M. Madness and Civilization, a history of insanity in the age of reason. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
- Frankl, V.E. Mans search for meaning: an introduction to Logotherapy. Boston: Shambhala press, 1992.
- Friedenberg, E. Laing. London: Fontana / Collins, 1973.

- Gardner, J. A Kind of Glory. Manzini, Macmillan Boleswa, 1985.
- Grof, S. The Holotropic Mind: The three levels of Human consciousness and how they shape our lives. San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1992.
- Grotstein, J.S. & Rinsley, D.B. [eds] Fairbairn and the Origins of Object Relations. New York: The Guilford Press, 1994.
- Ivey, G. An Introduction to object Relations Theory. Durban: Unpublished Paper, 1990.
- Jackson, E.M. The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. Madison and Milwaukee: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.
- Klein, M. The Psychoanalysis of Children. London: Hogarth Press, 1937
- Klein, M. Love, guilt and reparation, and other works, 1921 – 1945. London: Hogarth Press, 1975 (a).
- Klein, M. Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946 – 1963. USA: Delacorte Press, 1975 (b).
- Laing, R.D. The Divided Self: an existentialist study in sanity and madness. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.
- Laing, R.D. Self and Others. London: Tavistock, 1969.
- Leavitt, R. The World of Tennessee Williams. London: Allen, 1978.
- Morrison, J. The DSM iv Made Easy: The Clinicians Guide to Diagnosis. New York, Guilford Press, 1995.

- Ogden, T.H. Projective Identification and the Psychotherapeutic Technique. Jason Aronson Inc: Northvale, N.J, 1982.
- Ogden, T.H. The Matrix of The Mind: Object Relations and The Psychoanalytic Dialogue. Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc, 1986.
- Onions, T. [ed] Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Ostwald, H.G. [Transl] The Dao De Jing: Richard Wilhelm Edition. London: Penguin Arcana, 1985.
- Phillips, J & Stonebridge, L. Reading Melanie Klein. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.
- Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.
- Schapiro, B.A. Literature and the Relational Self. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Scott-Peck, M. The Road Less Travelled: The new Psychology of Love. London: Rider Books, 1988.
- Spillius, E.B. Psychic Retreats: Pathological Organisations in Psychotic, Neurotic and Borderline Patients. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology: An introduction. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1986.

St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology: An introduction. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.  
California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

Summers, F. Object Relations Theory and Psychopathology: A comprehensive text.  
Hillsdale, N.J: The Analytical Press, 1994.

Summers, F. Transcending the Self: an Object Relations Model of Psychoanalytic  
Therapy. Hillsdale, N.J: The Analytical Press, 1999.

Stanton, S. Tennessee Williams. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1977.

Walker, J. Halliwel's Film Guide [8<sup>th</sup> edition]. London: Grafton, 1992.

Winnicott, D. The maturational process and the facilitating environment: Studies in  
the theory of emotional development. London: Hogarth, 1965.

Winnicott, D. Playing and Reality. London: Tavistock, 1971.

Winnicott, D. Home is Where We Start from: Essays by a Psychoanalyst.  
Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1986.

Winnicott, D. In One's Bones. Northvale, N.J: Jason Aranson, 1993.

Journals Examined:

American Psychologist, British Heritage, International Journal of Psychoanalysis,  
Issues in Psychoanalytic Psychology, Journal of Popular Culture, Humanities and  
Social Sciences, Modern Drama, Re-Vision, Science, Southern Literary Journal,  
Tulane Drama Review, World Literature Today.

Journal Articles Cited:

Petit, C. "Trauma on stage: Psychoanalytic readings of contemporary American drama". Humanities and Social Sciences Journal, New York, May 2000.

Theses:

De Wet, F.E. The Predicament of Contemporary Man as Exemplified in Six Modern Dramas. University of South Africa, 1978.

Haley, D.E. Certain moral Values: A Rhetoric of outcasts in the plays of Tennessee Williams. The University of Alabama, 1999.

Fritscher, J. Love and Death in Tennessee Williams. Loyola University Library, 1967.

Video references:

Kazan, E. (Dir). *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* (1951) Charles K Feldman

Brooks, R. (Dir). *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF* (1958) MGM

Huston, J. (Dir). *THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA* (1964) MGM

Mankiewicz, J.L. (Dir). *SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER* (1959) Columbia

Newman, P. (Dir). *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* (1987) Cineplex

## Appendix

### **Glossary: Important Psychological Terms**

*Note: This glossary is intended for ease of reference. The explanations of the concepts come mostly from the following three readings:*

Ivey, G. An Introduction to object Relations Theory. Durban: Unpublished Paper, 1990.

Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology: An introduction. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

*Rather than directly quote these terms from the texts (the comprehension of which often requires even greater psychological knowledge than the term itself) the core principles of the thesis are typically defined in simple language for convenience and conceptual ease of reference.*

**Anti Libidinal Ego:** A term used by Fairbairn to describe the component of the ego that is split off in relation to the rejecting component of a bad object or object experience.

**Archetypes:** A term extensively used by Carl Jung, referring to innate images present from birth and potentially shared by all peoples through the collective unconscious. Similarly in Platonic philosophy it refers to “an idea or form as present in the divine mind prior to creation, and still cognizable by the intellect, independently of the ectypal objects”<sup>241</sup>.

**Cathect:** To perform cathexis

---

<sup>241</sup> Onions, T. [ed] Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.

**Cathexis:** Psychic incorporation of an external object into one's ego boundary (as a separate full object).

**Central Ego:** A term used by Fairbairn referring to the Self that relates socially and is set up through good object experiences.

**Countertransference:** The phenomena in which transferred or projected impulses produce a counter-projection in the recipient (often the therapist).

**Death Drive:** A term coined by Freud (and heavily used by Klein) describing an innate instinct towards death, destruction and aggression.

**Depressive Position:** The final (and healthy) developmental position in Klein's model of development in which the infant perceives external objects as being whole rather than part objects, and relates to them with empathetic capacity.

**Drive theory:** A theory that people are primarily motivated by innate drives (e.g. toward satisfaction, toward destruction et cetera).

**Ego Boundary:** The boundary between the self and that which is not the self.

**False Self:** A term used by Winnicott to describe an inauthentic self-structure (compliant) that develops due to not-good-enough mothering in an attempt to defensively preserve the (true) self.

**Good-Enough Mothering:** Mothering which is adequate to produce psychological health. Characterised by initial maternal preoccupation, mirroring to facilitate self-continuity (a sense of 'going on being') and a gradual allowance of (controlled) impingements allowing the infant to gradually relinquish feelings of omnipotence.

**Holding:** A term used by Winnicott to describe the psychical and physical provision of security and safety for the infant by the mother (figure) and the holding environment.

***Holding Environment:*** The overall (secure) environment in which the infant relates (specifically including the mother and her child).

***Ideal Breast:*** An inexhaustible comforting breast created by the infant's wish fulfilling hallucination as a defence against persecutory anxiety.

***Ingratiatory PI:*** A Projective identification in which the projector ingratiates themselves to the people they are in relationship with so as to maintain these relationships.

***Internal Saboteur:*** Fairbairn's original term for the Anti-Libidinal Ego.

***Introjection:*** The incorporation of an object into the psyche (the opposite process of projection).

***Libidinal:*** Associated with energy from the Libido.

***Libido:*** Initially coined by Freud to refer to the person's psychological (sexual) energy.

***Libidinal Ego:*** A term used by Fairbairn to describe the component of the ego that is split off in relation to the exciting component of a bad object or object experience.

***Mettacommunications:*** Indirect communications between people, conveyed in body language, tone, inflection etc.

***Mirroring:*** The process in which (the mother) imitates her infant and validates its experience, giving it a sense of self-continuity (this is mostly done facially).

***Object:*** The term object(s) refers to people or phantasized images of people with whom the subject interacts.

***Object Objectively Perceived:*** A term of Winnicott's similar to Klein's use of 'Object', referring to an object acknowledged to be external.

***Object Subjectively Perceived:*** A term of Winnicott's similar to Klein's use of 'Part Object', referring to an object as yet unacknowledged to be external and related to in a self-centred manner.

***Paranoid Schizoid Position:*** The first developmental position in Klein's model of development in which the infant is fundamentally self-centred, interacting with part-objects in relation to its persecutory anxieties caused by the death drive.

***Part Object:*** A term referring to the self-oriented and fractured manner in which objects are perceived before they are cathected into the psyche as entities independent of the self.

***Phantasy:*** An object relational term referring to the fantasies of the psyche, and one's subjective psychological world.

***PI:*** Abbreviated form of 'Projective Identification'.

***Power PI:*** A Projective Identification in which the projector disowns anxiety and inadequacy and induces these elements within others e.g. by becoming bossy or aggressive or extremely successful.

***Primary maternal preoccupation:*** A term coined by Winnicott to refer to the initial period of extreme attachment a mother has for her new born infant.

***Projection:*** The phenomena of (psychologically) expelling an object outside of the self (usually into another person).

***Projective Identification:*** The phantasied process of expelling an unacceptable split off object, depositing it in another person, inducing behaviour in this person and reincorporating the object (in environmentally modified form).

***Reparation:*** A term used by Klein to describe the infantile attempt (ostensibly at the juncture between the Paranoid-Schizoid position and the Depressive position) of proving that he has not destroyed the loved object through his aggressive impulses in Paranoid Schizoid relating), and therein ‘repairing’ it. Successful reparation is essential to enter the (healthy) Depressive position.

***Repression:*** The psychological act of defensively suppressing something undesirable (a self-element, experience etc.).

***Sexual PI:*** A Projective Identification in which the projector induces sexual arousal in others as a means of maintaining the relationship.

***Transference:*** Strong disowned feelings based on previous relationships that are projected onto and erroneously attributed to a present relationship (often towards a therapist).

***Transitional Object:*** An object (e.g. a security blanket, a favourite stuffed toy) strongly identified with and adopted by the infant aiding its passage between subjective and objective object relating.

***Transitional Phenomena:*** Phenomena existing between (immature) subjective object relating and (mature) objective object relating, facilitating the passage between these modes of relation.

***True Self:*** A term used by Winnicott to describe an authentic self-structure that is spontaneous and creative and that develops as a result of good-enough mothering.

***Wish Fulfilling Hallucination:*** An infantile defence in which the infant phantastically creates a need or want it has (especially the ideal breast).

### Synopsis of “The Glass Menagerie”

In The Glass Menagerie we are introduced to the Wingfield family, Amanda and her two children, Laura, the eldest, and Tom.

In the first scene we see the family around the dinner table discussing little of significance. In this interplay we learn that Amanda is focused on the memory of her youth in Blue Mountain County.

The first significant action of the play occurs when Amanda discovers that Laura is no longer at the Business School and has been deceiving her in this regard. Laura explains that she did not want to disappoint her mother and therefore did not tell her that she had left, but explains that she was too nervous to continue. She even admits to vomiting because of this during an exam. At the end of this scene, she also admits to Amanda that she liked a boy in high school.

In the next scene Amanda has a heated argument with Tom regarding his ‘going to the movies’. She does not believe his explanation that this is what he does at night. Tom storms out of the apartment during which he throws his coat, which lands on and breaks some of Laura’s glass menagerie.

The next morning, Tom stumbles in after what has clearly been a night of drinking. Laura implores him to apologise to Amanda which he grudgingly does. Amanda makes him feel very guilty for his behaviour and tries to persuade him to find a gentleman caller for Laura (who could take his place (as provider).

After this Tom informs Amanda that he has secured a gentleman caller. Amanda begins preparations for a dinner during which time she lapses into her ‘jonquil speech’ that is arguably the most intense example of her retreat into past memories.

Laura realises that the gentleman caller may be Jim O’Connor, the boy on whom she had a crush. She is consequently extremely reluctant to come to dinner. Her mother insists that she must, since she sees this as Laura’s opportunity for security.

The gentleman caller is indeed Jim. When Laura shows him into the apartment she quickly makes excuses and does not come to the table. Before dinner, Tom has a discussion with Jim to whom he confesses that he is leaving and joining the Navy.

Dinner goes well because Amanda is extremely charming to Jim. Throughout dinner, Amanda sings Laura's praises saying that Laura had cooked the meal. Immediately after dinner, she asks Jim to entertain Laura in the living room while she and Tom wash the dishes. Jim does this and he and Laura have an unusually successful interplay. Towards the end of the scene they even kiss. Laura feels elated and for the first time 'normal'. However, this blissful illusion shatters when Jim informs her that he is engaged to be married.

Soon afterwards Jim leaves and Amanda and Tom have their final argument. This proves to be the last straw for Tom and he abandons them in order to go travelling.

### *Synopsis of “A Streetcar named Desire”*

The play is set in New Orleans. Blanche DuBois, very properly dressed, comes to stay with her (pregnant) sister Stella - and new brother in law Stanley Kowalski in their obviously low-class home in Elysian Fields.

Blanche informs Stella that their old family home of Belle Reve (literally ‘beautiful dream’) has been lost.

Stanley returns home soon after, and the dynamic between him and Blanche is immediately intense. During this initial meeting Blanche informs Stanley that she has been married in the past, but that the ‘boy’ has died. She does not elaborate but is obviously upset by this.

Soon after, Stella tells Stanley that Belle Reve has been lost. He is suspicious and furious, confronting Blanche who successfully wards off his attack by presenting the legal documents proving her word. Stanley tells Blanche that Stella is pregnant.

One night, following a dinner at a restaurant, Stella and Blanche return home where Stanley is playing poker with several of his friends. Blanche takes a liking to one of these men – Mitch, whom she finds “superior to the others”<sup>242</sup>. The attraction seems mutual. Stanley loses his temper because of the radio playing and bursts into Blanche’s section of the house, throwing the radio out of the window. Stella and he then have a fight in which he strikes her. She is ushered upstairs while Stanley’s friends restrain him. When he comes to his senses (after being wet in the shower) he is anguished and pleads for Stella to return – which she immediately does. Following this Blanche and Mitch have a discussion on the steps to the flat.

The next morning Stella is in the flat, obviously happy and content. Blanche frantically comes to see that she is all right, and is horrified to find that Stella is not fazed about the event, and indeed is happy. Stella explains, “...there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark - that sort of make everything else

---

<sup>242</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 3.

seem – unimportant”<sup>243</sup>. Blanche speaks very plainly about her regard (or rather disregard) for Stanley – referring to him as ‘bestial’. Stanley overhears these insults. From this point his dislike of Blanche becomes more intense. One evening Blanche is preparing to go on a date with Mitch. Shortly before he arrives a bizarre interplay occurs between her and a young man (virtually a boy) who comes to the door collecting for *The Evening Star*. During this exchange Blanche kisses the young man who is a complete stranger to her. The date with Mitch proves fairly unsuccessful. Following the date they have a discussion in which she reveals that her husband, Alan, had killed himself following her declaring disgust of him (after she found him in bed with another man). Mitch declares that he likes Blanche, they kiss, and the relationship between them seems solidified and deeply affectionate.

Soon after this it is Blanche’s birthday. While Blanche prepares for some celebrations they have planned for the evening (Stanley and Stella, Mitch and Blanche), Stanley tells Stella information he has heard about Blanche. An informant has told him that Blanche entertained numerous men in a hotel (The Flamingo) in Laurel, acting – it seems – as a prostitute. Her coming to New Orleans was precipitated by her being discharged from her job (English teacher at a school) for seducing a seventeen-year-old boy.

Stanley has also told Mitch this information, and so Mitch stands Blanche up. Blanche is very confused and hurt by this. Stanley gives her a ticket back to Laurel as a birthday present, knowing full well that she cannot realistically take it. Stella goes into labour towards the end of dinner, and quietly asks Stanley to take her to hospital.

Blanche has a slight breakdown following Mitch’s rejection of her and sits alone miserably in the dark. Mitch then comes to see her and essentially breaks up their relationship because of what Stanley has told him. He tells her that she is not clean enough to bring into the house with his mother, or for him to marry. Blanche responds to this explosively.

---

<sup>243</sup> Williams, T. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Scene 4.

She then has yet another breakdown, which is more severe. She dresses in fine clothes and costume jewellery and becomes quite delusional. Stanley comes home and she lies to him, saying that she has had an invitation to visit an oil millionaire she once knew, and also that Mitch had come begging her for forgiveness. He knows this to be a lie and confronts her aggressively. She defends herself fearfully, but Stanley eventually rapes her.

Seemingly as a result of the rape, Blanche disintegrates entirely. She becomes utterly introverted and psychotic, and so a (Psychiatric) Doctor and Nurse come to forcibly collect her for a mental home.

As Blanche is ushered from the home, Stella (a new mother) is devastated and Stanley comforts her.

**Synopsis of “Cat On A Hot Tin Roof” (Broadway version)**

Cat on a Hot tin Roof focuses on the Pollitt family. The patriarch of the family is known as Big Daddy. He is an exceptionally successful Cotton Planter who owns “twenty-eight thousand acres of the richest land this side of the Valley Nile”<sup>244</sup>. His wife is Big Mama. They have two married sons. The elder Gooper (a lawyer married to Mae) and Brick (a former football star married to ‘Maggie the Cat’).

Both sons and their wives are visiting on the occasion of Big Daddy’s 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The opening scene depicts Brick and Maggie as thoroughly estranged, communicatively and physically in their marriage. Brick is an alcoholic. The precise reason for his alcoholism and their estrangement is initially unclear though Maggie alludes to the death of Brick’s friend Skipper as being the cause.

Brick and Maggie are childless while Gooper and Mae are expecting their sixth child. Big Mamma accuses Maggie of not keeping Brick happy (particularly sexually).

Big Daddy is dying of cancer, but this is concealed from him and Big Mamma. Both sons and their wives are aware of his terminal illness and play along with the charade.

In the second act, Big Daddy has an intensely honest confrontation with Brick regarding his alcoholism and his estrangement from Maggie. He believes the cause of this to be Skipper’s death, and questions their relationship’s nature. Brick says he drinks because of disgust toward mendacity. In this heated exchange Brick lets slip to his father that he (Big Daddy) is in fact dying.

In the final act (Broadway version) Big Mamma becomes aware that Big Daddy is dying and is devastated by the news. It becomes evident that Gooper wants to take control of the cotton plantation when Big Daddy dies and Big Mamma is furious at this suggestion.

---

<sup>244</sup> Williams, T. Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Act 2.

At the end of the play Maggie declares that she is pregnant by Brick, a lie that both Brick and Big Daddy happily support.

Brick and Maggie then go upstairs to their bedroom and it is suggested that he accepts her sexually again.

### Synopsis of “The Night Of The Iguana”

*[Note: The play relies far more on dialogue than action. Therefore this synopsis selects what pieces of action are regarded to be significant. It may, therefore, appear unnecessarily detailed or under-detailed. The selections of portions of dialogue / action have largely been made because of significance to the analysis]*

We meet Maxine and Shannon. Shannon has come to the Costa Verde Hotel (which Maxine manages) in Mexico. We learn that Maxine’s husband Fred has died. Maxine is overtly sexual and flirts with Shannon. A group of Nazis are staying at the hotel, which is otherwise almost empty.

Shannon tells Maxine that the present tour he has been conducting and guiding has been a disaster, and that he has seduced a sixteen-year-old girl among the party. He informs Maxine that he is on the verge of a psychological collapse following this tour, and that he intends to sit on the veranda of the Costa Verde “for at least forty-eight hours”<sup>245</sup>.

While he is talking to Maxine, Miss Fellowes (the leader of the disastrous tour) has a furious argument with him, firstly pointing out that he has led them to the wrong hotel (they are supposed to be at ‘the Ambos Mundos’) and that the tour he has taken them on has been a sham because of Shannon. She asks to use a telephone, and goes off-stage to make a call.

We are then introduced to Hannah Jelkes whose nature and appearance we are told are extraordinary, suggesting *[a Gothic Cathedral Image]*<sup>246</sup>. She is looking for hotel rooms for herself, and her ageing Grandfather Nonno who, she tells us, is the oldest living poet.

---

<sup>245</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 1.

<sup>246</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 1.

Miss Fellowes returns from making her call and says that she has called the tour company in Texas who employ Shannon to express her dissatisfaction and demand some form of compensation.

Hannah brings Nonno to the hotel. He is extremely old, nearly blind and very hard of hearing. We are told that he has been working on his last poem for years. He occasionally starts reciting portions of this work. Maxine does not want to give Hannah and Nonno rooms, suggesting she should go elsewhere, but Shannon persuades Maxine to assent. We learn that Hannah is an artist who subsists on drawing portraits and sketches of people.

Later Maxine again tries to persuade Hannah to go elsewhere. Hannah says that they have no money. The Nazi's celebrate because London is burning (it is during World War II).

Shannon is accosted by Charlotte, the young girl he seduced. She insists that he loves her, in spite of his protests to the contrary. Miss Fellowes joins in this argument too. Shortly after, Shannon wears his clerical garbs - trying to prove that he has not been defrocked as Miss Fellowes says.

Shannon and Hannah have a conversation about how he left the church. He says that it was because of his seduction of a very young Sunday school teacher and because he dislikes the western concept of God as being like a petulant and senile old man. He says he made an explosive sermon about this 'divine senility', and also in response to the judgement he could tell the congregation was giving him in response to the seduction. He explains that he now operates tours in Mexico trying to find evidence of his conception of God – which is to be found in the raw power of nature. Hannah suggests that he will eventually return to his service in Church.

Maxine's Mexican servants bring a writhing iguana held captive in a shirt. The Nazis are shocked by this creature. Shannon is speaking tenderly with Nonno, who thinks he is Hannah. Nonno says he feels he will 'finish it' here, seemingly referring to his poem. Shannon gives Nonno money, which Hannah does not want despite her present desperate needs.

Shannon and Hannah continue having an extended personal conversation. Maxine admits that she only told Hannah to leave because she had sensed something between Hannah and Shannon, and wants Shannon for herself. She allows Hannah and Nonno to stay.

Hannah and Shannon continue their lengthy conversation. Shannon asks for a cigarette and Hannah gives him one of her last ones without any hesitation. Shannon notices this and is complementary and amazed by her. In their conversation it becomes apparent that Hannah will in some way help Shannon, and he wants this. The threatening storm comes, and Shannon acknowledges the force latent within it to be his conception of God.

Shannon is writing a letter to the dean of his Divinity School. Maxine expresses the belief that he will not send it, since he has done this before. Maxine says that Shannon's problems started when his mother found him masturbating as a young boy and chastised him for it, saying that it angers God and mother. A member of Shannon's party, via Miss Fellowes, insists on getting the keys for the van and leaving. After a lengthy fight regarding this, they succeed in this and Shannon, enraged, urinates on the tire of the vehicle.

Shannon has what seems to be a psychological breakdown after this, and the Mexican boys tie him in the hammock to restrain him. Maxine tells Hannah that this happens each eighteen months. Hannah speaks to Shannon while he is in this state, and tells him that she finds his suffering self-indulgent and theatrical. He argues with her about this, saying that she is behaving like a woman wanting to trap him. She explains that she is merely a painter, reproducing what she sees rather than judging him. She mixes him poppy seed tea as a sedative.

Hannah is extremely honest and kind to him throughout this interplay, which he seems to be grateful for and to respond to. After a long struggle, Shannon gets out of the hammock, which Hannah said she knew he would. He thanks her for her help. She explains that his problem is a desperate search for meaning, which she finds in communication and the interactions that exist between people.

She explains that she once had similar problems, and this is how she is able to help and understand him. She says that she found redemption from the anxieties he is battling with by focusing outside of herself, which her painting facilitated.

She tells him of her two 'sexual' encounters – which are in fact not physically sexual and seemingly quite pure. He is amazed by this, and also by the fact that she does not feel dirty as he does.

Hannah asks Shannon to free the iguana. He draws a parallel between the creature's plight and that of all people and eventually frees the creature after what seems to be a personal debate. Hannah explains that she will soon leave. Shannon insists on giving her his gold Cross.

Nonno finishes his last poem. Maxine asks Shannon why he freed the iguana. They descend towards the sea to swim, suggesting that Shannon will become sexually involved with her. Maxine says that he should stay with her at the hotel. Hannah prepares Nonno to leave, and he quietly dies. For a brief moment she seems fearful.

Chapter 16 of Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching

*Create emptiness up to the highest!*  
*Guard Stillness up to the most complete.*  
*Then all things rise together.*  
*I see how they return.*  
*Things in all their multitude:*  
*Each one returns to its root.*  
*Return to the root means stillness.*  
*Stillness means return to fate.*  
*Return to fate means eternity.*  
*Cognition of eternity means clarity.*  
*If one does not recognise the eternal*  
*One falls into confusion and sin.*  
*If one recognises the eternal*  
*One becomes forbearing*  
*Forbearing leads to justice.*  
*Justice leads to mastery*  
*Mastery leads to Heaven*  
*Heaven leads to Tao*  
*Tao leads to duration*  
*All One's life long one is not in danger.*

*In H.G.Ostwald's "The Dao De Jing":*

*Richard Wilhelm Edition".*

## Donald Winnicott: Transitional phenomena

Transitional phenomena are significant as they form the bridge between (psychologically) infantile subjective object relating and mature objective object relating. To quote, “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena... belong to that intermediate area of experience to which inner and external life both contribute. The infant is passing from omnipotent control (phantasy) to control by physical manipulation (reality testing), in which the child needs the illusion to create an intermediate situation that is partly subjective and partly reality oriented”<sup>247</sup>.

Initially the child, because of a lack of relevant cognitive capabilities, is not able to distinguish between it and that which is outside of it. This, as previously discussed, results in an initial illusion of omnipotence essential for eventual psychological health. Through a process of psychological maturation they become aware that there is an external, an objectively perceived (external) object over which they do not have control. Transitional phenomena (including the transitional object) form the bridge between these two forms of object relating, allowing the child to move from subjectivity to objectivity in their relating.

What this means in practical terms is that the child finds a real object to which it attaches itself very strongly, for instance a soft toy or a blanket (The well known ‘security-blanket’ forms a familiar example of this kind of object, and may be recalled in the famous example of Linus from the comic strip ‘Peanuts’<sup>248</sup>). This object is not a part of the infant, but becomes so strongly associated with it that it offers the infant an opportunity of examining the objective and subjective worlds as they meet (since both are embodied in the object). Through such interaction the child is afforded a space in which to shift between the internal and external (subjective and objective) and so discover the not-me world in safety. This allows for symbolization, the use of metaphor and creativity to develop.

---

<sup>247</sup> St Clair, M. Object Relations and Self Psychology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. California: Brookes/Cole publishing Co., 1999.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid

There are at least seven special qualities to the relationship the child has with such objects, as identified by Winnicott. These provide fairly detailed explanation of the importance of these phenomena and so are reproduced here.

- (1) The infant assumes rights over the object - the transitional object is theirs to do with as they please.
- (2) This being the case, the second quality of the relationship is that the object is affectionately handled.
- (3) Related to the infant taking special rights over the object, is the next quality of the relationship, the object must only be changed by the infant (For instance, if it is a blanket, it is not to be washed at the infant's express request).
- (4) The object, fourthly, must survive instinctual loving and hating. This allows the infant evidence in the essential goodness of its love and the manageability of its aggressive impulses, which helps it to relinquish omnipotence since it need not be fearful of persecutory elements in the environment.
- (5) The object must also do something showing an inner vitality. This can be by providing warmth, having a pleasing texture etc. – as this makes the object more than an inanimate 'thing'. Rather it is something vital to which relating can naturally proceed.
- (6) Penultimately, it is important to realize that for the infant the object does not come from without, nor does it come from within, nor is it hallucinatory. Its origin is not questioned, nor is its nature scrutinized in great depth, as the child must be entitled to creatively attribute whatever it wishes to, to the object.

---

<sup>249</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

“Of the transitional object it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question ‘Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?’ The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated”<sup>250</sup>.

Because of this, and the nature of the object, it encourages imaginative responses and phantastic processes coupled with reality testing. “The transitional object is never under magical control like the internal object, nor is it outside control as the real mother is”<sup>251</sup>. Thus the object is the vehicle whereby the infant can move from subjective (internal) object relating, to objective (external) object relating.

- (7) The object will slowly be decathected. As the infant develops the capacity to relate maturely (to objectively perceived objects) the transitional object is no longer necessary and so is gradually decathected. It is not as much discarded as “relegated to limbo”<sup>252</sup>.

The transitional object is an essential phenomenon for the development of symbolisation, metaphorical capacity as well as cognitive ability. This is because these objects are imbued with some of their actual (reality based) attributes, and also with phantastically imagined subjective attributes. For instance, a blanket may be warm in reality, but may also be magically protecting – phantastically. This is significant because “When symbolism is employed the infant is already clearly distinguishing between fantasy and fact, between inner objects and external objects”<sup>253</sup>.

The child’s interaction with the transitional object allows it safely to test reality, and therefore gradually to start relinquishing phantasy for reality based relations. “The intermediate area to which I am referring is the area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality testing”<sup>254</sup>.

---

<sup>250</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

As transitional phenomena shift from being more internal and subjective towards being more objective and external (by definition it is never one nor the other but exists on the border of both), shared assumptions regarding such phenomena lead to cultural experience.

Art, largely, involves the investigation of metaphor with some degree of shared assumption about meaning. Though this meaning is ultimately individual and subjective in order for a shared meaning (or meaningful consensus) to be found within the metaphors that constitute art, a degree of shared assumption needs to exist. The capacity to shift between inner and outer to find such common ground is developed through the relational templates laid down in the interactions with ‘the first not-me possession’<sup>255</sup>, or transitional object. Thus transitional phenomena, forming the border between the intimately subjective and the publicly objective, form the basis of artistic and cultural interaction, “...*these... are* the progenitors of cultural and artistic phenomena”<sup>256</sup>.

#### Conclusion: Transitional phenomena

The significance of so called ‘transitional phenomena’ (including the transitional object) lies in the fact that through them the infant learns of the objective ‘not-me’ world gradually. It forms the safe bridge between the subjective and internal, and the objective and external. In doing so it provides the basis for metaphor, symbolisation, meaningful relationships and cultural experience. To quote Winnicott, “It is in the space between inner and outer worlds, which is also the space between people - the transitional space - that intimate relationships and creativity occur”<sup>257</sup>.

---

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

## Addition to Klein: Development of Selected Pathologies

If one looks at Klein's theory there is one essential ingredient to a mother developing a psychically healthy adult – namely the constant attention and devotion (trite put, maternal love heals (or prevents) all (or at least most) psychic wounds). As Donald Winnicott (who was tutored by Klein) said, “Success in infant care depends on the fact of devotion”<sup>258</sup>.

Ultimately the mother must be constantly attentive to the needs of her child, facilitating a positive environment in which persecutory feelings and 'bad breast' experiences are kept to as low a level as possible. Through her doing so she facilitates a positive environment that allows for the baby to introject good experiences to counteract the harmful destructive projections it places onto the world. Also, very importantly, the mother must demonstrate her capacity to survive - therein giving the infant evidence of their ability to phantastically repair - proving their inherent love and goodness.

To show this more systematically, 2 'psychotic' personalities /disorders will briefly be elucidated - namely: Eating Disorders and narcissism.

**Eating disorders:** Can come about because of the child's inability to enjoy or take in food. This comes about as a product of intense greed early in the Depressive position followed by an ego suppression of instincts and drives. The frantic greed that initiates this cycle is predicated upon the child's anxiety that it has devoured and destroyed the mother. Therefore, should the mother provide a sufficiently strong and loving relationship that she gives evidence of having survived - there is no need for the infant's greed to result in the suppression / modification of appetite.

**Narcissistic personality disorder:** Privation results in greed, as the infant wants what it seldom has. Therefore when the good breast does come its way it feeds frantically in a desperate attempt to get its fill while it can. Such greed facilitates projection of aggression and this then is perceived as a threat, which enhances greed, which leads to

---

<sup>258</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

aggression etc. A mother depriving the child initiates this cycle. Likewise, should the child hold onto their illusion of omnipotence (which they would only do if the real good breast is not good enough to allow a gradual relinquishment of the omnipotent hallucination of the ideal breast) then they may exhibit tendencies that are greedy, self absorbed and narcissistic.

Failure on the mother's part to supply what the baby needs leads to an aggravation / initiation of tension and fear that may push it into the Paranoid-Schizoid position. Adults who find themselves in such a position typically have weak and fragmented egos and therefore relate to people as part objects, rather than meaningfully and lovingly as whole objects (particularly evident in Narcissism and Borderline disorder).

So - simply we again arrive at the conclusion that if the mother provides a loving, holding environment that wards off as much environmental impingement as possible she facilitates differentiation and an integration of split-off ego dimensions. All of this facilitates empathy and true object relations in later life. Ultimately, devotion on the part of the mother in relating to the infant is what leads to health and whole object relations - as well as what avoids psychopathology.

### W.R.D. Fairbairn: Developmental Stages in Object Relations

Fairbairn's theory believes that all human relationships are characterised by a degree of dependency. The nature of this dependence obviously shifts, from extreme dependence (on the mother usually) as an infant to a more symbiotic form of dependency in mature relating. To put this into Fairbairn's words, "Development... proceeds from an infantile dependence on a part object... to a mature dependence on a whole object... Growth moves from an infantile attitude of taking to a more mature attitude of mutual giving and receiving between two differentiated individuals"<sup>259</sup>.

The theory proposes that there are three stages of dependency in the development of object relations.

#### *Infantile dependency*

Firstly, there is the infantile dependency stage that is "...characterised by identification with the object and by the oral attitude of incorporation or taking"<sup>260</sup>.

At the point of infantile dependency the infant identifies very strongly with the objects it comes into contact with, since it actually cannot conceive that these objects are not a part of itself. The mother's breast typically forms the main object relationship, and the child relates to it primarily through oral action, obtaining satisfaction and frustration from it and responding to these experiences (anal actions are similar to incorporation attempts since psychological internalisations and incorporations occur within the implications of retaining or expelling contents).

#### *The Transitional Stage*

The second stage is known as the transitional stage, and during it, "a child's relationships with objects expand. The child... experiences conflict between the

---

<sup>259</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

progressive urge to give up the... attitude of identification... and the regressive urge to hold onto that attitude”<sup>261</sup>.

Though Winnicott discusses such transitions in greater depth, Fairbairn’s contribution is useful in pointing out that there is an essential conflict (and fear) between staying within (an infantile desire to stay strongly identified with the object) and going without (moving towards more mature relating involving giving).

In later life any unresolved issues in this conflict (between holding and expelling) may manifest itself as obsessive compulsion. Likewise in the behaviour of schizoid personalities Fairbairn noted a lack of resolution in this stage – as patients desperately clung to infantile dependency and yet showed a longing to renounce it.

### *Mature relating*

Finally, “In stage 3, the mature relational stage, the capacity to give predominates”<sup>262</sup>. This may manifest itself in all manner of relational encounters, and includes sexual giving in mature sexual relationships. The primarily significant thing is the quality of the relationship (it being mature and giving) rather than the means by which this receives expression. Therefore, in a sexual relationship it is not the sexual act that is significant (since this may not be mature and giving) but rather the significance rests in it being an expression of giving (if it is).

As the individual moves toward mature relating and dependency, there is a shift of emphasis from identification (which is subjective) to relating to objects that have been differentiated and known to be other than self (objective). During this the quality of object relating shifts from self-centredness to giving and other-awareness.

---

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Scharff, D.E. Object Relations theory and Practice: An Introduction. London: Aronson, 1996.

## Attenuation Of Analyses In Relation To Williams' Personal Psychology

These interpretations have certain themes in common. For instance, the theme of loss is evident in all of them (though less evident in The Night Of The Iguana) and so is a permanent sense of guilt.

This is unsurprising since the plays have one obvious element in common, this being the author. Tennessee Williams invariably brought his own psychology and object relations to his writing of these texts, and correspondingly recurrent themes do seem to echo his personal psychological concerns.

The following brief chapter draws together the central implications of the four analyses appearing here, pointing these back to Williams' own psychology. Of the recurrent themes throughout these analyses, several seem most prominent and will be examined in this section.

Firstly, the theme of the lost object is fundamental to many of the works. Secondly, the theme of chronic guilt - both sexually and in the form of obligation - warrants attention. Ultimately, the theme of communication and empathetic relation between people seems to be the solution Williams offers to these fundamental problems and is therefore discussed.

### *The Loss Of The Loved Object*

As is evident in the preceding analyses, each of the scrutinised plays deals with the loss (of the loved object) prominently. This is hardly surprising since Williams' experiences with loss were severe. Firstly, the virtual absence of his father would have constituted a significant psychological loss for a young boy. After this Tennessee's next loss was that of his childhood's genteel and humane South, when the family moved to St Louis in 1918. As Hale says, "(Tennessee Williams) ... remembered his childhood as idyllic... The Southern idyll was shattered with a forced

move to St. Louis... At seven, Tom was transported from his agrarian Eden to an immense, smoky city”<sup>263</sup>.

These losses, however, are perhaps not as significant as the excruciatingly painful loss of his treasured sister Rose, whose vivacity was relegated to pitiful infantile detachment, following a forced lobotomy to cure her schizophrenia. The two were virtually inseparable, and losing Rose almost meant a loss of self for Tennessee.

Correspondingly, it is unsurprising that this emerges as a theme within his work.

Of all Williams’ plays, The Glass Menagerie deals with this aspect on the most autobiographical level. Its central character, Tom, is even given his own real name and the other characters of the play seem to directly parallel significant figures in his life. Amanda seems to be very like his mother Edwina, caring but overbearing and controlling. Laura, as Rose, is slightly handicapped and shares a tender relationship with her brother.

The torment that Tom faces in choosing to leave, and abandoning his loved sister, transparently echoes Williams’ own choice to leave his family and pursue an independent life. As discussed in the analysis of this play, the subtle cues and symbols which imbue the play with its meaning also serve as a means of subjecting the audience to the same kind of guilt and anguish Tennessee felt as he made his decision, and as a result of what happened to Rose. This acts in a manner similar to typical projective identifications – by phantastically expelling the unwanted object (in this case guilt into the play / onto the stage), inducing a response from the recipient that is congruent with the expelled element (a sensation of guilt and helplessness in the audience) and ultimately re-incorporating this element based on the response of the recipient. For Tennessee, this re-incorporation would not ultimately have been redemptive or therapeutic because the audience is not in a position to respond directly (through action that could indicate to him how to differently manage this object relation) but may have allowed him to work through this difficulty simply by its

---

<sup>263</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997.

external expression. Also, the critical and popular appeal of the play would have been, to at least some degree, redemptive.

The success of the play may have inspired him to deal with this topic again in his work, since its expulsion would bring a degree of relief. Indeed, he does deal with it again. In A Streetcar Named Desire Blanche is utterly tormented after the loss of her loved object Alan. As has been discussed in the analysis – this seems to be the genesis of all her problems. Very similarly, in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof Brick's loss of Skipper seems to be the one identifiable and traumatic event that results in his desperate internal struggle. As with these two central characters, Williams' loss (most especially the loss of Rose) sparks the majority of his personal psychoses.

From an object relational perspective, Williams seems to have created idealised objects and memories that he used to guard against the vicissitudes of life, much as these characters have. His relationship with Rose was intensely personal. His romanticising of the South is so intense that he regarded his childhood in Mississippi not as good, but as idyllic (in spite of developing debilitating diphtheria during this time). This suggests an acute fear of persecution (the infant creates the idealised breast to defend against the death drive) and makes sense in consideration of the cruel, persecutory manner in which his father treated him.

When such a (infantile) defence fails, a regression into part-object relating (associated with the Paranoid-Schizoid position) is natural, and indeed Williams did regress at several stages in his life. Following his ten months working in the factory (with his father – the 'bad' persecuting object) Williams had a nervous break down from which he took years to recover (with his Grandparents – significantly in the absence of his father). Following Rose's institutionalisation Tennessee wrote frantically in an attempt to defend himself from the psychological trauma of this event. Extraordinarily this seemed to work (the work at this time was possibly so exceptional *because* he was defensively and compulsively creative following his loss of Rose).

However, when his lover Frank Merlo died, Tennessee could no longer adequately cope and, like so many of his characters, he sunk into a prolonged depression. During the ten years that this depression ensued, the quality of Williams' work declined. His

substance dependence increased as well, suggestive of a regression to Paranoid-Schizoid type relating in which the infant is greedy and needs good (breast) experiences to feel psychologically secure.

Thus Williams' concern with loss (of the loved object), as well as his own response to loss suggests that he was predisposed towards idealisation as a defence against (perceived) persecutory elements within the world. This is understandable since he was the subject of fairly vicious paternal persecution, and was subject to great loss (of loved objects) in his life.

Following the loss of such loved objects (especially Rose), Williams seems to experience an acute sense of guilt that is apparent in his work. This forms the next topic of discussion.

### *Guilt*

Guilt is a pervasive theme throughout Williams' work not only because of the loss of loved objects, but also because of early (paternal) persecution and his personal upbringing. Within the plays, two forms of guilt are most evident and should be examined separately. These are firstly, guilt from obligation and secondly, (and more significantly) sexual guilt.

#### *Guilt From Obligation*

This is especially apparent within The Glass Menagerie. It seems to directly connect with anxiety over losing the loved object. In the play, as in Tennessee's real life, abandoning the obligation towards this loved object (to stay with it) results in a never-ending yearning for it. Even as Tom declares that he is 'more faithful' than he intended to be towards Laura, Tennessee's distress over pursuing independence whilst Rose was becoming increasingly fractured and dependent plagued him throughout his life, as is evident in several of his plays.

Not only does Tom feel guilty for deserting Laura in The Glass Menagerie, but also Brick is eternally remorseful that he abandoned Skipper by hanging up on him during

an important conversation in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, and Blanche is tormented because she believes that in some way she ‘failed’ Alan in A Streetcar Named Desire.

Psychologically therefore, this ties up with Williams’ anxiety over losing the loved object as discussed extensively in the previous point. However, the more prominent form of guilt appearing throughout Williams’ work is sexual in nature, and warrants more consideration.

### *Sexual Guilt*

Sexual Guilt can debatably be cited as the driving force in three of the plays analysed here.

In The Night Of The Iguana Shannon is tormented by his own sexuality and sensations of sexual dirt. An early conflict between these and his moral principles (social – as implicit in his mother’s chastisement, and religious – as implicit in the divine disapproval he assumes) leaves him in a borderline state where he battles to control them (and indeed his own psychic integrity).

In A Streetcar Named Desire, Blanche is tormented by her inability to manage both her own sexual impulse (even as Alan had been) and her disgust at another person. Likewise Brick in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof is tortured by the fact that he would not face Skipper’s telephone conversation, which the play implies was a confession of love for Brick.

It is significant that these last two examples involve homosexual impulses, since Williams himself was homosexual and battled with this from the point of view of his upbringing. He was raised in an extremely Christian home (his grandfather being a minister) and thus a degree of sexual guilt for his sexuality is very understandable.

Considering this, perhaps his belief that “Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt” is perhaps, “markedly Christian”<sup>264</sup> - as Fritscher points out.

His sexual guilt may also be fairly easily linked to his father’s persecution of him on the grounds of ‘sensitivity’. Considering that his (usually absent) father persecuted him on such grounds, it would be very plausible that Williams’ drew an unconscious association between his homosexuality and the absence of his father (a *potentially* loved object). The trauma of paternal abandonment that he may have suffered unconsciously could therefore easily have contributed to an overriding sexual guilt, possibly already in place because of his religious upbringing.

Considering that Williams seems, psychologically, to fear persecution – it is plausible that he would sublimate his anxieties of divine and paternal persecution into (more manageable) sexual guilt. In this way, even as Shannon does in The Night Of The Iguana, Williams chastises himself (with guilt) rather than having to deal with his perceived divine (and paternal) retribution.

Ultimately, Tennessee sought an artistic redemption from this guilt, fear of persecution and anxiety over losing the loved (idealised) object. Therefore it is quite unsurprising that his solution to these problems offered in his work is of a communicative nature.

#### *Communication And Empathy As A Solution*

Few of Williams’ plays dare to offer a solution for these conflicts that he seems to advance as intrinsic to the human condition (they certainly seem a part of his condition). However, two of the plays discussed in these analyses seem to suggest a possible cure (or, if not a cure, at least a tonic). These are Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and The Night Of The Iguana. In both of these, the tormented character receives help and possible redemption because of the constant (honest) communicative efforts of another.

---

<sup>264</sup> Fritscher, J. Love and Death in Tennessee Williams. Loyola University Library, 1967.

In Cat On A Hot Tin Roof Brick is disconnected from his True Self, almost a living-dead man. Maggie, however, as her famous declaration states 'is alive', and insists repeatedly that Brick should face the truth and be honest with himself. Big Daddy does likewise, and Brick undergoes a virtual vivisection as these two – who genuinely love him – repeatedly hammer away at his pretence in an effort to access his personal reality. As has been shown in the analysis, in this way Brick does regain a vestige of himself and heals to at least some degree.

Likewise, Shannon in The Night Of The Iguana is a personal isolate who is hiding from himself and the persecutions he believes to be in the world, until the extraordinarily empathetic Hannah Jelkes engages him in a sincere and honest human interaction. Her personal philosophy of reaching out to others proves redemptive to him because it bridges the gap between his internal world and the objective external world. In this lies something to believe in and therein the means to the 'white light' he needs.

HANNAH: "... In fact, I've discovered something to believe in".

SHANNON: "...God?"

HANNAH: "No... Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it's just for one night only... One night communications between them on a veranda outside their... separate cubicles, Mr Shannon"<sup>265</sup>.

This simple tool (of communication with empathy) is in fact profoundly powerful. All the differing theories of object relations offered in this thesis share several core assertions – and one of these commonalities is that psychological health can only be achieved through a process of shifting away from personal, internal (part) object relating, towards an external (whole) object relating. Klein describes this in terms of the transition between the Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive positions. Fairbairn couches it as a transition between infantile and mature dependency and Winnicott refers to the infants needing to leap into the arms of the as-yet-unseen mother (to psychically 'create' or notice that she is there, with the aid of transitional objects).

---

<sup>265</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

Communications with another person that are characterised by empathy *demand* whole object, mature relating- they are not possible without it. Therefore, the simple act of reaching out to another person, if it is within the person's power, immediately initiates a degree of mature (whole) object relating.

Hannah says in an extraordinarily wise way that, "My occupation, this occupational therapy that I gave myself – painting and doing quick character sketches – made me look out of myself, not in, and gradually, at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see... the light of the world outside me – and I kept climbing towards it"<sup>266</sup>.

As the infant ultimately must decide to shift away from inward object relating in order to move towards healthy whole object relations – so should each individual with sufficient capacity to do so. Herein, Williams seems to suggest (and correctly so) lies one of the fundamental keys to psychological maturity, well-being and health.

In Tennessee Williams' case, his art was therefore, at least in part, redemptive for him. Through it he could reach out to others and in so doing explicate many of his own inner objects and difficulties. Consequently it is unsurprising to find that he (usually successfully) used writing to ward off his own personal demons and maintain sanity – as doing so allowed communication that forced him away from primitive, internal (part) object relations towards mature empathetic ones.

Unfortunately, his drama offered him more a tool for expressing than of real relating. Since his audience was limited in the degree to which it could respond, he was more a speaker than he was a conversationalist. Consequently, beautiful and useful though the lessons he gave the world are, they were tragically of only limited use to his tormented psyche.

---

<sup>266</sup> Williams, T. The Night Of The Iguana. Act 3.

## *Conclusion*

This thesis has examined four of Tennessee Williams' most esteemed works (namely The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar named Desire, Cat On A Hot Tin Roof and The Night Of The Iguana) from an object relational psychoanalytic viewpoint.

The characters in this play frequently seem fractured psychologically. The individual nature of these spiritual fragmentations has been discussed in depth in each respective analysis, though recurring themes have emerged within the analyses.

Specifically, the themes of loss, sexual guilt, obligation and the potential redemptive quality of interpersonal communications between people have recurred in the analyses. From an object relational perspective the character's battles (and often failures) to shift from immature inward-directed (part) object relations toward outer-directed mature (whole) object relations is prevalent.

In each analysis it has been found that some central event has triggered the character's neurosis and personal sense of despair. This event is usually one of loss (Amanda and Blanche both lose their husbands and Brick loses his closest friend) but occasionally is a persecution (Shannon's maternal rejection of his sexual impulse).

Within the plays the events of this trauma is either compounded (For Amanda by Tom's leaving, for Blanche by Stanley raping her) or is healed through empathetic and honest interaction with other people (Shannon with Hannah and Brick with Big Daddy and Maggie).

Such (dis)integration amongst the characters, from an object relational perspective, is indicative of either a regression towards infantile (Paranoid-Schizoid position / immature dependency) type relations, or a progression into mature (Depressive position / mature dependency) object relations.

The aim of this thesis has been to offer insight not only into some of the works of Tennessee Williams, but to at least some degree into his own mind.

The central findings from the analyses indicate that Williams was plagued by guilt and anxiety – probably initiated by his conservative upbringing and persecutory father. Consequently he adopted the defence of idealising his good objects, many of which he tragically lost (especially his sister Rose).

Therefore Tennessee found himself burdened with a chronic sense of guilt and anxiety – as well as acute remorse at having lost the loved object. This predisposed him towards regression into immature (part) object relations characteristic of early infancy. This is evidenced in his nervous breakdown following brief employment at his father's warehouse, and his severe decade-long depression following the death of his lover (Frank Merlo).

Through his art Williams' found a means of reaching out to others. The more empathetic and mature relation implicit in this was indeed partially redemptive for him, and so it is unsurprising to see evidence in his work that he suggests empathetic communication between people as deeply psychologically helpful.

Though his own dramatic communications, more one sided by definition, were tragically limited in redemptive quality for him, his work teaches us the valuable lesson that empathetic communication with others and sensitivity is a worthwhile path to tread towards self-ownership and health.

*We come to each other, gradually, but with love. It is the short reach of my arms that hinders, not the length and multiplicity of theirs. With love and with honesty, the embrace is inevitable”.*

*Tennessee Williams: Person-To-Person*

*(Prescript to Cat On A Hot Tin Roof)*

*“Although healthy people communicate and enjoy communicating, the other fact is equally true, that each individual is an isolate, permanently non-communicating, permanently unknown, in fact unfound”.*

**Donald Winnicott: In Ones Bones.**

**Pg 31**

*Supplement to Biography: Later Significant Life events*

Besides Williams' early life that has been given more attention in the main body of this thesis, there were other significant events that were either formative or interesting. Some of these are briefly discussed.

Tennessee recalled his childhood in Mississippi as 'idyllic', despite an acute case of diphtheria that left him with a fear of choking to death until he died (ironically, in precisely this way).

One of the first significant events of Tom's life was the family's move from Mississippi to St. Louis in 1918. Not only did his mother rebel against this change, but also Tom found himself an outsider. Finding and reviling this money-driven, homogeneity-seeking world caused Williams, throughout his work, to plead the case of individualism assaulted by an over-materialised society. This is perhaps best depicted in the relationship between Blanche and Stanley in A Streetcar Named Desire.

In 1929 Williams enrolled at the University of Missouri to study Journalism. He did this partly inspired by the fact that he had sold a horror story shortly before for thirty-five dollars, and was convinced that he could make writing pay. Hence his decision to become a journalist was also an attempt to prove to his father that he could succeed, and not be the failure his father assumed he would be<sup>267</sup>.

Two years later (during the depression) he dropped out of school at his father's suggestion and began working in the shoe factory his father managed. He despised this job – as is suggested in Tom's plight in The Glass Menagerie - writing until late at night after work as a means to cope. Eventually this proved too much for him, and he had a nervous break down.

After recovering, he continued writing at his grandparent's home. Whilst there several of his early plays were performed in St Louis and Memphis. During this, Rose's

---

<sup>267</sup> Roudine, M. The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997

mental condition deteriorated. In a fight between Edwina and Cornelius, Rose interpreted a gesture from her father (which he claimed was meant to be placatory) as sexual, and suffered a psychotic break down. It was shortly after this that she was lobotomised.

In 1938 Tom graduated from the University of Iowa and moved to New Orleans, changing his name to Tennessee (and entering a homosexual lifestyle). American Blues (a collection of one act plays) won him an award in the same year.

In 1940 Tennessee saw the first professional production of one of his plays (Battle Of Angels – that was to be rewritten as Orpheus Descending in 1958). It was a failure. Following this, Williams continued to struggle until the turning point of his career that came in 1944-1945 when The Glass Menagerie was professionally produced first in Chicago (and immediately well received by both audiences and critics) and shortly thereafter on Broadway (to a similarly positive reception).

This success offered financial freedom, and Williams went to Mexico where he began working on what would become A Streetcar named Desire. This play was staged in 1947 and received a very affirmative response, including winning many awards. In this year alone Williams won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, The Donaldson Award and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. The success of the play was exceptional – arguably the greatest of his career, and offered him the financial freedom to travel and also buy a home in Key West, Florida.

Williams met Frank Merlo during this period and the two became lovers until Merlo's death in 1961 from lung cancer. Their relationship marked probably the most productive period in Williams' career, producing such masterpieces as The Rose Tattoo, Sweet Bird of Youth, Suddenly Last Summer, notably Cat On A Hot Tin Roof (for which he won his second Pulitzer Prize) and The Night of The Iguana.

Williams' was devastated by Merlo's death (probably being reminded of the loss of his other loved person - Rose) and declined into a severe depression that was to last for ten years. His (already established) dependency on drugs worsened and his work was not consistent in quality.

In spite of this, he received several accolades during this time, including the Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, a Medal of Honour from the National Arts Club and an Honorary Doctorate from Harvard University.

Eventually, Williams' died on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 1983. Ironically, this happened at the Hotel Elysee – calling to mind the apartment building (Elysian Fields) from A Streetcar Named Desire. He supposedly died from accidentally swallowing the cap of one of his pill bottles.