博士論文

題目

Embracing Reality:
Struggles of Self in the Plays
of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee

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氏名　村上陽香

Embracing Reality: Struggles of Self in the Plays of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee

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日本語要旨

現実を抱き締める
――テネシー・ウィリアムズとエドワード・オールビーの劇に見る自己の葛藤

序章　現実と向き合うこと、現実を描くこと

序章では、まずテネシー・ウィリアムズとエドワード・オールビーの家庭環境について振り返る。いずれの作家の幼少期も不幸なものだったが、家族は二人にとってのミューズとなった。彼らの作品の中には家族を連想させる人物が多く登場することが共通点として挙げられる。

また、二人の共通点としては同性愛者であることも挙げられる。このこともまた、二人を家族と疎遠にした要因の一つである。

両親を信頼出来ないどころか彼らに拒絶されることで、二人の作家は「自分とは何者か」という問いに晒されただろう。本論では彼らが向き合い続けた現実というものとの関わり方について時系列的に作品を分析することで考察していく。ここでいう現実とは、「変えられない環境の中での自己」と定義づける。「何者であるか」と「何者でありたいか」との大きな溝を描きながら、二人の作家が劇作と人生を通じて、どのように現実と向き合っていったかについて検証していく。

第一章　初期の成功作における現実と幻想

第一章では、ウィリアムズの『欲望という名の電車』とオールビーの『ヴァージニア・ウルフなんて怖くない』を扱い、初期の成功作において規範から逸脱しているとされている登場人物がいかに現実から逃れ、幻想に縋ろうとしていたかについて論じている。

まずは『欲望という名の電車』において、ブランチの抱く欲望について分析する。同性愛者であった夫アランの死後、ブランチは多くの男性と肉体関係を持つ。ブランチは淑女の振る舞いとセクシャルな振る舞いを織り交ぜながらミッチに迫るが、これはブランチが心を癒せる場所を探しているからである。また、新聞集金の少年にブランチはキスをするが、これは若くして死んだアランの姿を彼に求めていたからである。最終的にブランチは幻想の世界に入り込んでしまう

が、そこは本作の有名な台詞が示唆するように死者のための「楽園」であり、愛する者を愛することができる穏やかな場所であると考えられる。ウィリアムズの初期の作品で描かれる同性愛者は、死を選ぶほかなかった。異性愛者でありながら性的に規範から逸脱していたブランチは、同性愛者の望みである「愛する者を愛せる場所」である幻想の世界、死後の楽園へと向かったのだ。

次に『ヴァージニア・ウルフなんて怖くない』を分析した。本作では、二組の夫婦が夜通し行う宴が舞台である。また、ホスト側の夫婦、大学学長の娘マーサと歴史学部准教授ジョージは架空の息子を育てており、明日が彼の 21 歳の誕生日だということが発覚する。本論では宴の中でゲームを行われる順番に沿って分析して、最終的には架空の息子を殺すことについて考察する。第一、第二のゲームは口頭で行われるフィクション作りのゲームであり、語り手は聞き手の知られたくない過去を作り話のような体で暴露する。第三のゲームはホステスを犯そうというもので、ゲスト夫婦の夫、生物学部教員のニックが挑戦するが、失敗する。ここではニックの大学組織の一員としての野心と、マーサがその野心の客体として利用されてきたという事実が見えてくる。最終ゲームでは、マーサが息子を育て上げた過程を語り、同時にジョージがレクイエムを唱え、最後には彼が事故で死んだと宣言する。ジョージはマーサを見て、夫婦で作り上げたフィクションが現実の世界に侵入し始めていることに気付き、フィクションそのものを壊す。最終的には怯えながらも子どもがいない、望まれた理想的な家庭を築けない自分たちの現実を受け入れながら寄り添う夫婦の姿が映し出される。

本章の二作を分析して分かるのは、ウィリアムズとオールビーがそれぞれ初期の作品において、現実対幻想の争いを描いて観客に受け入れられていたことである。

第二章　失敗の中で

第二章ではウィリアムズの『二人芝居』とオールビーの『ダビュークから来た婦人』を扱い、キャリア中期の失敗作について考察している。初期の作品が現実対幻想の構図を取っているとすると、ここでは現実対現実の攻防が映し出されている。

『二人芝居』は劇作家兼役者のフェリスと役者クレアの兄妹が、二人きりで劇

中劇「二人芝居」を行うものである。舞台上には必要なプロップが足りておらず、フェリスは観客に想像力を用いるよう依頼し、フェリスとクレアは口頭で下書きを読み上げるような形で動きを説明しながら劇中劇を続ける。フェリスは劇中劇が始まる前、クレアに「作品に没入することが大事」であると告げている。その一方で、上演時は自分が演じていることに意識的な台詞が続く。この矛盾が解決するのは、フェリスが劇中劇の劇作家として存在している場合のみである。また、同様にクレアは劇中劇の共同制作者であると自ら宣言している。つまり、本作で重要なのは二人が即興で劇中劇を制作しているという点である。劇中劇の中の二人の状況は枠組み劇の二人の状況とパラレルをなす。特に劇中劇の二人が家から出られないという点と、枠組み劇の二人が劇場に閉じ込められているという点が類似している。寒さと暗さの増す中、フェリスとクレアは一度中止した劇中劇を再度上演することを決め、その中に没入していく。これは二人が劇中劇の現実を生きることで枠組み劇の現実に対抗して生き延びようとしていることを示す。本作は何度も書き直しを経ているが、ウィリアムズも劇作を続けることで生き延びようとしていたと分析できる。

『ダビュークから来た婦人』では、闖入者のエリザベスとオスカーに注目して、二人が他の登場人物と関わり合う第二幕をパラレル・ワールドが交錯する場と仮定して考察する。死を目前にしたジョーは、疎遠な母と、彼女の死を受け入れられない夫サムに不満を隠せない。二人の闖入者は彼女の母と夫に成り代わり、ジョーの最期の願いを叶える。オールビーいわく本作はいかに現実が当事者の必要としているもので決められていくか、そして現実の持つ複数性について扱った作品だと説明している。エリザベスとオスカーはジョーとサムの世界に挑戦するパラレル・ワールドの住人であるが、同時にジョーに無限の代替世界の可能性があるということを示すエージェントとしても機能していることに自覚的である。終盤にジョーが死を迎えることによって、ジョーを中心軸としたパラレル・ワールドは消え、死が世界の終わりと結び付けられる。

ウィリアムズとオールビーは本章にて扱った二作で複数の現実というものを描いたが、謎を多く残す作品は観客や批評家に受け入れられなかった。しかし彼らは現実の複数性、重層性について描き続け、次章で説明する晩年作に辿りつくのである。

第三章　全てがついに終わるとき

第三章ではウィリアムズとオールビーがそれぞれ苦難の時期を乗り越えて書いた晩年の作品を扱う。ウィリアムズの『曇ったもの、澄んだもの』とオールビーの『三人の背の高い女たち』は自伝的・伝記的な作品であり、二人が中期作品で複数の現実を戦わせたところから、次第に自分自身に起こったあらゆる出来事を受け止められるようになったことを分析していく。

『曇ったもの、澄んだもの』は若き作家オーガストをウィリアムズのオルターエゴとして、ウィリアムズの初めての同性の恋人であるキップと、その連れ合いとして創作されたクレアとの三人で過ごした時間を舞台とする。それは 1940 年のことであるが、舞台上にはそれ以前やそれ以後にウィリアムズの人生に関わった人物も登場し、作中の時間が自由浮動的に描かれていることが分かる。実際、舞台の時代設定については 1940 年と 1980 年の両方であることが書かれている。作中、オーガストは「延期されたパレードを待ち侘びている子どものような気分になる」と言うが、このパレードの意味を時間軸の自由浮動性と併せて考察していく。パレードは白内障で曇ったオーガストの片目が象徴する欲望だけではなく、もう一方の澄んだ目が象徴する愛情も揃って初めてやってくるものであり、本作が 1980 年の視点から 1940 年の出来事及びオーガスト/ウィリアムズの人生の中の出会いを振り返っているものだとすると、1940 年のオーガストはパレードを待つだけではなく、パレードを率いる当事者であると考えられる。本作はウィリアムズの『回想録』とは別の回想録として、彼の愛と欲望の日々及びそこに残る美しさや懺悔の気持ちさえも結晶化したものであると結論付けた。

『三人の背の高い女たち』はオールビーの養母の人生について書かれた作品である。本作は決して養母に対する復讐作ではないとオールビーは主張する。しかし、作中では養母が年齢とともに衰えていく様子や彼女が粉々に砕け散るといった表現があり、第二幕では 92 歳の A、52 歳の B、26 歳の C という三つの年齢の違う姿として養母は描き出され、互いを否定し合う姿も見られる。ここには養母の解体が象徴的に描き出されている。オールビー自身の若き日の姿も登場するが、彼と A との関わりは主題としての養母の強さ、引いては生前の養母の強権的な姿を映し出すものである。分析を進めることで、本作はオールビーが養

母の希望や絶望、期待や喪失など、良いことも悪いことも含めて彼女の人生を丸ごと描き出したものであることが分かる。

この章で扱った二作はどちらも二人の劇作家たちが円熟した頃に書かれたものであり、人生の現実そのものと向き合ったことによって可能になったものである。これまで幻想や代替的な現実と争ってきた彼らの現実は、ようやく良きも悪しきも含めて受け入れられるものとなる。

結論　現実「そのもの」と向き合い、抱き締める

人生とは受け入れがたい状況を人に突きつけるものである。幼い頃から家庭環境などに恵まれなかったウィリアムズとオールビーは、その不幸を作品へと織り込んでいる。繰り返しにはなるが、本論文において現実とは「変えられない環境」ではなく「その中での自己」である。二人の作家は人生の旅路の中で葛藤を重ね、ついに自分自身を受け入れられる存在へと変貌させていく。彼らは執筆を通してその時その時の現実との向き合い方を表現し、晩年には現実を抱きしめられる存在へとなっていったのである。

Synopsis

Embracing Reality: Struggles of Self in the Plays of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee

Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee do not share their successful years, but they have things in common when we look into their personal lives. For instance, both playwrights were not able to rely on their parents since their childhood. Williams' father was violent and alcoholic and Albee was adopted into the Albee family but was not loved by his adoptive parents. They made their bitter experiences through their unpleasant childhood into their muses. Both Williams and Albee depicted distressed female characters who resemble their family members. Another aspect they have in common is that they were homosexual. This was another reason for them not being able to get along with their families.

Being denied love and affection from their parents, both playwrights must have been confronted by an existential question: "Who am I?" This thesis aims to discuss how they tackled reality, or in other words, themselves in an unchangeable situation, by examining six plays, three of each, in chronological order.

Chapter 1 examines how the characters find refuge from their reality. Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Martha and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* cannot achieve or return to what is required to be normal or ideal. To escape from reality, they create an illusionary world, magical for Blanche and fictional for the married couple.

Blanche's desire is often recognized as physical and sexual.

However, she is looking for a safe environment where she can think about her dead husband Allan. Allan was a homosexual and Blanche's rejection of him drove him to suicide. At the end of the play, Blanche finds refuge in her illusionary world. Blanche is at Elysian Fields, a paradise for the dead. There, she can love Allan as she likes. By portraying the disaster of the heterosexual female character Blanche, Williams shows how homosexuals wish for an Elysium where they can love and be as their true selves.

Martha and George invite Nick and Honey to their house at the midnight right before their imaginary son's 21st birthday. The two couples play four games but they are unpleasant and hurting instead of fun and entertaining. The first two games show how George and Martha are good at creating fiction. The third game shows Nick's ambition to win the rat race at the college he and George work at and how Martha, the college president's daughter, has been objectified as a step for success. The final game deals with Martha and George's son. As Martha gives a speech about how the boy was brought up, George chants requiem in Latin. The fictional son is killed by George, who realizes that what was fiction is gnawing into reality. At the end, Martha and George are left without the shelter of fiction, frightened but closer together than ever.

Though the endings differ for the characters in the plays, both plays show an attempt not to look directly at how the characters do not meet the norms. Williams and Albee's early, successful plays are battlefields in which reality fights illusion.

By the time the playwrights reached their mid-career crisis,

the battles change to reality against reality. Chapter 2 takes a look at these battles.

The Two-Character Play written by Williams may seem like it has another reality-against-fiction structure, but for Felice and Clare, writing and acting the play-within-the-play, "The Two-Character Play," is by no means fictional. The siblings are engaged in producing the play in order to fight the cold and deserted environment they are put in. Their desire to survive is shown in how they choose the reality of "The Two-Character Play" which they make instead of the harsh reality in the frame play.

The Lady from Dubuque, written by Albee, deals with parallel worlds, an infinity of realities. Jo is about to die from illness and she feels anger towards her estranged mother and her husband Sam who cannot understand that she will be released from anguish only by death. The two intruders, Elizabeth and Oscar, are mysterious, but they come to Jo to give her what she wishes for: love and understanding. Jo's surroundings fight to dominate one another, and her reality changes at the last minute. Elizabeth and Oscar indeed come to Jo's deathbed as an intruder from a parallel world, but they seem to understand that they are only a possible alternative. Their role as agents who show Jo her infinitive possibilities depict Albee's intention to write the play as a question about our reality.

The two plays dealt with in this chapter were failures, but Williams and Albee both kept on writing, experimenting with dramaturgic structures. They were also fighting reality by producing realities.

Chapter 3 is where the battle finally ends. Reality becomes

something to embrace, not fight against. Williams and Albee overcame the fiascos and moved onto (auto)biographical plays.

Something Cloudy, Something Clear is the most autobiographical play Williams ever wrote. August, a still unsuccessful young writer, serves as Williams' alter ego. Other characters except for Clare are all adopted from Williams' real life. Set in both 1940 and 1980, the time flow in this play is not linear and floats around as August looks back at his past. By taking the parade metaphor August uses into consideration, we see how he wanted to fulfill both his sexual desire and love-seeking heart. This play is a memoir in which Williams crystallizes his past experiences.

Three Tall Women more of a biographical play of Albee's adoptive mother Frances than an autobiographical play. Though the mother and the son did not get along, Albee did not intend to write this play as a revenge. Nevertheless, he breaks his adoptive mother into three different female characters, A, B, and C. Different in age, the three denies each other, showing Albee's dismantling of Frances. Still, as we read closely, it becomes clear that Albee has depicted Frances' whole life including both her good and bad experiences.

Williams and Albee both reached a point where they can think and write about reality as something to reconcile with. They have made themselves into someone who can embrace their past, present, and perhaps the future by continuing to face reality in their careers.

Embracing Reality: Struggles of Self in the Plays of Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee

Introduction: Facing and Depicting Reality

Although their popular and successful years do not overlap, Tennessee Williams (1922–1983) and Edward Albee (1928–2016) do curiously share several other aspects. First, let us take a look at their personal history.[1]

Both playwrights suffered intrafamilial trouble ever since their childhood. Born in Columbus, Mississippi, Williams grew up in a peaceful Southern town where his grandfather served as a rector. Due to Williams' father's job at a shoe company, the family had to leave his grandparents and move to St. Louis. The troubles started then. The new, noisy environment shattered Williams' and his sister Rose's delicate mental state. Their father was alcoholic and violent, and both parents were hostile toward each other. In 1943, after suffering from mental illness and misunderstanding of her state by her parents, especially her father, Rose was forced to undergo a lobotomy. Williams, away from home at that time, was not able to save her.

Compared to Williams' life, Albee's began quite differently. Right after he was born, his mother gave him away to an orphanage, and the wealthy couple of Reed and Frances Albee adopted him as their only child. It was through his grandfather, one of the co-founders of a vaudeville theater chain throughout the U.S., that Albee first stepped into the world of drama and at an early age. What he lacked was the love and affection a child so young may wish for. His father did not care about him, and his mother was so dominating that they never had a truly good relationship.

Despite their different circumstances, both Williams and Albee evidently shared unpleasant childhoods. But they made

their bitter experiences into their muses and channeled them into their art. Since their intrafamilial struggles inspired most of their work, it is not surprising that many of their characters resemble their family members. Albee's *American Dream* is "filled with references to scenes from Albee's life" (Gussow 140–1). For Albee, his adoptive mother, Frances Albee, was a (mostly unpleasant) muse. Though many distressed women appear in his plays, it is not surprising that they all somewhat resemble Frances. In fact, *Three Tall Women*, which I will discuss in chapter three, is actually a play about Frances' life.

Though Williams was more autobiographical in his work than Albee—he once said, famously, "Blanche is me"—he also has a muse from his family who appears in many of his plays: Rose. Even if we look beyond *The Glass Menagerie*, in which Laura is obviously inspired by Rose, his other plays also have mentally unstable female characters who share some resemblances with Rose. *The Two-Character Play*, which I will discuss in chapter 2, focuses on a distressed brother and sister who find themselves in a desperate situation they are incapable of escaping. The sister Clare is easily upset and seems to have been in a sanitarium before. Thus, evidently, that Williams and Albee drew some of their characters from the women in their families is another feature they share.

Another aspect they have in common, as anyone who specializes in American Drama would know, is that they were homosexual, which was also another reason they could not get along with their families. For being so physically and mentally weak, Williams' father castigated him, calling him a sissy or "Miss Nancy" ("Chronology" 1010). Albee's mother cut him out of her grand will, a fact he only realized after her death, the

reason for which, it is said, was her inability to accept his sexuality. However, while they were both homosexual, since they belonged to different periods in history, they differed in the way they accepted and revealed their sexuality. Until Williams' *Memoirs* came out in 1975, Williams was a closeted gay. Albee, who belonged to a new era, was more open. What is curious about these facts is that while Williams challenged the audience with his homosexual characters (as we will see in chapter 1), Albee seldom dealt with homosexuality in his plays—though he did come out as gay, that did not mean he was a queer playwright and instead stuck to the subject of dysfunctional families. While Williams also did write about families, he was more inclined to write about people who were marginalized due to their mental instability or illnesses. Both playwrights thus focused on what troubled them most in their lives.

Both Williams and Albee were unable to trust their parents and denied their love and attention, so they must have been confronted by that familiar existential question: "Who am I?" This thesis aims to discuss the reality of the two playwrights that so troubled them, the reality with which, in the end, they reconciled.

Since reality can be defined in a multitude of ways, it is important to discuss how it is used in this thesis. To begin from definition, reality is their selves. This applies to both the characters in the plays and the playwrights who created them. To be more precise, by reality, I mean their selves which, despite their will to do so, they cannot change. Many of their characters are thrown into situations where they become marginalized or cannot fulfill their wish. The conflict between who they actually are and who they should/want to be is a conflict that is featured

in several of Williams and Albee's plays. This thesis studies six plays, three from each playwright, and lines them up in chronological order. In three chapters, I will examine how Williams and Albee tackled the existential question they were confronted with.

In chapter 1, I will discuss William's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962). Although these two plays are apart in the sense of their production years, they were both written when their writers were in their mid-30s. Both plays enjoyed Broadway success and are renowned as one of their major works. Both plays have characters, predominantly female characters, who do not fit into what society considers ideal. As deviators, they try to escape reality by using their imagination and crafting illusions or fictions that will accommodate their desired selves.

In chapter 2, I will focus on two plays that, coincidently, ended with only 12 performances: Williams' *The Two-Character Play* (1975) and Albee's *The Lady from Dubuque* (1980). They were apparent failures, but the authors' struggles in crafting these plays are worthwhile to consider. To a certain extent, discussing these plays demand a detour into the idea of metawriting. When they were working on these plays, Williams and Albee were in a difficult period in their careers and personal lives. Similarly, the characters in both plays struggle against their environment and attempt to find or choose alternative situations that align with their needs and desires. Since these two plays were written several years after the start of their careers, at a time when they were mired in a period of difficulty, analyzing these plays reveals the survival strategies Williams and Albee employed to deal with their troubles.

In chapter 3, the discussion will proceed to the late plays: Williams' *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1981)—one of his most autobiographical plays, with almost all the characters, except one, drawn from his life—and Albee's *Three Tall Women* (1991), which, despite its autobiographical features, is rather a biographical play about Frances. In the two plays, we can see how Williams and Albee finally embraced the situations they were put in and how they managed to survive there—in other words, their "reality"—throughout their lives.

When I say "embraced," I mean that they accepted themselves, including their flaws, failures, and rejections. But it does not mean that they compromised—they did not give up on themselves or their surroundings. Instead, they managed to make their selves into people (or maybe we can almost say characters) who survived their realities. In other words, Williams and Albee created their realities, their true selves, into something unchangeable but acceptable. Here, "acceptable" does not mean behaving like Blanche or Martha and indulging themselves in illusions. Instead, it means that they reconciled with all their troubles, problems, flaws, and failures; that they came face to face with what disturbed them, accepted them as part of their selves, and transformed them into art.

To embrace reality is not easy. Even for these two grand playwrights, it took a lifetime. In this thesis, I hope to illustrate how they struggled with their selves, how these struggles manifest in their plays, and how they finally overcame them and embraced the reality of themselves.

Chapter 1
Reality and Illusion in the Early Successes

Introduction

Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee both rose to stardom as playwrights early in their careers. The two plays discussed in this chapter are among their most important works.

On Broadway, success means audience acceptance. Neither Williams nor Albee was obsessed with commercial success, but their works were welcomed by the audience. The two plays discussed in this chapter deal with norm consciousness. Although both plays have characters who deviate from the norm, the audience loved these characters. This is because their deviation and the ending they meet did not harm or threaten what most people believe should be the norm. Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a sexual deviant, but at the end of the play, she is trapped in her world of magic. Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* knows that an "ideal" family needs children, but she is not blessed with any. At the end of the play, she loses the imaginary son she and her husband, George, created, and is left to face reality defenseless.

This chapter discusses how these characters are tormented by reality and how they erect illusions to resist it. The discussion will proceed with how the playwrights incorporate the reality of the deviants into their works to create characters.

1 The Final Destination of *A Streetcar Named Desire*: Magic and the Desire of Blanche as a "Sexual Deviator"

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as in other Williams' masterpieces, there is a deceased homosexual who does not appear on stage: Blanche's late husband, Allan Grey. As a beautiful poet, he shares a similarity with Sebastian Venable of *Suddenly Last Summer*. Allan, who commits suicide after Blanche rejects him, also shares some similarities with Skipper from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* , who, after being rejected by his best friend, Brick, chooses to die. Although Williams himself stated that he did not feel the need to make homosexuality a theme in his plays (Spoto 319), invisible queer characters are nevertheless present in his early works.

What distinguishes Allan from Skipper or Sebastian is that the latter two characters have prominent roles. Allan is barely there in the play, and the film version does not even address his homosexuality. He is invisible and barely mentioned, and his homosexual element is inconspicuous, which makes it difficult for the audience to register his importance to the play.

Streetcar seems much more like the story of Blanche's downfall, and reading closely, it can be said that it is, rather than a queer play, an extremely heterosexual piece. When Blanche appears on stage for the first time, she behaves as a Southern belle, symbolized by her all-white costume, but this image is contradicted by her debauchery, which is revealed later in the play. This contradiction between what is ideal and what is real gradually drives her to a mental breakdown. As the play progresses, it becomes clear that Blanche, before she arrives in New Orleans to visit Stella, had physical relations with several men night after night. It is thus not surprising that the "desire" mentioned in the play's title seems to have taken over Blanche.

However, we must not forget that Blanche's downfall begins

with the death of Allan, a homosexual character. When we interpret Blanche's desire through Allan's existence, we can see her heartbreaking psychological desire for fantasy, which cannot be explained by physical or sexual desire alone. In this section, I will decipher how Williams weaves homosexual desire into *Streetcar* through Blanche, who is both heterosexual and "sexually deviant."

1.1 Repetition of Allan's Suicide: The Varsouviana Polka and Despair

First, I will analyze Allan's suicide. In the sixth act, she tells Mitch that after she finds out about Allan's homosexuality, she impulsively accuses him by telling him, "I saw! I know! You disgust me…" (*Streetcar* 528) on a dance floor. Allan runs outside and shoots his head off with a revolver.

For Blanche, Allan is not just any husband but, according to Stella, a boy she almost worshipped and adored (*Streetcar* 533). As Allan's wife, Blanche probably never suspected that her husband might be a homosexual. However, though it is not clearly explained, Blanche seems to have witnessed a distressing scene of his infidelity.

> BLANCHE: […] Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty—which wasn't empty, but had two people in it…the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friends for years. (*Streetcar* 527)

As a Southern belle, Blanche must not have been able to reconcile

with Allan's homosexuality. Blanche's thinking, as Elia Kazan interprets it, is conditioned by the traditional Southern idea that women have to obey men and be protected by them (Murphy, *Williams and Kazan* 35). Men, while having more freedom, are also obligated to ensure the safety of their wives and families. This is a typically heterosexual and patriarchal way of thinking. Senata Karolina Bauer-Briski describes Blanche's life as follows:

> Although her personality is, to a certain extent, responsible for her catastrophe, it is important to bear in mind that her experience with Allan had a major impact on the course of her future life. Had Allan been heterosexual, things would have turned out differently and Blanche might have been able to lead a perfectly normal and happy life. (Bauer-Briski 47)

What drastically changes Blanche's life is Allan's homosexuality. If he were a heterosexual, Blanche's life could have been perfectly normal and happy. In 1949, at the London premiere of the play, owing to Lord Chamberlain's censorship, Allan is found in the "empty room" with, instead of an older man, an African-American woman (Hooper 74). Of course, finding her beloved husband having an affair with a different woman may shock Blanche. Moreover, African Americans were seen as servants for Blanche at that time, so she could have interpreted the affair as disgraceful and degrading. However, Blanche herself is not new to affairs and liaisons.

> BLANCHE (*Picking up a large envelope containing more papers*): There are thousands of papers, stretching back

> over hundreds of years, affecting Belle Reve as, piece by piece, our improvident grandfathers and fathers and uncles and brothers exchanged the land for their epic fornications—to put it plainly! (*She removes her glasses with an exhausted laugh.*). (*Streetcar* 490)

When Stanley asks Blanche about the loss of Belle Reve, where the sisters grew up, Blanche answers as above, saying that her male ancestors' infidelities were the cause.[1] Considering that Blanche has seen men act in that way, if she had seen Allan with a woman, she might not have been so critically damaged as in the original, uncensored play.

However, it is not Allan's homosexuality itself that throws Blanche into utter despair. As I already mentioned, Allan's suicide is caused by Blanche's castigation. As Mark Lilly points out, the tragedy of Blanche and Allan is like that of Skipper and Brick in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Lilly 117). In *Cat*, Brick resists his best friend Skipper's confession that he might be a homosexual, driving Skipper to his alcohol and drug addiction and his self-destructive end.

> BRICK: Yes!—I left out a long-distance call which I had from Skipper, in which he made a drunken confession to me and on which I hang up!—last time we spoke to each other in our lives…
> (*Muted ring stops as someone answers phone in a soft, indistinct voice in hall.*)
> BIG DADDY: You hung up?
> BRICK: Hung up. Jesus! Well—
> BIG DADDY: Anyhow now!—we have tracked down the

> lie with which you're disgusted and which you are drinking to kill your disgust with, Brick. You been passing the buck. This disgust with mendacity is disgust with yourself.
>
> You!—dug the grave of your friend and kicked him in it!—before you'd face truth with him! (*Cat* 951; underline mine)

What is noteworthy about this incident is not only that Brick's rejection leads to Skipper's death but also that Brick himself becomes an alcoholic as a result. The reason for Brick's rejection can be traced back to the homophobia prevailing in the public mind. Brick judges his best friend not by what he thinks about Skipper himself but instead by using societal common sense and then rejecting him as a deviator. Both Blanche and Brick, despite the differences in their relationships, felt affection for Allan and Skipper, who they would not have rejected if they had seen them as individuals. What prevented them from doing so is the homophobia justified by a heterosexual ideology. To work through his guilt over letting his best friend die this way, Brick becomes an alcoholic.

In Blanche's case, having rejected Alan, she cannot shake off the guilt of killing him, and her life, haunted by Allan's death, begins to fall apart. When Allan committed suicide, Varsouviana Polka was playing on the dance floor, and since Blanche did not directly see the scene of the suicide, her memory of the incident is of the polka and the gunshot that interrupted it. Although a detailed explanation of this event does not appear until scene six, the polka is already playing at the end of scene one, which shows how Blanche is constantly haunted by this incident. When Stanley

asks her what happened to her deceased husband, Blanche's reaction makes the audience aware of how much this tragedy has affected her.

> STANLEY: […] You were married once, weren't you?
> (*The music of the polka rises up, faint in the distance.*)
> BLANCHE: Yes. When I was quite young.
> STANLEY: What happened?
> BLANCHE: The boy—the boy died. (*She sinks back down.*) I'm afraid I'm—going to be sick!
> (*Her head falls on her arms.*). (*Streetcar* 482)

This dialogue appears at the end of scene one, but the topic is not carried over to the second. At this point, the polka is played, and the audience can see how the topic of her husband disturbs Blanche. This sets the stage for her future behavior and her explanation of the incident with Allan in scene six.

Michael S. D. Hooper refers to the repeated polka as follows:

> He [Allan] may be a dead homosexual, out of sight to the audience and symbolic of a closeted existence, but Williams insist on his continuing influence through the Varsouviana, the gunshot and the locomotive that all powerfully displace the moment with the memory of disclosure and betrayal. (Hooper 74)

In the play, Allan's tragedy occurred more than ten years ago, but in the intervening years, Blanche must have heard the polka in her head many times. In the play's second half, even after the identity of the music has been revealed, the polka still plays, but

it is playing during the scenes that show Blanche trapped both physically and mentally. Blanche must have relived Allan's suicide, a symbol of betrayal and guilt, over and over again during these years, and it is not hard to imagine that she is mentally trapped.

1.2 Filling the Emptiness: A Means Named Desire

After losing Allan, Blanche is tormented by emptiness. Stella explains to her husband, "I think Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human!" (*Streetcar* 533). Blanche loved Allan so much she deified him, and simply losing him would have been enough to throw her into despair, so the guilt of being the catalyst for his death weighs heavily on her.

To fill the emptiness left in the wake of Allan's death, Blanche becomes physically involved with men she does not know.

> BLANCHE: […] Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan—intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with…I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one place to another, hunting for protection—here and there, in the most—unlikely places—even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but—somebody wrote the superintendent about it—"This woman is morally unfit for her position!" (*Streetcar* 545-6; underlines mine)

It is important to note that Blanche's debauchery begins immediately after Allan's death and continues until her arrival in

New Orleans. In other words, she has also experienced the loss of Belle Reve during that time, and the effects of that loss are also evident in her messed-up life. As for why Blanche goes from one man to another, it is necessary to consider the cases of both Allan and Belle Reve.

First, we will examine the loss of Belle Reve and Blanche's lustful life. Although Blanche grew up in an elegant upper-class family, the loss of Belle Reve brings an end to the beautiful Southern life she was accustomed to. Signi Falk describes Williams' writing of the Southern lady as follows:

> They are all out of touch with the world around them, and they live in worlds of their own making: one of soft sentimental dreams about their own charms, or one about their own past successes with men. In some cases, because of the conflict within themselves, they are unaware of their own unseemly behavior. (Falk 71)

It seems to have been important for Blanche, who frequently worries about her appearance, to continue to be desired by men. Youth and beauty symbolize the glory of her happier days. In addition, starting with the death of her parents, people die one after another in Belle Reve, which makes Blanche say, "Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep!...Stella. Belle Reve was his headquarters!" (*Streetcar* 480).The pervasive scent of death acts as a reminder of aging and decay, and so it might have been necessary for her to keep confirming her youth and unchanging charm in order to escape the horror.[2]

After Belle Reve is finally mortgaged, Blanche lives in a second-class hotel, the Hotel Flamingo, falling completely out of

the upper class to which she was born, living on a meager teaching job salary. Raised as a Southern lady, her aim was to live under the protection of men. So, having lost her once elegant lifestyle, she must have been desperate to find someone to marry.

But how to find a proper man for marriage and security? That is her problem. Brenda Murphy, noting Blanche's continuing obsession with her appearance, offers the following observation about the relationships she forms with men:

> To convey her belief that protection can only be found through men, and men can only be acquired through sexual attractiveness, Blanche's near obsession with her appearance needed to be obvious to the audience. (*Williams and Kazan* 37; underline mine)

From what Blanche knows of the Belle Reve men, the women they want are the sexually attractive ones. So, in her haste to get married, and because she wants to exhibit her attractiveness and have someone rescue her from her miserable situation, she dives into relations with several men. This could mean that she was trying to rebuild her life using men's desires, not her own sexual desire. In other words, for Blanche, physical desire is not so much a thing that she has or wishes to fulfill but rather a means she uses to achieve her other aims which derive from her heart.

She acts on this idea that men are attracted to women with sexual attractiveness ever since she arrives in New Orleans and sets her eyes on Mitch. Blanche sometimes appeals to her sexuality to gain Mitch's attention, who respects her more than Stanley and the other men. In explaining Blanche's sexual desires, Bauer-Briski uses her interactions with Mitch as an example.

First, on the poker night when Blanche first meets Mitch, she deliberately changes her clothes in a place where her silhouette and sexual appeal are clearly visible to the men. Furthermore, when she invites Mitch to Stella and Stanley's house, she speaks to him in French, offering direct and seductive words, certain that he will not understand them. Bauer-Briski thus believes that Blanche is also trying to get into a physical relationship with him (Bauer-Briski 55). Since Blanche's past lewd life is later revealed to Mitch, and since Blanche rejects him when he tries to get sexually involved with her without marriage, it is still difficult to believe that Blanche is simply approaching Mitch and other men to quench her thirst as an oversexed woman. With that said, I must agree that Blanche is, without a doubt, consciously emphasizing her sexuality.

On the other hand, Blanche sometimes appears to Mitch as a chaste Southern lady, motivated not only because she still wishes to think of herself as a pure lady, but also because she understands that a woman's value is enhanced by her unwillingness to immediately give into a man's needs.

> BLANCHE: [···] Mitch—Mitch is coming at seven. I guess I am just feeling nervous about our relations. (*She begins to talk rapidly and breathlessly.*) He hasn't gotten a thing but a goodnight kiss, that's all I have given him, Stella. I want his respect. And men don't want anything they get too easy. But on the other hand men lose interest quickly. Especially when the girl is over—thirty. They think a girl over thirty ought to—the vulgar term is—"put out." ···And I—I'm not "putting out." Of course he—he doesn't know—I mean I haven't informed him—

of my real age! (*Streetcar* 517; underline mine)

However, Blanche struggles to win Mitch over by combining her virginal, ladylike demeanor with her sexually appealing behavior. Let us take another look at why Blanche wants Mitch. Of course, as I have already mentioned, the main reason is that she needs a marriage partner to stabilize her life, but when we get down to it, Blanche herself tells us that her true desire is deep in her heart. She says that "[she wants] to breathe quietly again!" (*Streetcar* 517) and feels that Mitch "seemed to be gentle—a cleft in the rock of a world that [she] could hide in!" (*Streetcar* 546). She thinks she can find shelter and rest by marrying Mitch. Marrying him will help her find an environment to calm her nerves, which have been on edge for several years. According to Bauer-Briski, Blanche is not attracted to Mitch himself.

> Blanche neither loves Mitch nor desires him physically. She is after the function he could take on, in other words, be her husband and take care of her, so that she would not have to worry about anything anymore. (Bauer-Briski 87)

Philip C. Kolin also highlights that Mitch's masculinity is incomplete (Kolin 135–6). This suggests why Blanche, though she does not love Mitch, still wants him to consider her sexually attractive.

1.3 A Virgin with Desire: Obsession with "Youth"

For Blanche, the loss of her job, her home, and the refinement

she had since childhood signal the collapse of her world, a surely heavy burden. Still, what continues to torment her more than anything is, as we can see from the repeated Varsouviana polka, Allan's death. From here on, we will continue our discussion of Allan's death and Blanche's debauchery.

We have just confirmed that Blanche has physical relations with a number of men and seduces Mitch to gain the financial and emotional stability that marriage could bring. What this does not explain, however, is the relationship with her 17-year-old student, which results in her dismissal. That Blanche would approach her student for a shelter or a suitable marriage partner is hard to believe.

Furthermore, her approach to the young man who comes to collect money for the *Evening Star* is unlikely to be the result of her search for a husband. Though his age and appearance are not described, Blanche's description of him as a "child" suggests that he is also quite young.

Some, such as Murphy, still consider that the idea of Blanche's access to young men who are not capable of being her spouse is linked to the intensity of her sexual desire. This behavior, Murphy highlights, offers the audience the impression that she is seducing every man she meets (*Williams and Kazan* 42). However, there may be other interpretations as to why she is so strongly concerned with the "youth" of the men she meets.

Roxana Stuart asked Williams if he thought Blanche was seeing Allan in the young men. Williams denied this, replying that Blanche was imagining how Allan seduced young men (Londré, "Streetcar" 58). The idea that Blanche has relationships with several men acts out relationships among gay men like Allan can be linked to Williams' own sexual history, the truth of which

is revealed in *Memoirs*. However, when Blanche witnesses Allan with an older man, she does not know whether he has had relationships with men younger than himself. Presumably, Blanche did not witness Allan's homosexual encounters several times, and it seems unnatural that she would imagine a relationship between her husband and a younger man. Here, I would like to proceed with the idea that, as Stuart says, Blanche was seeking Allan's presence through young men.

Blanche repeatedly calls the man who comes to collect the *Evening Star* as the "young man" (*Streetcar* 518–9).

> BLANCHE: [···] Young man! Young, young, young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a Prince out of the Arabian Nights? (*Streetcar* 519)

That she refers to him as "young" suggests that she is clearly focusing on his youth. The stage directions also refer to him as "*the young man*" (*Streetcar* 518–20), suggesting that Williams consciously emphasizes the character's youth. Furthermore, in the dialogue that follows, Blanche says:

> BLANCHE: [···] Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good—and keep my hands off children··· (*Streetcar* 520)

Blanche is aware that she prefers young men. This, of course, leads to her relationship with her 17-year-old pupil, which leads to her dismissal.

Georges-Claude Guilbert, while showing some understanding of the argument that Blanche is acting like Allan and male

homosexuals and of the exchange between Stuart and Williams I mentioned earlier, takes another position.

> When she debauched her pupil back home, she was no doubt pursuing Allan's youth through him. The beautiful young man collecting for the *Evening Star* reminds her of Allan. (Guilbert 109)

Guilbert interprets Blanche's affairs with young men as her seeking Allan, pointing out that when Blanche refers to her husband, she rarely calls him by his name and never refers to him as a "man." Instead, she refers to him as "the boy" (*Streetcar* 482) or "young husband" (*Streetcar* 490). Blanche, who was sixteen when she married, describes herself as "a very young girl" (*Streetcar* 527), so from her point of view, they were probably children when they married.[3] Her emphasis on the youth of her pupil and the young man indicates that she has Allan in mind.

In addition, when Blanche talks to Stanley about astrology, she tells him about her sign, Virgo. This sign represents virginity, so Stanley, who already knows her past, laughs at her. Still, she says that in her heart, she has never told a lie (*Streetcar* 546). Guilbert, recognizing that Williams' intentions cannot be confirmed, offers the following possibility.

> Why does Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) constantly refer to herself as a maid, a single woman, and unmarried woman, when in fact she was married to Allan Grey? Especially in 1947, it would have been so much more convenient, respectable, and "in the order of things" to go by the widow label. It could be partly explained by

> the fact that she was married very young, and for a very short period of time. But could it not be because she never had sex with her husband? (Guilbert 90–1; underlines mine)
>
> As I intimated above, it is possible, though not absolutely certain, that he never managed to make love with her, that he was heterosexually impotent (which might partly explain why she refers to herself as a maid(en) rather than a widow, the marriage having never been consummated. (Guilbert 94)

There are characters in Williams' works who, despite their homosexual tendencies, have sexual relations with women, such as Brick in *Cat*. Williams himself had relationships with women, though very few, so Guilbert's idea cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, I think it is safe to assume that Blanche and Allan had no sex life or, if any, very little. But Blanche's preference for young men and boys reveals her desire for Allan. That she says and does things that make her believe that, deep down, she is a virgin suggests that she is trying to stop time in her heart so that she can stay in the pure young days when she was romantically involved with Allan. She still directs her innocence to Allan, the only man she has ever loved.[4] The mental repose she tries to achieve by marrying Mitch indicates that she will be able to spend her time thinking about Allan without being bothered by anything else.

1.4 Homosexuality and Death: Escape to Elysian Fields

As she recalls her memories of Allan and explains them to Mitch, Blanche regrets not helping him when he asked for it.

> BLANCHE: [···] He came for 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! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me—but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! (*Streetcar* 527; underline mine)

That Allan's suicide is caused by Blanche's disapproval of his homosexuality suggests that he was not accepting his own sexual orientation. His sexuality tormented him, and he wished to escape the guilt associated with it. Living in a society where it is considered "normal" and "ideal" to build and protect a family with a wife and children as a heterosexual, he must have not been able to overlook his "abnormality." Guilbert believes that it would have been almost impossible for 16-year-old Blanche to save Allan anyway, and that even if Blanche had not said anything on the dance floor, Allan would have eventually committed suicide from homophobia (Guilbert 96).[5]

As I have already mentioned, there is a strong connection between homosexuals and death in Williams' works; moreover, they either choose to die or are aware of their impending death. Not only Allan but also Skipper in *Cat* commits suicide. In *Last Summer*, though Sebastian does not directly commit suicide, when the boys chase him on the hill, he refuses to go down and runs up. He is thus unable to escape and is eaten alive by the

local boys (*Last Summer* 146). His mother, Mrs. Venable, says that "nothing was accidental, everything was planned and designed in Sebastian's life" (*Last Summer* 102). Sebastian's unreasonable choice that cost him his life can be interpreted as an indirect but bizarre suicide attempt.

What does the death of a homosexual mean? Here, we need to look at the expression that Allan was clinging to Blanche. As mentioned earlier, it is thought that Allan was struck by the fear of deviating from what was considered normal. That he tried to cling onto Blanche, who believed he was heterosexual and loved him, indicates Allan's desire to remain in a general heterosexual marriage and family. However, when Blanche is unable to save him, Allan chooses to kill himself. Confronted by the reality that he cannot adhere to the "normal," he chooses to escape from the world that will treat him as a deviate. In Williams' early works, the deaths of homosexuals represent their inability to survive in a society that demands normativity. They are thus forced to exit the stage.

Blanche is heterosexual and survives until the end of the play, but when we trace her fate, it can be seen that she is slowly moving toward a symbolic death, just as if she is reliving the agony of Allan's life and suicide. Here is a famous line that appears in the first scene:

> BLANCHE [*with faintly hysterical humor*]: They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields! (*Streetcar* 471)

Riding the "streetcar named Desire," Blanche visits Stella's home.

On the way, she transfers to a train called "Graveyard," and her final destination is "Elysian Fields," which relates to heaven and a place of happiness. The route she takes is extremely symbolic.

Furthermore, she says the following about Stanley in scene six:

> BLANCHE: He hates me. Or why would he insult me? The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner! That man will destroy me, unless— (*Streetcar* 526; underline mine)

Later, Stanley rapes Blanche, and she suffers a mental breakdown. Blanche comes to the "grave" and "Elysian Fields," and although she feels that she is going to be executed, she does not escape and, finally, dies a mental death. The name Elysian Fields, Leonard Quirino explains, is based on the Greek myth of Elysium.

> Elysium, the paradise of the happy dead for the Greek poets, becomes in *Streetcar* a street which "runs between the L&N tracks and the river." [⋯] In myth, the dead who entered the Elysian Fields were made to drink of the water of the river Lethe to forget all traces of their mortal past. And in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, Vergil depicts Lethe as a kind of watery purgatory where the dead are cleansed of all taints of memory and desire before they can be considered fit for reincarnation. (Quirino 32–3)

For Blanche, Elysian Fields is never a comfortable place. However, as Quirino argues, Blanche's strong attachment to water, her dreams of sea journeys, and repeated bathing are based

on the geography of the mythical Elysium and its purifying action (Quirino 33). This suggests the possibility that Blanche's final destination on the train is a paradise after death.

In the final scene, Blanche talks about her ideal death.

> BLANCHE: (*The cathedral chimes are heard.*) And I'll be buried at sea sewn in a clean white sack and dropped overboard—at noon—in the blaze of summer—and into an ocean as blue as (*chimes again*) my first lover's eyes! (*Streetcar* 559)

The sea she dreams of being thrown into is described as "blue as the eyes of her first love," which is probably Allan. For Blanche, the paradise after death—in other words, the ideal world where she can forget her harsh reality—is still a place where she can stay with and love Allan.

Why is the real Elysian Fields, where Stella and Stanley lived, such an impossible place for Blanche to live? The reason resides in Blanche's another famous line from the ninth scene.

> BLANCHE: I don't want realism. I want magic! (*Mitch laughs.*) Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what *ought* to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!—*Don't turn the light on!* (*Streetcar* 545)

Blanche lives in a world of magic, a world of "what ought to be true" rather than reality. In her magical world, Blanche can decide for herself what should be true, and sometimes it

contradicts everyone else's truth. In the real world, which is symbolized by Stanley, facts and solid things become the standard for judging things. If it is sinful to live in a magical world, Blanche claims, then she does not mind going to hell, but it is the values of the real world that determine whether it is sinful. For treating Blanche like a matrimonial swindler, Stella denounces Stanley.

> STELLA: You needn't have been so cruel to someone alone as she is.
> STANLEY: Delicate piece she is.
> STELLA: She is. She was. You didn't know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change. (*Streetcar* 540)

In her own way, Blanche tries to hold onto her reality. C. W. E. Bigsby describes the marginalized characters in Williams' works as follows:

> What others may see as lies they cling to as strategies of survival, but when the real exerts its authority they have only two choices: submission, a kind of martyrdom, as Williams permits them a ritual death; or insanity, as they let go of the world which torments them, and myth, illusion or the lie subsumes them completely. (Bigsby 66–7)

After her survival strategy fails, Blanche, true to her own words, exits the real world and enters the magical one. What she and the

other characters think of Elysian Fields is something entirely different, and, finally, Blanche pursues Allan to Elysian Fields, the paradise created by her fantasy.

1.5 Blanche and the Homosexuals: The Final Destination

In this section, I first focused on Blanche's desires, arguing that she uses physical or sexual desires as a means to her ends—it is actually her psychological desire she wishes to satisfy. Further, I discussed that she, like Allan and the other homosexuals in Williams' plays, is on a slow path to self-destruction at the end of the play, and concluded that her final destination is a magical world, an Elysium where she can be with Allan.

Williams later came out publicly and, in his later works, sometimes focused on homosexuality. However, when he was still writing his early successful plays like *Streetcar*, he did not bring homosexuals on stage and only referred to them as the already dead. As if to relive their tragedy, Blanche, though heterosexual, plays the role of the sexual deviator and finally retires to the world of magic. John M. Clum describes the fates of Allan and Blanche as follows:

> *A Streetcar Named Desire* suggests that those who "aren't straight" must act in order to survive and that they must imaginatively transform a world in which they are rejected into a bearable place. Allan Grey (and how his gray name contrasts with the lurid colors of Stanley's world) and Blanche cannot exist after they have been exposed. Their world is off the heterosexual stage, if they

are allowed any world at all. (Clum 126)

In his *Memoirs,* Williams writes about homosexuals coexisting with heterosexuals.

> I had the Quixotic notion that I could continue to enjoy all kinds of society, the bohemian and the elite, the straight and the gay. I know many persons in "the gay world" who accomplish this trick with apparent ease: however, I think it still requires a good deal of hypocrisy, even now that society in the Western world is presumed to have discarded its prejudices. My feeling is that the prejudices have simple gone underground. (*Memoirs* 204)

Even in the 1970s, when *Memoirs* was published, homosexuals needed to be hypocritical to exist casually with heterosexuals. They could not live in the real world as they were, and they managed to survive by lying and making things up. They needed to live a lie to protect themselves. The world of magic, where they could live and be true to themselves, was their Elysium.

Blanche shows the audience her heterosexual disaster, which has to do with her innumerable affairs with men. Still, as a sexual deviator, she acts out the desire of homosexuals who find refuge in death. Blanche's final destination on the streetcar named desire is Elysian Fields, the after-death paradise where she can be with her beloved Allan, where no one can call her a deviant.

2 Now Without Shelter: Games and the Exorcism in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is Albee's most famous play. Martha, the daughter of a college president in New England, and her husband George, an associate professor of history at the college, invite Nick, a new member of the biology department, and his wife Honey to their home for a night party. This three-act play has titles for each act: "Fun and Games" for the first, "Warpurgisnacht" for the second, and "The Exorcism" for the third. As can be guessed from the title of the first act and the play's title, a wordplay on the children's song "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?", there are many verbal games in this play.[6] However, these games are not "fun" but rather almost-violent, and the characters play these games by using each other as material and hurting each other.

The older couple, George and Martha, have a son who will celebrate his 21st birthday the next day, but he does not appear on stage. This is because the son the couple has "raised" together is imaginary. When analyzing the games, it becomes clear that George and Martha are terribly good at verbal games, that they use them as a means of communication between them. For them, their imaginary son is not only an important sign of their connection but also an important sign of their ability to create fiction.

In this section, I will analyze the communication and relationship between the two couples by focusing on the four games played at the party. They are, in chronological order, "Humiliate the Host," "Get the Guests," "Hump the Hostess," and "Bringing up Baby." By analyzing the communicational and relationship problems of the two couples, I will consider the ending of the play.

2.1 Humiliate the Host: Let the Games Begin

In the second act, when George is alone with Nick, he reminisces about his youth, about when he went to a bar with a fifteen-year-old boy who mistakenly called bourbon "birgin" and caused the whole bar to erupt in laughter. After the night at the bar, George says, the boy got a learner's permit and, with his father in the passenger seat, tried to dodge a porcupine and crashed into a large tree. In the hospital, when the boy, who was injured himself, was told of his father's death, he could not stop laughing—he had already accidentally murdered his mother with a shotgun before, and now he killed both his parents. He was put in a mental ward, George says, and has not spoken a word in 30 years.

This shocking story is told as George's companion's experience before the game starts, but the situation changes when Martha comes back to the men after taking care of Honey. Despite George's repeated attempts to stop her, Martha brings up the story of George's ambition to publish a novel, which was thwarted by his father-in-law, the college president. Martha's dialogue is deliberately rhymed, making her story sound like fiction.

> MARTHA (*Consciously making rhymed speech*): Well, Georgie-boy had lots of big ambitions/in spite of something funny in his past/ […] Which Georgie-boy turned into a novel…/His first attempt and also his last…
> Hey! I rhymed! I rhymed! (*Woolf* 244)

Martha's word-play revelation overlaps with George's story, and Nick mutters, "(*Remembering something related*) Hey…wait a minute" (*Woolf* 246). At this point, the audience, like Nick, will hear Martha's narrative as "a story they heard somewhere" or "a story they know." George's novel was banned by the president of a conservative college in New England from being published because of its shocking content about parricide. Martha recreates the conversation George and her father had:

> MARTHA: Georgie said…but Daddy…I mean…ha, ha, ha, ha…but *Sir*, it isn't a novel at all…(*Other voice*) Not a novel? (*Mimicking* GEORGE*'s voice*) No, sir…it isn't a novel at all…
> […]
> No sir, this isn't a novel at all…this is the truth…this really happened…TO ME! (*Woolf* 246)

In other words, Martha's account of George's novel (which is supposed to be fiction) reveals a real fact in the form of fiction. It is hard to believe that this is a true story, and even harder to believe that it is George's own past, but George reacts immediately by violently jumping on Martha and trying to suffocate her. Also, the fact that George himself told this story before Martha and Honey came back gives the impression that this story might be true.

It is not clear whether this parent-killing boy is George himself.[7] But what is more important is that Martha and George share the story of this boy and the story of the publication of the novel and its ban. For the couple, the first game reveals that fiction is not only something to share but also a weapon to fight

with. Sharing and telling is their most important, if not the only, means of communication. They communicate with each other daily, it can be seen, by mixing fiction and violent behavior.

Neither the story of the boy nor the story of the publication or its ban is known to be real or fictional. However, it is for this reason that their thoughts are strongly reflected in the words they speak. In the conversation between George and the president mimicked by Martha, which I quoted earlier, Martha calls the president "Daddy" and then "Sir." This may mean more than just that Martha mistakenly called her father as she always does. Here, let us take a look at the relationship between Martha, George, and Martha's father.

Martha has already lost her mother, and because of this, she has a close relationship with her father. Martha tells us, "I was hostess for Daddy and I took care of him…and it was…nice. It was very nice" (*Woolf* 207) and "And I got the idea, about then, that I'd marry into the college" (*Woolf* 207). This shows that Martha is a member of the college organization for her father. Moreover, she chose to marry George because she sensed a "natural" desire in her father to pass on what he created to his descendants. Unfortunately, Martha says George does not have the quality and is unlikely to rise to the expectations of being a future president, which is a hard fact for George to accept, for it means he is neglecting the high hopes of his biggest boss and father-in-law. In addition, since the couple does not have a real child, Martha's father's plan has come to nothing. In a conservative college town, the ideal family is one with parents and children. George and Martha have not been able to live up to that ideal and are forced to spend their days creating not only a fictional son but also other fictions.

2.2 Get the Guests: The Purpose of the Games

George, humiliated by Martha in the first game, fights back by starting a second game, "Get the Guests." Whether or not Martha's story is true, if George was humiliated by his wife, then Martha should be the one he attacks. Oddly enough, however, George plays the second game by telling the story of Nick and Honey in an amusing way. By thinking about the meaning of whom George targets, we can understand the purpose of the "language games" in this play.

"Get the Guests," like "Humiliate the Host," is a story about George's second novel. It is a kind of allegorical story in which "Blondie" and "Mousie" (*Woolf* 250) appear. Although their real names are not used, the two characters are clearly imitations of Nick and Honey.[8] Nick immediately tries to stop George, but since Honey is interested, George continues.

The story is about Mousie's father and her marriage to Blondie, about which Nick has already told George before their wives came back. Nick and Honey, close together since childhood, decide to get married because of her pregnancy. However, it turns out to be a hysteric pregnancy. Honey's father is a wealthy and religious man, and Nick admits that he married her partly for money. Honey, who is listening to George's narration, initially has a puzzled reaction, saying, "This is familiar…" (*Woolf* 250). Eventually, she says "I don't like this story. I don't like this story…" (*Woolf* 252), and when the story gets to her imaginary pregnancy subsiding, she tells Nick distraughtly, "You…you told them…" (*Woolf* 253).

"Humiliate the Host" may or may not be a true story, but "Get

the Guests" is based on a story that Nick, who is not familiar with language games, told George beforehand. Moreover, Honey, who is also unfamiliar with the games, is distraught, so the audience realizes that a true story is told in a fictional manner here. The young couple, who were listening to the stories from the same position as the audience, now becomes victims of the game. Although the characters do not interfere with the audience, and the fourth wall is maintained, the audience may feel unsettled to see that the game, which they thought was limited to Martha and George, also extends to Nick and Honey, or, in other words, the listeners.

After Martha sees off Nick and Honey, she says to George, "Very good, George. […] It's the most…life you've shown in a long time" (*Woolf* 256) and praises him. C. W. E. Bigsby, pointing out that Albee's plays are characterized as conversational plays, writes about the role of language in them.

> There is something static about Albee's plays. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Tiny Alice*, *A Delicate Balance*, *All Over*, *Seascape* are all conversational pieces. There are rarely more than four characters on stage. His subject—the substitution of language for experience—is equally his theatrical method. It is in and through language that his characters must find whatever salvation they can. Language is thrown back and forth as though in some game. (Bigsby 133)

In Albee's plays, language becomes a game, a substitute for experience, and it is through it is through the exchange of language that the play moves forward. This play is a perfect

example of this: the passage of time and the settings are realistic, and no special events physically occur, but the events told in words are diverse and show that whoever has the most control over language can dominate the scene. The game of exposing each other is not primarily about hurting others but about telling the story well. That someone gets hurt is only a byproduct of the story, and the story that is told well enough to accomplish that is a good one.

2.3 Hump the Hostess: Ambitions, Potential, and Failure

Unlike the other games, "Hump the Hostess," which is secondly referenced in the play after "Humiliate the Host," is not a verbal game. It is a physical "game" in which Nick and Martha engage in sexual intercourse, without the participation of George, who proposes it. This is the third game Nick and Martha try to play after "Get the Guests" as they leave the living room at the end of the second act. After all, the game does not "succeed," but at the beginning of the third act, Martha expresses her feelings about their situation. In this section, I will discuss Martha's position as the president's daughter, her marriage to George, and Nick's ambition.

The hostess of the house is not just any hostess but Martha, who, as already mentioned, is the daughter of the president and the hostess of the college itself. When Nick talks to George in the second act, he mentions how having affairs with the faculty's wives will help him gain power and ascend to the top of the college hierarchy. At this point, although in line with George's talk, he says, "And I'll bet your wife's the biggest goose in the gangle…*gaggle*, isn't she…? Her father president, and all"

(*Woolf* 230).

In this exchange, Martha becomes the symbol of the college rather than a woman or a person. Of course, the person Nick wants to get closest to may be is her father, the president himself, but Martha is seen as a step in that direction. She is materialized and considered only a step on Nick's road to success. Anne Paolucci points out that Nick cannot understand the mistake George has made: giving up his path to success because he wanted to write a novel. She also explains that Nick is trapped by his ambitions for financial success, and although he is married to Honey, who is wealthy, he has already failed as a husband in that he cannot empathize with her fears and wishes (Paolucci 50). Nick is portrayed as a man who seeks success in the sense of status and money, who is not afraid to take advantage of others to secure the route necessary to achieve it.

At the beginning of act three, we learn that "Hump the Hostess" has failed. Nick blames the failure on his prolonged drinking, insisting that he has the potential (or that he is not impotent). Martha retorts, "I wasn't talking about you're potential; I was talking about your goddamn performance. […] Your potential is fine. It's dandy. (*Wiggle her eyebrows*) Absolutely dandy. Oh, but baby, you sure are a flop" (*Woolf* 275). Nick, who is repeatedly told that he is a "flop," says in response that, to Martha, George and everyone are a failure. However, Martha states that, while most men look at her and try to get her and fail, George is the only man who can satisfy her. Paolucci considers George to be the only man who can satisfy Martha sexually (Paolucci 50). Although this possibility cannot be denied, it is likelier that George and Martha are united in a way that is more important than sexual satisfaction. Let us take a look

at the following lines:

> MARTHA: …George who is out somewhere in the dark….George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite that so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad. (*Woolf* 277; underline mine)

I believe that Martha is confused and repulsed by the love directed toward her, yet she feels that George loves her as a human being. This is a big difference for her because other men simply see her as a stepping stone on their roads to success. George, who calls Martha "a devil with language" (*Woolf* 166), is her great opponent in the language games, and the games themselves, which fictionalize what is and what is not, have somehow become a means of communication between them. It is a testament to their similar linguistic skills that they are able to maintain the existence of their imaginary son over a period of nearly 21 years.

2.4 Bringing up Baby: The Exorcism

Before discussing the last game, "Bringing up Baby," it is necessary to consider the polysemy of the game's name: Baby is, of course, Martha and George's imaginary son. The existence of

this son is a secret shared only between the couple, and to reveal it to anyone else is to break the rules of the game. In the first act, Martha says, "I am sorry I brought it up" (*Woolf* 201) when Honey mentions in front of everyone that Martha has told her about the son. To this, George immediately replies, "You brought *him* up" (*Woolf* 201; emphasis original). Here, we see that this game has two aspects: on the one hand, it means "raise your son," but on the other hand, it means "talking about your son." The game of raising a son itself does not begin at the party—rather, it is thought to be something that the couple has been doing for 21 years, something that only becomes public on the day before their son's coming of age. The night of the party is the first—and the last—time the subject of their son will be brought up. This is because "Bringing up Baby" will take place in act three, "The Exorcism."

Nick, Honey, and the audience enter the game with very little information about the imaginary son. All they know is that the next day, after the party ends and dawn comes, is his 21st birthday. In the game, the listeners experience for the first time through Martha's narration the upbringing and growth of her newborn son until he comes of age. Bigsby points out that their son is a linguistically constructed being, that the couple are coauthors (Bigsby 131).

In an interview, Albee said that the fictional son is "a symbol and a weapon they use in every one of their arguments" (Flanagan n.p.g.). Martha and George's way of fighting is certainly basically verbal, and it is possible that the couple talk about their son when they are alone.[9] However, the one ability they both have in common is their ability to use words to create fiction. In other words, every time they talk about their son, they must be

continuously reaffirming his existence as fiction.

However, things go awry when Martha tells Honey—who is not part of the couple's game and who, of course, thinks that he is a real being who happens to be absent from the house—that she has a son. To allow the son, a fictional being, to enter reality is to blur the line between reality and fiction. As Matthew Roudané notes, when Martha treats her son as a real person, George realizes that their lives are collapsing into something unreal.

> More than a social embarrassment – after all, what's so unusual about mentioning one's child? – Martha's announcing their son's existence signals, George realizes, that their private life has disintegrated into an unreal make-believe world. Distinctions between truth and illusion, and that relatively narrow space between the real and the imaginary, become blurred, not by the continual drinking, but by a psychotic reliance on (when it's convenient, at least) fiction as truth. ("Marrow" 47)

To break through this situation, George refers to the fact that his son is fictional, makes Nick and Honey confirm his "existence" by telling them about him and his truth, and then kills him to break away from the fiction itself.

Martha, urged by George, begins to talk about their son. The stage directions about her speech say, "By rote; a kind of almost-tearful recitation" (*Woolf* 294) and that George is "prompting" (*Woolf* 294) for her. These directions indicate that the story is again a fictional narrative. At this point, Nick and Honey have not yet arrived at the truth about the son, and, at first glance, it

sounds as if Martha and George are just reminiscing about him. However, an intuitive audience may see through the rules of the other games and realize that the son is fictional.

Martha's loving reminiscences are a "reference" to her son, a process of "raising" him, just as I have discussed the meaning of this game. Nevertheless, at the same time, George begins to chant a requiem in Latin. Isn't this scene just like a funeral? Their imaginary son appears on stage for the first time as a verbal creation, but at the same time, he is exorcised. As Martha's narrative refers to their son's adolescence, there is a scene where the couple argues about the relationship with him, but as Martha ends the story, she says, "The one light in all this hopeless… *dark*ness… our SON" (*Woolf* 302; emphasis original), and George finishes his requiem at the same time.

The "darkness" Martha refers to here includes her own existence and married life, which did not meet her expectations, and her own inability to honestly return George's affection. She dreamed of an ideal family, one with a loving husband and children, contributing to the college, and receiving love from her father. When she couldn't get what she wanted, Martha's fictional son was the one who supported her. However, as a result of relying on him too much, the son begins to violate the boundary between fiction and reality, and to stop his invasion, George decides to kill him in a way that is clearly fictional (the content of the accident is a parody of the first game), saying that his son "crashed into a big tree while trying to avoid a porcupine" and "ate the telegram reporting the accident."

Martha insists that "YOU CAN'T DECIDE THESE THINGS" (*Woolf* 305), but George says, "I can kill him, Martha, if I want to" (*Woolf* 307), and Nick finally understands the situation.

Martha and George, a couple unable to have children, end their fiction-making game by drawing a clear line between the expectations placed upon them and the reality of what they have (or have not) achieved. They say goodbye to the fiction and face the reality of themselves with the loss of their son, both their weapon and refuge, and their means of communication.

2.5 Peel the Label: To Get Closer than Ever Before

At the end of the play, Martha demonstrates an uneasy attitude and, as if her previous eloquence was a lie, can only speak in single words. She has been relying on fiction, and when it is taken away from her, she becomes frightened and unsure of herself.

Before the story of the son is told, Honey tells George that she got drunk and peeled the label off a bottle of liquor. When he hears this, he says the following:

> GEORGE: We all peel labels, sweetie; and when you get through the skin, all three layers, through the muscle, slosh aside the organs (*An aside to* NICK) them which is still sloshable — (*Back to* HONEY) and get down to bone...you know what you do then? [...] When you get down to bone, you haven't got all the way, yet. There's something inside the bone...the marrow...and that's what you gotta get at. (*A strange smile at* MARTHA) (*Woolf* 291–2; underline mine)

There are a number of layers on the surface that lead to the marrow. They protect the marrow from the outside, but they are

also obstacles. The same is true of George and Martha's true feelings, hidden from view by various layers. Having lost the weapon and shield that was their imaginary son, they are more vulnerable than ever, but at the same time, they are also closer than ever, more capable of communicating and revealing their true selves with each other.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on two major works of American Drama, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. In both plays, there are characters (to be precise, female characters) who do not align with societal norms. They fail to achieve what is expected of them. However, the two plays have quite contrary endings: In *Streetcar*, Blanche retreats into her illusionary world, but in *Woolf*, Martha and George, though afraid and vulnerable, walk toward the real world. This may be because Blanche's deviation, for it is sexual, is more socially detested compared to Martha and George's deviation—after all, there are many couples who cannot have children.

In the two plays, the playwrights express their concerns: Williams deals with homosexuality, and Albee focuses on a family without a son. These early plays have a boundary between reality and illusion (magic, or fiction). That boundary blurs, and sometimes the illusion violates the real, but we can see that both reality and illusion are fighting against each other. This may be why these plays were well-received: the contrast is rather easy to understand for the audience.

However, as Williams and Albee make progress in their careers, the way they depict reality becomes different from what

we have seen so far. In the next chapter, we will see reality vs. reality, the playwrights' next phase.

Chapter 2
Within the Fiascos

Introduction

As we saw in chapter 1, both Williams and Albee found success in the early years of their careers. Their early works depict characters who are marginalized and live outside the societal norm, characters whose reality and true selves can truly exist in an illusory or magical world. In the end, their illusion loomed large, threatening their reality. These works are imbued with Williams and Albee's awareness of the problems in their personal lives, perhaps because they themselves were people who were outside of what was considered the "normal" way of life.

Chapter 2 takes us beyond the successful years of both playwrights to a time when they were struggling with alcoholism and drug addiction. I have selected Williams' *The Two-Character Play* and Albee's *The Lady from Dubuque*, both of which were negatively received by audience and critics alike. Despite their poor reception, these plays, which were rewritten many times and had different titles, were significant to their writers.

This chapter deals with two plays in which characters aim to replace their real selves trapped in an unbearable situation with another to somehow survive or at least make the current situation into a happier one. The construction of a new self, or, in other words, an alternative reality, is evidence that one has chosen to fight their predicaments. This relates to how Williams and Albee struggled with their own fiascos as playwrights and continued to work on their plays.

1. The Desire to Survive: Endless Dramatization in Tennessee Williams' *The Two-Character Play*

Despite its poor reviews, Williams himself described *The Two-Character Play* as comparable to his masterpieces like *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Since its first production in the 1960s, it was revised and rewritten several times and underwent even a temporary title change to *Out Cry*. In an interview on *Out Cry*, Williams explained his play as follows:

> Williams: I think it's my best play since *Streetcar Named Desire* [sic]. But they (critics) don't understand it, but they will one day.
> Int.: What does it have that your other plays do not? What's so great about it?
> Williams: It's a very personal play. It's my own human outcry. The style is different too. (Brown 255; underline mine)

To discover why he called this play "personal" and his "own human outcry," we must consider the period he was working on it: the so-called "stoned age." In the 1960s, Frank Merlo, Williams' partner for 15 years, passed away after suffering from cancer, and Williams was lost in alcohol and drugs. Maureen Stapleton described how Williams was then.

> "He just didn't have an armor for the criticism offered to his plays in the 1960s," according to Maureen Stapleton. "There was no life for him but his writing, and

> when he thought his writing was failed, he thought it was the beginning of the end." (Spoto 257, underline mine)

For Williams, who began writing as a child, life and writing were inseparable. This is reflected in *The Two-Character Play*, where Felice is a playwright/actor and Clare is an actress. In addition, the play is set in a theater, suggesting its nature as a metaplay. Lionel Abel defines metaplay as a "necessary form for dramatizing characters who, having full self-consciousness, cannot but participate in their own dramatization" (Abel 78). Felice and Clare are creating the play-within-a-play, which is also titled "The Two-Character Play," which they are acting out at the same time. *The Two-Character Play* can be called a play about a play, a metaplay. This work, which deals with playwriting and performing, no doubt reflects William's own thoughts and conflicts about playwriting.

Felice and Clare, Williams explains, are two sides of one person (Spoto 267), which signals the idea that they represent two facets of the writer himself. Moreover, since Felice and Clare are siblings so close to each other that they are almost incestuous, and since they frequently refer to mental hospitals, it is easy to draw parallels between them and Williams and Rose.

In *The Two-Character Play*, Felice and Clare play the roles of "Felice" and "Clare," the two characters in the inner play, "The Two-Character Play." Since the title of both the frame play and the inner play are the same and the characters' names are also the same, the border between the frame play and play-within-a-play seems to blur. However, the incompleteness of the onstage set and Clare's repeated requests for cuts during the performance ensures that "The Two-Character Play" is always being

performed by the actor and actress Felice and Clare within the framework of *The Two-Character Play*. The siblings refer to "getting lost in the play" and "to be confined" several times. With a focus on these phrases and the relation between the frame play and the inner play, we will examine how the two characters are isolated from the outer world both in the frame play and the play-within-a-play.[1]

1.1 The Insane Brother and Sister: A Confinement to "the House"

The settings for the frame play (which is the real world for the actor/playwright Felice and actress Clare) and the play-within-a-play are as follows:

> SYNOPSIS OF SCENES
> Before and after the performance: an evening in an unspecified locality
> During the performance: a nice afternoon in a deep Southern town called New Bethesda. (*2CP* 307)

The frame play is set in an isolated theater situated in some cold and unknown place far from anywhere. The other members of the theater company have abandoned Felice and Clare, one reason for which is their wages that couldn't be paid due to financial difficulties. However, in their telegram to Felice, they write "Your sister and you are—*insane!*" (*2CP* 321; emphasis original). This offers evidence that the brother and sister are in a distressing situation.

Although the setting of the inner play is a warm summer

afternoon, which is different from the situation in the frame play, the siblings' situation forms a parallel to the situation in the play-within-a-play: Felice and Clare in "The Two-Character Play" are also perceived as siblings out of their minds. Their father, an astrologer, shot his wife and killed himself with the same revolver. After this horrible incident, Felice and Clare have become afraid of how people see them and therefore have refused to come out of the house.

As I mentioned already, "being confined" is a key element of *The Two-Character Play.* Felice and Clare talk repeatedly about being locked up in the closed wards of an asylum in the play-within-a-play. Just before the first act ends, when Felice says the word "confined," Clare reacts violently and insists that the word is forbidden. In reality, though, the brother and sister of "The Two-Character Play" are practically imprisoned in the house where the play is set.

> The characters in the inner play are confined in their family home, just as the actors Felice and Clare are confined in the theater. The characters in the inner play are isolated from the community in which they live, partly because of their eccentric behavior, but primarily because their father, who was mentally disturbed, killed his wife and himself and left his children to bear the burden of his act. (O'Conner 93)

As Jacqueline O'Conner mentions in her book, Williams wrote about people who experience or witness something horrible, people who end up considered insane and grow isolated from others. A typical example of this pattern is Catharine in *Suddenly*

Last Summer, who talks about her cousin Sebastian's cannibalistic death. The more she talks, the more her aunt Mrs. Venable rages, ordering Catharine to have a lobotomy. For Felice and Clare in "The Two-Character Play," the bizarre events of their parents' lives also contributed to their alienation. The difference between Catharine and the siblings is that, to escape from their desperate situation, they attempt to lie about what they have witnessed and twist the truth. However, this plan is never executed. Fearing they will be treated as lunatics and eventually locked up in an asylum, the two are psychologically trapped inside the house, unable to seek help from outside.

At the end of the frame play, Felice and Clare finds out that the theater's door is locked from the outside and get locked up in the theater, unable to escape, suggesting a parallel between the frame play and the inner play.

1.2 The Incomplete Set—Restraints of the Theater

Felice and Clare's inescapable situation is also indicated by the several restraints they face when they perform "The Two-Character Play." Some stage props are missing, and the stage set and costumes are incomplete, leaving Felice and Clare with no option but to perform without them. By resorting to their imagination and offering explanations for the missing items, they manage to perform the play-within-a-play.

When Felice turns on the stage lights for the play-within-a-play, the first thing Clare notices is that the staircase that is supposed to lead from the first-floor room to the second floor is cut off after a few steps. Hearing her sister's protest, Felice insists that they can just narrate that they climb the stairs and

go up.

When they actually reach this scene, Clare does as she was told: explain verbally how she has gone upstairs to get her things. One thing to notice here is that not only Clare, who is supposed to have gone upstairs, but Felice also explains what he is doing and thinking as if he were reading from the stage directions written in first person.

> CLARE: I'm just—just going upstairs to fetch your fair-weather jacket and a tie to go with it. [*She turns upstage.*] Oh, but no stairs on the set!
> FELICE: The set's incomplete.
> CLARE: I know, I know, you told me. [*She faces upstage.*] I have gone upstairs and you are alone in the parlor.
> FELICE: Yes, I am alone in the parlor with the front door open. —I hear voices from the street, the calls and laughter of demons. "Loonies, Loonies, Loonies, *looooonies!*"—I—shut the door, remembering what I'd said. (*2CP* 348)

Lines like these appear several times after this scene. In the scenes where Felice mentions the sunflowers blooming in front of the house and the soap bubbles blowing from the windows, the lines are addressed directly toward the audience. In both situations, Felice asks the audience to use their imagination to overcome the theater's realistic limitations.

> FELICE: […] The audience is supposed to imagine that the front of the house, where I am standing now, is shield by sunflowers, too, but that was impractical as it

would cut off the view. (*2CP* 353)

FELICE: [⋯] I pick up my spool and dip it in the water and blow a soap bubble out the parlor window without the slightest concern about what neighbors may think. Of course, sometimes the soap bubble bursts before it rises, but this time please imagine you see it rising through gold light, above the sunflower heads. (*2CP* 356)

The scene of the missing stairs, and the sunflowers, and the soap bubbles all imply the limits of spatial expansion. The missing stairs indicate the inability of the siblings in "The Two-Character Play" to exit the room and even go to the upper floor. Sunflowers cannot be put on stage, for it would obstruct the view, reminding us that the two characters are trapped on stage. Moreover, for the inner play's characters, the sunflowers function as the border between their house and the outer world—both a barricade and a wall that keep them inside. Felice's insistence that they should be imagined emphasizes his detachment from the outside community. At the level of the play-within-a-play, the soap bubbles indicate the siblings' psychological state in which they confine themselves to the house. The bubbles are blown when the two notice that their phone is dead and decide to call out to a neighbor from the window, but they lack the courage to do so. Felice in "The Two-Character Play" calls this act "a sign of surrender, and we know it" (*2CP* 355). This obviously shows that their voice will not reach the outer world, that they now have lost the will to try. Even the soap bubbles they blow, they notice, will not reach anyone.

The Felice and Clare in the play-within-a-play are not physically locked or confined. If they wish, they can come out. However, since they fear being seen as insane, they remain inside. The bursting bubbles symbolically indicate their lack of their will to leave the house. Therefore, they, having only one another, are trapped in their small space without expansion. They do not have anywhere outside where they can exist.

1.3 Self-Conscious Acting and Getting Lost in the Play

Declaring these theatrical restrictive situations to the audience reveals that the play, which consists of the frame play and the inner play, is merely a play, a piece of fiction. Felice's lines, which work as explanations and stage directions, clearly indicate that the two characters are conscious of the restrictions of the frame play, their real world, and are performing the play-within-a-play with these restrictions in mind. This means that they maintain their awareness of playing the roles of "Felice" and "Clare" as actors. Obviously metatheatrical, this situation seems to contradict the idea of "getting lost in the play."

In the frame play, Felice repeatedly emphasizes the importance of getting lost in the play. Just before the performance of the inner play begins, he stops Clare from peeking through the imaginary curtain to see the audience who comes for "The Two-Character Play."

> FELICE [*seizing her wrist*]: You will not, you must never look at an audience before a performance. It makes you play self-consciously, you don't get lost in the play. (*2CP* 317; underline mine)

Felice insists that if you see the audience before the performance, the acting will become self-conscious, and you will not be able to immerse yourself in the play. The two siblings, both in a state of physical and mental exhaustion, will have to concentrate more during the performance than usual to maintain the realism of the play-within-a-play. It is as if Felice and Clare as actors were asked to forget that they are performing and to "become" Felice and Clare who live in "The Two-Character Play."

Nevertheless, the two do not forget that they are "playing the roles" of the desperate brother and sister. The lines I mentioned in the last section all appear in the second act, but the inner play is already interrupted by the frame play in the first act, blurring the border between real and fiction. Before the imaginary curtain of the inner play is raised, Clare claims that she will not participate in the performance unless cuts are made to the original "The Two-Character Play" Felice has written. When her claim is rejected by her brother, she declares:

> CLARE: I'm not going to be given cuts, I'm going to make them myself. Now can you hear this C-sharp on the piano? [*She strikes a note on the piano.*] Whenever you hear this C-sharp struck on the piano it means a cut's coming at you, and don't you try to duck it or I'll take a walk. (*2CP* 323–4)

Clare then strikes the key and glares at Felice. Felice responds by shutting the lid of the piano. When Felice says the word "confined," Clare runs to the piano and strikes the key fiercely. Since it is already said that striking C-sharp is an interference

with the play by Clare, these actions are obviously done by the actress, not by the character of the inner play. Likewise, Felice is reacting to his sister as an actor, or, to be more exact, as the author of "The Two-Character Play" instead of the character in it.

Since the characters in both the frame play and the play-within-a-play share their names and relationships, it seems as if the real world in the frame play would be easily disturbed and absorbed into the fictional world. In fact, however, the opposite seems to occur: the play-within-a-play never becomes anything more than "a play within the frame play" and the brother and sister never forget that they are performing. In this way, they will never be able to immerse themselves in the play.

However, when the audience members leave, forcing "The Two-Character Play" to end, Felice says that he did not notice it because he was lost in the play.

1.4 Playwriting as Improvisation: Dramatizing the Real

When Felice says that he was lost in the play and so didn't notice the audience leave, Clare says that she could hear them stand up, but Felice insists that he hears nothing when he is lost in the play. Just as he said to her before the performance, he was not conscious of the audience and was absorbed in the play.

However, this scene comes immediately after the scene with soap bubbles. In other words, Felice obviously recognized the audience and spoke directly to them, asking them to use their imagination. How could he recognize the audience, be conscious of performing, and get lost in the play all at the same time? Here, we need to consider what "getting lost in the play" means to

Felice.

Annette J. Saddik, referring to the repeated use of the expression “lost in the play,” writes about the usage of the word “lost.”

> There are several references in *The Two-Character Play* to being “lost in the play” (5:317, 318, 367), a phrase which draws attention to the use of both “play” and “lost” as central puns. The characters must lose themselves both in the act of performance—the play—and in the linguistic play that saves them from the silence they fear. Moreover, they are “lost” not only in the sense that they are totally absorbed in their activity, but also in the sense that they are dislocated, disoriented, unsure of their whereabouts. (Saddik 98; underline mine)

As Saddik argues, “lost” could mean not only being absorbed in something but also being dislocated from their whereabouts and wandering. Felice and Clare do not know where they are (in the dimension of the frame play) and have lost their place in society (both in the frame play and the inner play). Still, Felice’s line is “lost *in the play*” (emphasis added) and even if we are to take it as being dislocated, we must consider how the siblings are lost in the theatrical work. In addition, since this line is said by Felice in the frame play, it should be taken as the words of an actor/playwright.

Getting lost in the play so that he even forgets the audience and at the same time explaining the scenes directly to the audience: these two situations can take place simultaneously

without contradicting each other only when Felice stands there on stage not as a character in the-play-within-a-play or an actor but as a playwright who is demonstrating his playwriting to the audience. At the beginning of the frame play, Felice is alone with a scratch pad, writing and reading his notes for a monologue.

> *He draws a piano stool into the light, sits down to make notes for a monologue on a scratch pad.*
>
> FELICE [*slowly, reflectively, writing*]: To play with fear is to play with fire. (*2CP* 309)

Moreover, though it is eliminated from the 1975 version of *The Two-Character Play*, in the beginning of *Out Cry*, published in 1973, Felice again has a scratch pad and a pencil and delivers the lines below before the inner play begins.

> FELICE: [...] (*He draws a deep breath to compose himself.*) Act One, Scene One. At rise of curtain I am discovered on stage alone, yes, necessarily alone since she never enters on the cue and never in a condition that I can predict anymore. (*Out Cry* 775–6)

When Felice says this, he is still in the dimension of the frame play, and the imaginary curtain for "The Two-Character Play" has not been raised. These lines that start *Out Cry* are quite like the ones Felice says in "The Two-Character Play," considering how he explains the situation in the first person.[2] What can be drawn from this fact is that these lines are not spoken by the character of the inner play nor by the actor, but by the playwright

Felice, who is writing the play as he performs it.

Another fact that supports this idea is that when Clare is getting ready for their lonesome second performance of "The Two-Character Play," she puts the telegram from the company members on the sofa. When they commence the first performance of "The Two-Character Play," the telegram is crumpled and thrown out of the set of the inner play.

> CLARE [*in a loud stage whisper*]: The cablegram is still on the set.
>
> FELICE: Clare, there wasn't, there isn't a cable gram in *The Two-Character Play*.
>
> CLARE: Then take it off the sofa where I can see it. When you see a thing, you can't think it doesn't exist, unless you're hallucinating and you know that you are.
>
> [*He picks up the cablegram, crumples it, and makes a gesture of throwing it out the window.*]
>
> FELICE: There now, it never existed, it was just a moment of panic. (*2CP* 329)

Since the telegram does not exist in "The Two-Character Play," it seems as if it interferes with the border between the frame play and the inner play, threatening the latter's fictionality, like Clare's persistent cut demands. However, in the second performance of the inner play, Clare chooses to put the telegram on the sofa, just as it accidently was in the first performance. Londré explains:

> In *The Two-Character Play* the sequences builds more dramatically [than *Out Cry*] to the telegram as a stunning metatheatrical touch that suddenly rattles every convention we had bought into about the play's level of reality. ("Break Out" 101)

Since Felice always declares the commencement of the performance of "The Two-Character Play," the audience in reality (who came to see Williams' *The Two-Character Play*) must have thought they knew where the frame play ends and where the inner play begins. However, the way Clare handles the telegram shows that this object that is supposed to exist only in the frame play is now included in the inner play. This disturbance of reality and fiction can confuse the audience and make the work unreliable. It may be one of the reasons *The Two-Character Play,* in spite of Williams' devotion to it, was not well-received. Under these circumstances, we cannot deny the possibility that the demands Clare makes and the quarrels due to it in the "The Two-Character Play" are actually a part of the frame play that obstructs the inner play or a part of the inner play itself. The only thing we know for sure is that Felice and Clare are dramatizing their real selves and placing them in "The Two-Character Play."

Although the author of "The Two-Character Play" is Felice, Clare declares that she also has a right to make cuts and that tonight's performance will be a collaboration with her (*2CP* 324). Though it is true that it is mainly Felice's role to use words to give lines like stage directions, Clare also takes the circumstances of the frame play and dramatizes it, weaving it into the play-within-a-play. For both Felice and Clare, to perform

the-play-within-a-play and to dramatize the reality in the frame play are inseparable. Confronted by realistic restraints, the two keep improvising during the performance. They are dramatizing what is happening in the frame play as they play the inner play: in other words, they are "lost" in the act of making and acting "The Two-Character Play."

1.5 Self-Confinement to the Theater

As Felice and Clare theatricalize the reality of the frame play and improvise it into the play-within-a-play, an ambiguous space, both real and fictional, unfolds on stage. *The Two-Character Play* seems to consist of the dimension of the frame play—reality—and the inner play—fiction—but since the two characters' performance itself is an act in reality, the boundary between the dimensions stays blurred. Taking this into consideration, this section will focus on the ending of *The Two-Character Play.*

When "The Two-Character Play" ends due to the audience's departure, Felice and Clare suddenly notice how cold and dark the theater is. Realizing they are locked in from outside and that the phone is dead (just like in the inner play), the two choose to perform "The Two-Character Play" again, which is set on a warm summer day, to prevent themselves from freezing.

In the second performance, the revolver that killed their parents is put within their reach, and right from the beginning, the lines, as per a stage direction, have to be delivered "*very fast*" (*2CP* 368). These lines are those that appeared in the first performance. After several speedy exchanges, Clare asks her brother if he is lost in the play. Though the situation is obviously unnatural, Clare feels that Felice may be lost in the play, and

Felice replies that he is. Generally speaking, no one can declare that he is lost in a play when he really is. Still, if Felice is getting lost in both playwriting and performing simultaneously, Felice's declaration turns into an announcement that he is ready to improvise the following scenes. In fact, the second performance begins to branch off from the first one as their exchanges regain a normal pace. Felice looks out from the window, gazing at the sunflowers as Clare aims the revolver at him. When she fails to shoot him, Felice tries to shoot her but in vain.

Felice and Clare are trapped in the theater, and the only way to escape is to escape from their reality: in other words, to choose death. However, although they are extremely afraid of being confined, their more particular fear is that they will be confined separately in an asylum's closed ward—their fear of confinement is linked to their fear of being separated from each other and of being alone.

Just before the first performance of "The Two-Character Play" ends, Clare says:

> CLARE: [⋯] Oh, what a long, long way we've traveled together, too long, now, for separation. Yes, all the way back to sunflowers and soap bubbles, and there's no turning back on the road even if the road's backward [⋯]. (*2CP* 357)

The inseparable brother and sister now reach their final play, "The Two-Character Play." Sunflowers and soap bubbles represent their practical limitations and impossible situation, but they also show that the siblings will keep dramatizing whatever realistic state they are put in. As long as this (inner)

play is titled “The Two-Character Play,” the two characters must stay together: if one dies before the other, the play will not hold.

The second performance has no audience: it is just for themselves. It is their means to endure the cold and darkness that dominate the theater. The theater, Felice and Clare say, is a prison for actors and playwrights (*2CP* 364). As they say so, they try to maintain the function of this closed house as a place for creation and performance, a space separated from the outside so that it will become something more than a cold and dark environment. Felice and Clare confine themselves to the self-conscious act of improvising the play-within-a-play to withstand the severe reality surrounding them.

1.6 A Playwright’s Survival: Theater as an Escape

Williams explains the stage set for the frame play as follows:

> It must not only suggest the disordered images of a mind approaching collapse but also, correspondingly, the phantasmagoria of the nightmarish world that all of us live in at present, not just the subjective but the true world with all its dismaying shapes and shadows... (*2CP* 308)

The situation surrounding Felice and Clare is, no doubt, a nightmare, and they struggle to get away from it by keeping themselves inside the world of the play-within-a-play. Still, they are conscious of dramatizing the reality (within the frame play) around them, so they are not taken into the fiction but are living the lives of actors and playwrights.

About the scattered set of the frame play, Keiko Furuki points out the following:

> Nevertheless, the ambiguous setting of this play clarifies Williams's attempt to produce the artist's interior on the exterior stage. In other words, the ostensibly private dramatization, paradoxically, reflects the playwright's intention to stage the private world of the artists to the public. (Furuki 101)

The Two-Character Play is a play that Williams revised again and again during "the stoned age." How Felice and Clare never stopped playwriting and performing despite the extreme circumstances reflects the state Williams was in when he was writing it. As Ruby Cohn insists, "[a]s in no other Williams play—early or late—*Out Cry* dramatizes the theatre as theatre" (Cohn 238). This illustrates Williams' own obsession with and reliance on writing to save him in a desperate situation.

C. W. E. Bigsby notes that "[a]t least to act is to convince yourself that you are still alive; to write is to resist a blankness which is no longer that of possibility, but that of nullity" (Bigsby 64–5). For people involved in theater, acting and playwriting are the means to elude nothingness and death. By confining themselves to the world of theater, Felice, Clare, and Williams attempt to survive their difficult reality.

2. Pursuit of an Alter-Reality: *The Lady from Dubuque* as an Entanglement of Parallel Worlds

Owing to negative reviews, Edward Albee's *The Lady from*

Dubuque was discontinued after only twelve performances. This failure is said to have been the beginning of Albee's decade-long decline (Gussow 314–5). Toby Zinman points out that the characters in this play are difficult for the audience to sympathize with (Zinman 99). All the characters are inexplicable, and it is difficult to say that they are likable, but none of them are more difficult to understand than Elizabeth, "the lady from Dubuque," whose self-defined identity is the title of the play, and her companion Oscar. Intruders who suddenly appear just before the first act closes; their identities are never made clear to the audience.

Albee spoke of Elizabeth in an interview with David Savran on *The Play about the Baby*:

> My new play, *The Play about the Baby*, continues the exploration begun in *The Lady from Dubuque*, about reality being determined by our deserving it by our need for it. [⋯] We always end up with the reality we need to have, the one that is fitting for us. In *The Lady from Dubuque*, that was Jo's mother because Jo needed her to be the mother and she became the mother. No reality there, but we accepted it as an intellectual conceit. It became real because it was what should be. (Savran 12)

In the second act, Elizabeth claims to be Jo's mother, but her characterization is far from that of Jo's mother (described in the first act). Though Albee himself admitted that Elizabeth is not Jo's real mother, he explained that her motherhood becomes "real." I will use this representation of the "real," which changes itself whenever necessary, as the point of departure to

understand this difficult play and consider it as an entanglement of parallel intersecting worlds.

2.1 Elizabeth as Jo's "Mother"

At the end of the first act, when Jo is screaming in agony from the pain of her illness, Elizabeth and Oscar, hearing Jo's cry and realizing that Jo's house is their destination and that they are "just in time," appear on stage for the first time.

> OSCAR (*Looking about, with some distaste*): You say this is the place?
> ELIZABETH (*To the audience, not urgent, not languid, but no nonsense*): Is she alive? Are we here in time?
> (*The sound of* JO's *scream from upstairs; a brief silence, then another scream*)
>
> ELIZABETH (*Still in the audience, her eyes acknowledging the sound with a brief, upward movement of her head*): Ah yes! Well, then; we *are* in time.
> (*Turns her head slightly toward* OSCAR)
> Yes; this is the place.
> CURTAIN (*Lady* 608; emphasis original)

It was necessary for Elizabeth and Oscar to arrive here before Jo dies. Why it was necessary is unknown, but this implies that if Jo had died before they came, something would have been "too late."

Zinman and Murphy both interpret the roles of Elizabeth and Oscar as "Angels of Death."[3] It is true that the two characters stay by Jo's side and comfort her as she dies. Her death scene,

thanks to the intruders, becomes tender. Still, do they not disturb the stage too much as characters whose only role is to lead Jo to a calm, relaxing end? Roudané offers another way of interpreting the two intruders' role, arguing that Elizabeth and Oscar function as the white rabbit in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, leading Sam into a world where everything has changed (*Albee* 120). Though Roudané's idea is more acceptable than Zinman and Murphy's since it does not idealize the intruders' roles, we must still be careful that the world in the second act is depicted as a real world, not a world of nonsense. Moreover, though Sam is the character who moves and speaks most in the play, we should not forget that Jo is the central character—the play, after all, is about Jo's death.

When Savran asked Albee about ghosts appearing in his plays, Albee denied the idea.

> DS:[…] [I]t seems to me you have a number of characters who straddle the line between the living and the dead. What about the lady from Dubuque, for example?
> [EA:] She's not a ghost. She's a substitute. (Savran 5; underline mine)[4]

According to Albee, Elizabeth is not a ghost but a real being. As already mentioned, she is a "substitute" for Jo's mother. Bewildered by the sudden appearance of the intruders, Sam repeatedly asks, "Who are you?" The given answer is that they are Jo's relatives. Finally, Elizabeth claims, "I'm Jo's mother, come from Dubuque!" (*Lady* 620). However, Sam describes Jo's mother in the first act, and she is clearly a different person from Elizabeth.

SAM (to the audience): […] The lady [Jo's mother] leaves something to be desired. She's tiny, thin as a rail, blue eyes—darting furtive blue eyes—[…]pale hair, tinted pink, balding a little; you know; the way women do, when they do. We don't see her much. We don't like her; I don't like her. (*Lady* 572)

Furthermore, when Jo first meets Elizabeth, her phrases and reactions are puzzled and unnatural for a family reunion. She therefore lets herself be persuaded by Elizabeth. We can thus understand that Elizabeth is not Jo's actual mother, so why did Jo accept her?

One piece of information that cannot be ignored when considering this situation is the insubstantial relationship between Jo and her mother. Jo's death is expected to come soon, but her mother never shows up or even rings the phone. She does not exist in the play. Jo reacts to this treatment by saying, "Where is she? Where the hell is she? […] IN THE HOUR OF MY GODDAMN NEED!!" (*Lady* 571). Sam says that neither of the couples likes Jo's mother, but Jo is actually yearning for her. When we take a look at what Jo is seeking, we learn that the mother Jo wants is not necessarily the woman who gave birth to her but a woman who takes a motherly attitude to her. Rather than biological facts, psychological needs are emphasized here.

ELIZABETH (*A litany*): Come, let me stroke your forehead, comb your hair, wash you, lay you down and tell you stories… […] Protect you from the dark and from the thunder?

JO (*A little girl*): Protect me?

[…]

ELIZABETH (*Smiles*): From the dark and from the thunder.

JO: Make it better?

[…]

ELIZABETH (*So tender, gentle*): Make it better? What have I come for? Come to me. (*Lady* 639)

Elizabeth's words are those that a mother might say to her little child, and, indeed, Jo's reaction to them is that of a young girl. Jo is seeking motherly, unconditional love and protection. Moreover, she is looking for a way to let her pain and agony go away. Instead of her birth mother who never gives her what she needs, Jo accepts Elizabeth because she fulfills her necessities despite being a stranger.

2.2 Interchangeability of Sam and Oscar

If Elizabeth is a substitute for Jo's mother, Oscar is a substitute for her husband. Here, Oscar becomes Jo's (substitute) husband. Since Oscar is black, Sam rejects his insistence that he is Jo's relative.[5] However, though it is reasonable enough to say that Oscar and Jo are not blood relatives, Oscar still can be Jo's husband—all that is needed to confirm this relationship is Jo's acceptance.

Near the end of the second act, Oscar changes into Sam's pajamas.

OSCAR (*To* CAROL): Don't you think I make a splendid

Sam?

JO: Sam? Is that you?

SAM: Jo? Please don't?

OSCAR (*Arms wide; beatific*): Am I not…am I, indeed, not Sam?

(*To the audience*)

Am I not Sam? (*Lady* 662)

There should be no need to explain that Oscar is not Sam: Sam appears from the first act, and the two male characters neither behave nor look like each other. Of course, none of the characters are confused in that sense. However, Jo, due to her illness-addled consciousness, mistakes Oscar, who's wearing Sam's pajamas, for her husband. Marital relationships do not involve blood, and the essential element that determines the relations is approval from each other. Now that Jo mistakes Oscar for Sam, her husband becomes Oscar.

Here, the word "Sam" used in this context is no longer a proper noun/name of a character but a common noun meaning "the person who is Jo's husband." This is in line with the idea I mentioned in the last section: Jo's "mother" is not the specific person who gave her birth but the person who gives her the motherly affection she needs in this current situation. The person called "Sam" is not necessarily the person who is the legislative husband of Jo's (i.e., Sam as a character), but a man whom Jo believes or wants to be her spouse.

The reason Jo mistook Oscar for Sam is not only because he wears Sam's pajamas. Murphy points out that Albee read and was affected by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' *On Death and Dying* when working on this play, a book that describes the relationship

between a dying wife and her husband:

> In *On Death and Dying*, Kübler-Ross gives the case study of a Mrs. W. who had reached the point of wanting to be left alone to die in peace. She said that the only thing keeping her alive was "her husband's inability to accept the fact that she had to die," and was angry with him for "not facing it and for so desperately clinging on to something that she was willing and ready to give up." […] In *The Lady from Dubuque*, Jo's husband Sam is an embodiment of the loved one who is unable to face the fact of his wife's dying. Each time she forthrightly refers to her dying, he evades it, acting as though she had made a remark in bad taste. ("Threnodies" 97–8; underline mine)

Kübler-Ross introduces a couple in which the wife, the one facing death, accepts the fact that she will die quietly, but her husband does not want to face this truth because he wants to keep her alive somehow. Sam is also this type of husband: he keeps on condemning Jo when she speaks of her illness or death, insisting that his heart hurts because of her illness. Sam's reaction indicates that he loves Jo and does not want to lose her. Ironically, however, it also shows that he has not accepted the fact that only death can release Jo from her pain and anguish.

The line in which Sam claims to take care of Jo as she screams in pain in the first act is almost accurately repeated by Oscar, wearing Sam's pajamas, in the second act.

> SAM (*Gently taking her to the top of the stairs; soothing,*

crooning): I'll take care of you now; I'll make you better; you'll see; I'll put you right to bed, and take a cold cloth to your… (*Lady* 607)

OSCAR (*As* HE *carries her upstairs; soothing, crooning*): I'll take care of you now; I'll make you better; You'll see; I'll put you right to bed; I'll make you better… (*Lady* 665)

The two almost identical lines are delivered in a similar situation: Jo is screaming from pain and taken to her bedroom. Nevertheless, as Murphy points out, the meaning of "make you better" differs between these two lines. Sam is saying that he will lessen Jo's pain and let her live longer, whereas Oscar is saying that he will let her pass away peacefully ("Threnodies" 100). At the end of the play, Jo arrives at the point of accepting her death. The attitude she wants her husband to take is that of Oscar's, not Sam's.

When we fit Jo's thoughts into the equation from the last section, the word/name "Sam" means "Jo's husband," which means "the man who takes the attitude Jo wishes her husband takes," which is Oscar. Here, Sam, having lost both his name and position, finds himself in an identity crisis.

2.3 Intrusive Characters from Another World

In the discussion above, we derived that, despite the lack of blood or legitimate relationships, Elizabeth has the function of Jo's mother and Oscar Jo's husband in the second act. The second act's character functions contradict the first act where Jo's

mother is described as a pink-haired woman and Sam being Jo's husband. In this section, I will provisionally state act one as "the real world." This way, the world in which Elizabeth and Oscar exist becomes a parallel world where the characters differ, with Jo as a central point. Assuming that one of Jo's parallel worlds is intruding "the real world" in act two, we will continue analyzing this play.

When Lucinda, one of Jo's friends, meets Elizabeth for the first time, she recalls the details about Jo's mother's she heard the previous night (during the party in the first act). Lucinda asks Elizabeth if she is living in Dubuque with her sister. She reacts as follows:

> ELIZABETH: I… move about all the time […] Well! One may *be* from Dubuque… […] But certainly one *roams*: Dubuque is not everything. (*Lady* 626; emphasis original)

The notable point of this line is Elizabeth's first-person expression. At first, she uses "I" as first person, but eventually, she begins using the generic singular "one." Also, her saying that "Dubuque is not everything" deprives her of her only characteristic information.[6] If she is not "the lady from Dubuque," who could she possibly be?

But what if Elizabeth is just one of the possible candidates for Jo's mother? Thinking along these lines, things start to make sense. Since Elizabeth is neither Jo's birth mother nor her relative, there is no inevitability that she must be the one who becomes the mother. She is only a "possible mother," leaving infinite possibilities for any alternative woman to become Jo's

mother. There is no necessity for her to be from Dubuque. Elizabeth's saying "one" infers the possibility that she is speaking not only of herself but of "any alternatives as Jo's mother."

The same thing can be said about Oscar. His personal history is wide-ranging, too wide-ranging to belong to a single person. Though Oscar is black, he says he was in the Japanese Army during World War Two (*Lady* 622) and a member of the Foreign Legion (*Lady* 642). Hearing his past careers, Edgar, a friend of Jo and Sam's, denies it. But this doesn't affect Oscar. He says to the audience, "Then I *wasn't* in the Foreign Legion. *I* don't care" (*Lady* 642; emphasis original). Oscar's simple denial of his life history and his emphasis on "I" shows that he is only a possible husband of Jo's, not *the* husband. If we assume that his diverse careers introduce the pasts of other possible candidates, these peculiar explanations may become comprehensible.

Also, Thomas P. Adler gives attention to the stage direction which says, "ELIZABETH *and* OSCAR *enter the set from one side, from without the set, in that order*" (*Lady* 608) and that Elizabeth says "We *are* in time" (*Lady* 608; emphasis original), pointing out that Elizabeth and Oscar come from "somewhere out of time" (Adler 138).

If we consider the above, we can see that there exists a parallel world where Elizabeth is selected as "Jo's mother" and Oscar as "Jo's husband," and that this parallel world intervenes in the "realistic world" where mothers and husbands are defined by blood and legislative relationships. In contrast, the parallel world appearing here in act two is defined by Jo's desire.

2.4 Two Parallel Worlds in Conflict

When we examine act two as a battlefield where two worlds appear in the same space-time, the roles of "Jo's mother" and "Jo's husband" overlap. Sam tries to get rid of Elizabeth and Oscar from his house, which should have been his and his wife's private space, but inversely, he is excluded by the guests who take over his house.[7] This struggle for the house resembles the conceptual struggle for the "real" of the play.

Within this struggle, the judges who determine the predominance between the intruders and Sam are the other characters. Sam gets driven into a troublesome situation here because the two pairs of guests do not doubt Elizabeth's identity.[8] As mentioned above, Jo's birth mother has an eccentric appearance and does not behave motherly. Of course, all the guests are capable of distinguishing Jo's mother from Elizabeth. However, since Jo's birth mother is so bizarre, the guests accept Elizabeth as Jo's mother because she seems to match their idea of how a mother might act. After Jo agrees to receive Elizabeth as her mother, Sam is considered a liar who is turning the situation into chaos; therefore, he is restrained and deprived of freedom.

One of the significant characteristics of this play is that the characters speak naturally to the audience from time to time. In the "Performance Note," this point is mentioned as follows:

> *With some regularity throughout this play the characters address the audience—usually in brief asides, but occasionally at greater length. This is done without self-consciousness, quite openly, and without interrupting the flow of the play. In other words, the*

> *characters are aware of the presence of the audience, and since the audience has always been there, the characters are not upset by it, even though there are times they wish it would go away.*
>
> *It is of utmost importance that the actors make it clear that it is not they, but the characters, who are aware of the presence of the audience.*
>
> *Speeches to the audience (asides, etc.) are clearly marked, as is their termination.* (*Lady* 559; underline mine)

Since the characters address the audience, the whole theater becomes a platform for the characters to communicate.

While talking about *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Zinman touches on theater:

> True or False is a game central to the theatrical enterprise: "Truth or illusion" governs not only the content of this play [*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*] but of play-making itself: any naturalistic play depends on our accepting its illusion as reality (and thus we are engaged emotionally) while maintaining our consciousness of it as theater (and thus we are engaged aesthetically). (Zinman 41–2)

Apart from the reality and illusion within the play, there is a safe place outside it, a place from where the audience can watch it as a fictional drama. When characters speak beyond the fourth wall, they start to interact with the audience. In other words, the illusion of the play starts to disrupt the safe realism of the

theater. Characters do speak to the audience from the first act, but in the second act, Elizabeth and Oscar repeatedly question the audience of their own existence. If the intruders can make the audience accept their existence, they will succeed in taking over the house (literally and theatrically) with their "parallel world" from both inside and outside the play.

Of course, the final judgement will be given by Jo: After all, she is the one who is connected to all the other characters and has the power to determine who plays which part. Reaching her death bed, if Jo chooses comfort (with Elizabeth as her mother and Oscar as her husband), Sam automatically loses his position within the house (both in the play and the theater).

2.5 Sam's Disappearance

Considering the above discussion, I will focus on the question "Who am I?", which started this play as a party game. At the beginning of the play, Jo, Sam, and the two guest couples play "Twenty Questions." The host asks, "Who am I?" and makes other players guess who he is pretending to be. This game has two great significances involving "I."

The first point is that "I" is never determined; it changes its existence from time to time. Each time the game starts over, "I" becomes a different being. Moreover, Sam uses the word "I," a singular first person, but makes his answer a pair of people to confuse his opponents. This trick forecasts that "I" can be plural; several people can be candidates for a singular role. In other words, this game shows that there is no concrete and singular "I" in the first place.

Another suggestion this game offers is that people can only

define “I” using other words. Even though “I” seems to be a solid concept, one can only explain it by telling if “I” is male or female, alive or dead, and so forth. Sam tries to begin the game by asking others “Who am I?” but the answer he gets from Jo is, “Your name is Sam; this is your house; they’re drinking your liquor […] and I am your wife, and I am dying…” (*Lady* 563). In act two, when questioned about himself, Sam can only say, “I’m Jo’s husband; this is my house” (*Lady* 611). Sam’s answers indicate that people can only describe themselves in relation to other people or things (mentioning their property or where they belong, for instance). Sam is attached to Jo; she is a core element in defining who he is—if Sam loses Jo, he not only loses his beloved wife but also his own identity.

Jo, her consciousness dimmed by her disease, accepts Oscar as “Sam.” Dying, she says bye-bye to Sam, who rushes to Jo.

> SAM (*Tears; choking; loss; fury; tenderness*): Do you want this? Hunh?
> (*Shakes her*)
> Is this what you want!? Yes!?
> […]
> Because if this is what you want. I’m not any part of it; you’ve locked me out. I…I don’t exist. I…I don’t exist. Just…just *tell* me. (*Lady* 664–5; emphasis original)

Now that Jo does not recognize Sam as Sam, he loses his role, position, and words to identify himself. Sam no longer has the power to establish his own identity. “I don’t exist,” he says, suggesting that he is fading into the background of the stage and the play.

2.6 Indefinable Relativities

As discussed, above, the definitions of “Jo’s mother” and “Jo’s husband” are fluid, and Sam’s identity becomes indefinable. If people can only be identified by words, in this play, where words such as “mother” and “husband” become insignificant, everything is no longer definite.

Just before the curtain, Elizabeth and Oscar exchange thought-provoking lines.

> ELIZABETH: Everything is true.
> OSCAR (*Descending. Quietly; to* ELIZABETH; *to* SAM): Therefore, nothing is true.
> ELIZABETH (*Looks up to him*): Therefore, everything is true.
> (SHE *smiles*) (*Lady* 667–8)

In a world where words' definitions change endlessly and even individual identities are not concrete, anything can be correct. In other words, there is no absolute "real" in this world, which makes everything simultaneously unreal/incorrect. We decided that act one is the "real world" for the sake of discussion; however, in this situation, where there is no such thing as "real," the idea of a "real world" itself collapses, and the world of act one also becomes absorbed as one possible parallel world. When we interpret *The Lady from Dubuque* as a play in which parallel worlds interfere with each other, causing disorder and loss of identity, Sam is forced to retreat into a background world that is merely a possible alternative.

Sam, for he is rejected by Jo, now recognizes himself as nonexistent. However, if we consider this situation from Jo's perspective, Sam has not disappeared—even if Jo accepts Elizabeth and Oscar as her family, she does not know them in a true sense. The intruders do not have specific identities; they are simply symbols expressing "mother" and "husband."[9] Moreover, Sam is not the only person who is erased from Jo's world. It is that Jo is only choosing people who will relieve her from her final suffering. In other words, Jo's reality has somehow made an alternative reality to save her at the last minute. In this alternative reality, Elizabeth and Oscar are not superior to Sam. Their world is, after all, an alternative one. They are only a possibility. As already discussed, the two seem to understand that they are interfering with the world of act one. They know that they are merely some possible signifiers that can also fade into the background.

2.7 Agents Showing Alternatives

What does the appearance of Elizabeth and Oscar on stage mean? The two intruders act as Jo wishes, indicating that her wish was not fulfilled in her "original world" we saw in act one. In an interview with Kathy Sullivan, Albee mentions Sam and Jo.

> Sullivan: It seems to me, however, that you have excluded Sam's needs.
> Albee: But Sam's reality is less important than Jo's needs. He's surviving while she's dying. (Sullivan 188)

Both Jo and Sam desire things, but Jo's desire, since she is about

to die, is prioritized. Unable to accept his wife's death, Sam laments Jo's weakening in act one, saying that it is crucial to hold on to the object one is losing and take time for himself later (*Lady* 600). Still, he does not understand that Jo, dying, will no longer have any time left to seek what she wants. The reality Jo faces in the world of act one is that she cannot get comfort either from her mother or her husband.

Again, Elizabeth and Oscar are merely possible alternatives to Jo's mother and Jo's husband. They have no concrete identities—they live in one of Jo's parallel worlds—and any absoluteness. In the second act, they fight Sam for the house and stage priority. However, assuming from the way they talk, they do seem to understand that Jo will judge everything. This understanding suggests that the two are not trying to hold their power over Sam. What they show is that Sam's world is not the only absolute one. Here, we come to understand that Elizabeth and Oscar are not only possible candidates for Jo's family but also agents who show that there can be multiple, even infinite, alternative realities ready for Jo.

Ela Bittencourt mentions after a 2012 performance that although the play raises many questions, it offers no answers. The only certain thing is that Jo is dying (Bittencourt n.p.g.). Albee calls the two worlds "real" and "symbolic" (Sullivan 188), but there is actually no "real" world. By showing a "symbolic" alternative world, the two intruders offer Jo a final chance to face her reality and let her pursue her wishes and die in fulfillment.

2.8 The End of the World

In *On Death and Dying*, Kübler-Ross explains the final phase

of a patient's death.

> The most heartbreaking time, perhaps, for the family is the final phase, when the patient is slowly detaching himself from his world including his family. They do not understand that a dying man who has found peace and acceptance in his death will have to separate himself, step by step, from his environment, including the most loved ones. How could he ever be ready to die if he continued to hold onto the meaningful relationships of which a man has so many? (Kübler-Ross 177; underline mine)

According to Kübler-Ross, though it is heartbreaking for the family, the patient greets death calmly by separating himself from his surroundings. Jo already knows that this moment will come: "Well, I dare say the day will come I'll need you all. Then, of course, the day will come I won't need a soul. And then, of course, the day won't come" (*Lady* 590).

In the discussion above, we examined how the arrival of Elizabeth and Oscar offers Jo the chance to choose her wish. The reality she chooses, for she was wishing for love and comfort then, is one where the two strangers become her loving family.

In the final phase, where Jo meets death, what happens to the parallel worlds with her as the central point? To consider this, we need to focus on the line delivered by Elizabeth, explaining to Sam about her dream of death.

> ELIZABETH: All right; I dreamt I was on a beach at sunset—with friends; we had a driftwood fire, I believe. […]

(*Begins to share this with the audience, too*)

There were seagulls in the distance, and there was the sound of the surf—but muted, for it was sunset.

[…]

And all at once…it became incredibly quiet; the waves stopped, and the gulls hung there in the air.

[…]

Such silence. And then it began; the eastern horizon was lighted by an explosion, hundreds of miles away—no sound! And then another, to the west—no sound! And within seconds they were everywhere, always at a great distance—the flash of light, and silence.

[…]

We knew what we were watching, and there was no time to be afraid. The silence was…beautiful as the silent bombs went off. Perhaps we were already dead; perhaps that was why there was no sound.

(*A silence*)

SAM (*A shivering little boy*): That was…that was the end of the world.

ELIZABETH (*A pause; comforting; to* SAM, *now*): I thought that's what we were talking about.

(*To the audience*)

Isn't that what we were talking about? (*Lady* 666–7; underlines mine)

Hearing Elizabeth's explanation of death, Sam calls the sight "the end of the world." Elizabeth affirms his words. If death means the end of the world, how can one understand Jo's death in this play?

Just as Jo is about to be carried to her deathbed by Oscar, she says to Sam, "Please…just let me die?" (*Lady* 665). This line agrees with Kübler-Ross' final stage of accepting death. Jo is ready to say goodbye to everything and everyone around her. Now that she is ready to let go of her surroundings, she stops choosing from all the possible parallel worlds around her. The multiple alternative parallel worlds lose their central point. As Jo finishes her existence, she lets go of her world. This is when no more alternatives are needed. In other words, this is the end of Jo's world. Death, as the parallel worlds vanish, is thus linked to the end of the world.

2.9 To Face One's Wish and "Realities"

In chapter 2, section 2, I focused on Elizabeth and Oscar's role in *The Lady from Dubuque*, concluding that they are intruders from another parallel world who enter the world in which Sam lives. The second act becomes a battlefield in which the worlds with Jo as their central point struggle against each other. Sam loses this conflict and gets absorbed into the background. However, Elizabeth and Oscar are not absolute alternatives. They are merely possibilities, showing Jo that she has the right and power to choose her reality.

What Jo seeks before her death are the love of her mother and the understanding of her husband. These factors are not provided by her birth mother or her legitimate husband. Instead, they are given to her by Elizabeth and Oscar. Still, they seem to know that they are just possibilities Jo can choose from. From this point, we can draw what Jo seeks in the end from a broader point of view.

As already examined, this play starts with the party game, "Twenty Questions," in which the participants ask each other, "Who am I?" Elizabeth offers her opinion on this question.

> ELIZABETH (*This and the following both to the audience and generally to* SAM *and* CAROL): In the outskirts of Dubuque, on the farm, when I was growing up—back there, back then—I learned, with all the pigs and chickens and the endless sameness everywhere you looked, or thought, back there I learned—though I doubt I knew I was learning it—that all of the values were relative save one… "Who am I?" All the rest is semantics—liberty, dignity, possession.
> (*She leans forward; only to* SAM *now*)
> There's only one that matters: "Who am I?" (*Lady* 662; underlines mine)

As everything gets relativized as semantics, the only thing that matters is one's identity. With Elizabeth and Oscar's arrival, Jo is given possible parallel worlds to choose from, which, as Elizabeth mentions, are relativized. Here, on her deathbed, Jo receives the chance to get what she seeks. The most important thing is what Jo wants—everything else becomes secondary.

Albee explains, "*The Lady From Dubuque* deals with the question of whether our reality is determined by our need and is not an absolute" ("Introduction" 8). He has in mind multiple realities that make up the play. This idea, however, was not present at the beginning of this play's composition. In an interview with Walter Wager in 1964, Albee mentions that he is writing *The Substitute Speaker* (the former title of *Lady*), and

that it is the toughest play he ever worked on at that time. “It’s tough because I’m trying to join naturalism and considerable stylization. It is basically naturalistic—but with hallucinatory elements,” said Albee (Wager 41). As this play became *The Lady from Dubuque* and was produced in 1980, Albee was reaching his downfall. Still, he had up his sleeve some complicated and experimental ways to surprise his audience. The problem was that he, in the 1980s, still was not in control of his maneuvering of multiple realities.

The enigmatic intruders offer Jo a possible parallel world where her wish comes true. Moreover, they give the audience a chance to pursue what they really seek, or, in other words, the “reality” they want. Although this play was a failure, Albee’s challenge to write characters’ search for their reality went on, leading to his comeback with *Three Tall Women*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on two plays: Williams’ *The Two-Character Play* and Albee’s *The Lady from Dubuque*. Although both plays were not received well, they demonstrate the struggles and experimental ideas the playwrights had while writing them. However, though Williams and Albee were both undergoing a difficult time as writers, they were not ready to accept defeat. While struggling to survive in the industry, they grew to handle their own realities as multiple but with centripetal force. In the next and final chapter, I will examine how the two playwrights overcame their failures and went on to write introspective and surprising plays.

Chapter 3
When It Finally Ends

Introduction

In chapter 2, we saw the struggles of the characters and the playwrights to survive their difficult reality, or at least to make them more bearable. To depict these struggles, Williams and Albee focused on the coexistence of a reality and an alternative reality. In the plays discussed in the last chapter, reality is not an absolute—it can be changed (or exchanged) for a better one.

Chapter 1 was about the fight against reality and illusion; and chapter 2 was, as above, the clash between several possible realities. In chapter 3, what we are going to see is a coexisting of realities. In Williams' *Something Cloudy, Something Clear,* August, who is no doubt young Williams himself, has two conscious points: 1940 and 1980. He is a young, still-not-successful writer, but at the same time, an old, past-success writer. August looks forward to his life and looks back at his life at the same time. In Albee's *Three Tall Women*, we will see Albee's adoptive mother's life through communication between A, B, and C. The first act is realistically shown, but in the second act, we will meet Albee's mother at three ages. Again, they will look forward and backward at the same time, showing her whole life. There is also a character named "The Boy," who is certainly Albee himself. In other words, it is clear that both Williams' and Albee's plays are autobiographical in some way (although *Three Tall Women* should be called biographical).

The plays I will analyze are the late plays of the two playwrights. While Albee still lived on after *Three Tall Women* and saw success, *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* was produced just two years before Williams' mysterious death. In their late-career plays, they were able to depict the multiplicity of reality without confusing the audience as to lead to a failure. Let's see how their works make multiple realities coexist in a peaceful, retrospective way.

1 Marching and Watching the Parade: *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* as a Crystallized Memoir

Something Cloudy, Something Clear, Tennessee Williams' last play to be produced before his death (Hayman 237), is the compilation of his life. With almost all the characters, including Williams' alter ego August, based on real people from his life (many using their real names), it is one of Williams' most autobiographical plays.

The play is set in "September, 1940 and September 1980" (*Something Cloudy* x). The events of the play take place mainly in 1940, but August and Clare, the only characters who are entirely fictional, are able to look back at the past from the perspective of 1980. Furthermore, there are several characters who do not fit into either 1940 or 1980; the play treats time not as a linear thing but as something that freely floats around.

Attilio Favorini, for instance, considers this work a memory play, one that, similar to Williams' *The Glass Menagerie,* recalls the past (Favorini 144). Kishi Masayuki discusses this work as a self-reflective ghost play along with Williams' *Vieux Carré* and *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (Kishi 151). Indeed, it is possible to

consider this as a memory play or a ghost play, and it is possible to confirm that August, who lives 40 years later, thinks about the dead by having them appear on stage.

I would like to focus on the story of the parade August tells while looking at the audience in part one.

> AUGUST (*Looking out dreamily in the direction of the audience*): All my life, at least since I started to shave, I've been like a kid on a grandstand, flag-draped, you know, waiting for a circus parade to come by. I hear the calliope in the distance. It gets louder slowly, that light, haunting music. But there's another sound, the sound of a thunderstorm approaching much more quickly. There's a sudden torrent of rain, a deluge—disperses all, all are dispersed except me. I stay on the deserted grandstand among drenched, motionless flags—always the obstinate waiter. (*Something Cloudy* 24)

August then explains that "a sort of faceless policeman in a black raincoat" (*Something Cloudy* 24) comes to tell them that the long-awaited parade, owing to heavy rain, has been postponed. The policeman is "a likeness to not yet being completely alive" (*Something Cloudy* 24).

Furthermore, William Prosser introduces that Williams had written a one-act play called *The Parade* in the early 1940s, and while admitting that the content is very different from *Something Cloudy*, he expresses the similarities between the two works as follows.

> Though enormously different, *Something Cloudy,*

> *Something Clear* still bears a relationship with the early play. Interestingly, both plays describe their protagonist as waiting for a "parade" in his life. That Williams returned to this early symbol in his last play is typical of the way he used material throughout his career. (Prosser 234; underline mine)

As Prosser points out, Williams also treats the parade as a thing being awaited in *Something Cloudy*. In this section, I would like to clarify the meaning of the parade by treating it as the central point of discussion.

In the introduction to the published version of the text, Eve Adamson, the director of *Something Cloudy*, refers to the title of the play as reminiscent of the photographic phrase "double exposure" and notes the double nature of Williams himself and the play's content (Adamson vii). The fact that the time setting of the play is both 1940 and 1980 is symbolic of this double exposure. It has also been pointed out that the title is based on the cataract in the left eye of Williams and August (Adamson vi–vii), and August, Clare, and Kip talk about the symbolism of the difference between his left and right eyes several times in the play. This feature is, undoubtedly, an important element that cannot be avoided when discussing this play. In this discussion, I will analyze the difference between August's two eyes and the parade, and consider August in 1940, who waits for the parade, and August/Williams in 1980, who looks back on his younger self.

1.1 Waiting for the Parade to Come

First, I will consider the meaning of the parade in this play.

As quoted earlier, for August, the policeman who announces the postponement of the parade is "a likeness to not yet being alive," which may mean that he is yet to find what he is seeking. But what exactly does he mean by "a likeness to not yet being alive"?

In his paper, Raymond-Jean Frontain likens the postponement of the parade to Williams's other works, highlighting that many of his characters lose the chance to have what they want at the last minute.

> To borrow the language of *Something Cloudy,* Williams's Protagonists await a parade that is almost always rained out at the last minute. For example, Amanda invests the Wingfield household's meager resources in engaging Jim O'Connor as a suitor for Laura, only to learn at the end of the evening that he is already engaged to be married. (Frontain 148).

If we follow Frontain's point, August strongly desires something. There are two possible things that August wants: success as a playwright and the existence of Kip. Here, I would like to quote the conversation between August and Clare, which comes just before August's explanation of the parade.

> AUGUST: Being loved is a hard thing and to love is—
> CLARE: Hard to believe, too? (*Something Cloudy* 24)

They are talking about love here, and, later, August admits that he loves and wants Kip. In other words, it is safe to assume that the metaphor of the parade refers to Kip's existence.

Kip was the first man the young Williams had a proper

relationship with, and their love affair is described in *Memoirs*. Night after night, Williams made love to him, but he eventually lost Kip after he accused Williams of trying to turn him into a homosexual, which Kip could not accept (*Memoirs* 52–61). Many times, in his diary, Williams wrote about "K.", expressing his unrequited love for him (*Notebooks* 207). Williams wanted Kip so badly.

1.2 The Parade and Double Exposure

However, despite the actual break up between Kip and Williams, August says, "The parade went by, it marched right by me, right by where I was waiting" (*Something Cloudy* 71). The long-awaited parade has finally passed before him. August says this to Clare at the beginning of scene two, after it is suggested by Kip's accepting of August's invite to the shack that August and Kip will have a sexual encounter for the first time at the end of part two, scene one. In other words, August's acquisition of Kip's body means the passage of the parade rather than a long-term relationship with him.

In a 1981 interview, Williams talks about the title of the play:

> I prefer this title *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* because it refers to my eyes. My left eye was cloudy then because it was developing a cataract. But my right eye was clear. It was like the two sides of my nature. The side that was obsessively homosexual, compulsively interested in sexuality. And the side that in those days was gentle and understanding and contemplative. So it's a pertinent title. (Rader 346)

According to Williams, his cloudy left eye represents his sexual desire, his homosexual desire, and his clear right eye represents tenderness. Throughout the play, there are references to both of August's eyes, with his clear eye constantly contrasted with his clouded eye.

As per biographical facts, Kip in this play is a draft-dodger from Canada who has a brain tumor and is unable to work or protect himself. He and Clare (who suffers from type one diabetes) are unable to survive without the protection of others. Therefore, Kip gives in to August's desires, accepts him, and begins to have sexual relationships with him. As mentioned earlier, the real Kip refused to become a homosexual, and it is unknown to what extent he truly responded to Williams' affection. Nevertheless, for August in the play, the fact that he is able to make Kip his, even if half-heartedly, is a symbolic event in his life, making him feel the passage of the parade.

It may appear that August is a lustful man, one who feels the need to be sexually fulfilled regardless of his partner's intention. In fact, he is described as having nightly sexual relations with a seaman and other random people. However, what we have to consider here is that if Kip's body itself is the object of August's desire, or, in other words, if satisfying his sexual desire is everything, it would be strange that the parade did not pass him when he had a relationship with a stranger. Considering that the parade does not go by until August has Kip, it may be said that there was a necessity for him to have no one else but Kip.

1.3 The Kid Waiting for the Parade

So far, I have argued that August's physical possession of Kip signifies the passing of the parade. However, does this not mean that we are only paying attention to August's cloudy eye? What about the clear one, which is kind, loving, and understanding? To consider this, I will focus on the word "kid" that appears in the first sentence of the description of the parade.

> All my life, at least since I started to shave, I've been like a kid on a grandstand, flag-draped, you know, waiting for a circus parade to come by. (*Something Cloudy* 24; underline mine)

As is evident from the phrase "since I started shaving," August's feeling for the parade must have emerged during or after puberty, probably accompanied by his sexual awakening. August considers himself a child waiting for the parade, and this, together with his clear eye, suggests that he is waiting for the parade to understand pure and honest love. The parade, which did not come after his physical relationships with other men, finally comes when he has a relationship with Kip. It comes because August wants Kip from the bottom of his heart, and Kip accepts him as well (although this acceptance stems from his desperate circumstances), and August finds the fulfillment he was looking for when Kip agrees to have sex with him. Just before they enter into a physical relationship, Kip goes for a walk to cool down, leaving August worried and unsure about his return. When he sees Kip coming back, he feels that the "[s]ound of the parade came with him, unearthly calliope and heart beat fast" (*Something Cloudy* 66).

The parade that August long desires and waits for can be thought of as a combination of both his clouded and clear eye:

the arrival of a being who satisfies both his affection and desire. And, to be precise, if we have to choose from one of the two eyes, it is not August's clouded eye that is often emphasized but rather the clear, loving eye that seeks Kip's presence.

1.4 The Parade of Life

This play is different from Williams' other plays in that its protagonist's desire is fulfilled. This is because August is in a position to fulfill his desires, and he can decide on the conditions for their fulfillment. It is undeniable that August takes advantage of Kip, who is weak and seeks August's protection. Nevertheless, considering that his relationship with Kip is the first that August, twenty-nine-years old, is accepted to have a relationship with a specific male than just another anonymous male body, this experience must have been significant for him—otherwise, he would not have recounted his relationship with Kip in 1980.

The interesting part of this play is that, even though it is based on Williams' relationship with Kip in the summer of 1940, it also includes Hazel, Williams' childhood sweetheart, Frank, his later long-term lover, and Tallulah, an actress he first met in 1940 and worked with for a long time afterwards. These people were not necessarily characters in Williams' life in the summer of 1940, but they influenced his life before and after that time. They were all deceased as of 1980, but Williams undoubtedly loved them.

August confesses to Hazel that he cut a hole in the wall of the boy's shower room at the pool to peek at other naked men. Frank was a long-time lover of Williams', who of course had sexual relationships with him, which means that his relationship with

August obviously included sex as well. It may be possible to think that the sexuality in Williams' life influenced their appearance on stage. However, the fact that Williams and Tallulah had a relationship as professionals and friends, and not as lovers, suggests that it is necessary to focus on affection in a broader sense than just lust in this play.

Earlier, we discussed that the parade came because August finally bonded with the person he wanted (Kip). This could have been a major conversion in his life. However, as I mentioned earlier, this is also August fulfilling his desire on his own. In other words, he is not only a passive observer of the parade but also the person who has the power to lead it. 1940 may be the model for the parade, but the appearance of Hazel, Frank, and Tallulah makes the whole life of August/Williams a parade. The parade of his life is unfolded on stage and, without a doubt, it is August himself who is leading it.

1.5 Crystallizing the Parade

August, who was only waiting for the parade, is transformed by his own power into the leader of the parade that reflects his entire life. Here, the play's time setting, 1940 and 1980, needs to be considered again.

Clare, the only fully imaginative character in the play, understands that August's consciousness spans the years 1940 and 1980. Clare herself does not have a long life ahead of her due to severe type one diabetes and will not survive until 1980 (and is aware of that fact), but once in a while, she reminds August of the time gap.

After a brief conversation in which they reminisce about the

past from the perspective of 1980, Clare makes a statement that brings them back to the reality of 1940.

> CLARE: This is the summer of 1940, August. Let's drop the metaphysics, play it straight, play it not like summer long past but as it was then.
> AUGUST: Then! Yes! But I'm no prompter, you have to remember your lines. [A pause.] (*Something Cloudy* 13)

They decide to "play" the year 1940, and the actions go on with the year 1940 as its basic reality.[1] This means, conversely, that if they do not perform, 1940 becomes a summer in the past to be looked back on, which is proof that the time axis of the play is in 1980.

In the last line of the play, August, who is left alone, says the following:

> AUGUST: […] The lovely ones, youthfully departed long ago. But look [*He points.*] very clearly here, and while this memory lives, the lovely ones remain here, undisfigured, uncorrupted by the years that have removed me from their summer. (*Something Cloudy* 85)

Time forces August to leave the summer with Kip and others, but the beautiful memories remain intact. In other words, August's 1940 has been crystallized as part of his life and remain with him in 1980. Furthermore, the events of August's life centering on this summer are scattered throughout the play, and the characters other than Kip and Clare who appear on stage—Hazel and the others—are included in "the lovely ones." It can be said

that Williams himself led the parade of life using his own alter ego, August, and crystallized it as a memoir.

This play, Williams' most autobiographical and revealing work, is a summation of his life across time and space, reflecting, as the title suggests, the duality of his past and present. Forty years later, Frontain writes, August finally understands that he "used" Kip sexually and is able to ask for forgiveness; yet, it is only because Williams chose to continue writing until his death (as August claimed) that he is able to keep alive the memory of Kip (Frontain 143). "Although the August of 1940 is short on compassion," James Fisher writes, "the August of 1980 is filled with it and recognizes his sins and failings, longing to do the impossible—to remake the past" (Fisher 202), and that through this play Williams is redrawing the past. This play is a different memoir from Williams' *Memoirs*, which he published in 1975. This play is Williams' crystallized memoir, which he populates with the people he loved, his past mistakes, and, sometimes, even his repentance.[2]

2 Portraying the Whole: Loss, Denial, and Acceptance of Life in *Three Tall Women*

Two weeks after he was born on March 28, 1928, Albee's mother gave him away to an orphanage. A few days later, he was adopted by Reed and Frances Albee. He was their only child, and he spent his childhood in their wealthy but unloving family (Gussow 22–3).

Though he never had a good relationship with either of his adoptive parents, he had a particularly bad relationship with his adoptive mother, Frances, who was overbearing and a racist.

When he was 21, he ran away from home, and the mother and son spent nearly 20 years without contacting each other. After Frances suffered a heart attack, they reunited, seeing each other often until her death. But they never became truly close until the end; a certain distance was always maintained between them.

After Frances' death in 1989, Albee was inspired to write a play about her. Unlike *The Sandbox*, which he wrote when he was still a young playwright on the occasion of the death of his beloved grandmother, Grandma Cotter, *Three Tall Women*, written on the occasion of Frances' death, is not a play "for" his adoptive mother but "about" her (Gussow 374). In fact, he does not include the former play's angel of death who takes care of the grandmother's last breath; he merely lays out the events that happened to his adoptive mother based on true stories. Even though he did not like his adoptive mother until the end, this play, according to him, was never written as revenge.

> I knew I did not want to write a revenge piece—could not honestly do so, for I felt no need for revenge. We had managed to make each other very unhappy over the years, but I was past all that, though I think she was not. (*Stretching* 166)

However, though Albee says so, his adoptive mother is an object of quarrel and destruction in his play. A, B, and C, all with Frances as their model, argues with herself about her internal conflicts. Albee not only divides her into characters but also repeatedly depicts how she can get physically shattered throughout the play.

In addition, this work is not only about Albee's adoptive

mother but also about how people go through various events in their lives (Roudané, *Albee* 138). Furthermore, according to Albee, he wanted to write a play about a *fictional character* who closely resembles his adoptive mother as objectively as possible (*Stretching* 167; emphasis mine). In light of these facts, it can be said that this work is not only a play about Frances but also a play that depicts a person's aging. The play has a unique dramatic structure in which the characters and settings are completely different in the first and second acts, and in which a single character is divided into three characters of different ages.

In this section, I will first examine the structure of the play and discuss the way A's life is taken to pieces in the first act. A speaks of experiencing various losses, such as the loss of the connections with her surrounding acquaintances and the family she had when she was younger, and the loss of her proud, tall figure that moved freely before her body and soul declined. After, I would like to focus on A, B, and C who become "one tall woman" in the second act and consider the line, "I deny you," they say to each other. This line is uttered when the characters find it difficult to accept their own reality at different ages; at first glance, it makes us feel as if she is losing her unity as a single person. However, upon closer reading, I believe that this lack of unity is the best proof of the long life A has lived. At the end, we will consider the end of life and its acceptance. In this play, Albee fragments and deconstructs the women who resemble his adoptive mother and represents her as she arrived at her final days.

2.1 Two Sets of A, B, and C

First, I would like to confirm the characterization of this play. None of the three women who appear in the play has a proper name; they are set as A, ninety-two years old, B, fifty-two, and C, twenty-six.[3] In the first act, A is an old woman with declining physical and cognitive functions. B is A's caretaker, and C is A's lawyer's agent. In other words, in the first act, A is the only woman who represents Frances; the other two are peripheral characters. The three women gather at A's house, and the first act proceeds realistically.

However, in the second act, A, B, and C change into figures representing the different ages of one person. In other words, B shows what A was like when she was fifty-two, and C shows what A was like when she was twenty-six. Furthermore, in the second act, another figure, A, who has a seizure at the end of the first act and is in a coma, is placed on the stage as a dummy.[4] This dummy is required to completely copy the appearance of the actress playing the role of A, and the audience is supposed to believe that A has become bedridden. Roudané points out that, when A, played by the actual actress, appears in the space where the bedridden dummy-A, B, and C are present, the audience is made aware that the stage has shifted from the realistic world of the first act to the non-realistic world where A, B, and C are the same person.

> Albee shifts away from realism to nonrealism, subverting the theatergoer's sense of objective reality early in Act 2. With the surprise entrance of a very mobile and elegantly dressed A, the audience suddenly realizes that the three women are really *one* woman. Thus A reappears, the figure lying in the bed being a mannequin,

> allowing the play to blend the three life-narratives of A, B, and C into one woman at three different stages of her life—A at ninety-two, B at fifty-two, and C at twenty-six years of age. (*Albee* 139)

The narratives of A, B, and C, Roudané explains, are fused together as one person. However, in this section, I would like to take this statement paradoxically and consider that the narrative that should belong to one person is dismantled into three (or four, if we include Dummy-A, who is silently sleeping). This means that the woman who resembles Frances is dismantled in the second act, and only Dummy-A, who neither moves nor speaks, continues to exist in the realistic dimension of the first act, while the other three women exist in the non-realistic dimension.

Albee repeatedly emphasized to the actresses playing B and C that they need to be completely different people in the first and second acts. Rakesh H. Solomon discusses an episode where though Albee knew, of course, that this was a two-act play, he advised the actresses to imagine each act as a separate piece (Solomon 166). By doing so, especially with regard to B and C, they would be able to effectively fulfill the different roles they play in the two acts: In act one, they present the character of A to the audience; in act two, they present how A was like both physically and intellectually at various ages.

By thoroughly dismantling the protagonist in the second act, Albee turns the structure of the play into that of a complex non-realistic play at once. However, the first act does contain some descriptions that foreshadow A's dismantling.

2.2 The Breaking Off of the Whole: Irreversible Loss and

Remaining Pride

In act one, A is described in the character introduction as "A very old woman; thin, autocratic, proud, as together as the ravages of time will allow" (*Women* 309). At ninety-two, due to her inability to use one of her arms, A is unable to move on her own. She also has difficulty controlling her bowels. These characteristics are consistent in their reference to Frances, who began to decline physically and mentally rapidly around the time she reached her nineties (*Stretching* 167). It is probably safe to assume that A in act one closely resembles Frances in her final years.

In the first act, which presents a realistic world, A does not accept her own deterioration, rejects offers that will logically improve her situation, and tries to behave as before. For example, though she can no longer control her bowels, she refuses to wear diapers or use rubber sheets; when she is made aware that she can no longer manage her finances, she refuses assistance, claiming that she can take care of herself without any help. Both of these matters involve elements of her self-esteem, and although she can no longer take control of her matters according to those around her, she is reluctant to admit her decline. She is vain about herself.

A's bewilderment and inability to acknowledge her own decline is scattered throughout the first act, but it is first noted in the scene where she laments in the face of the vagueness of her memory and is appeased by B.

A: […] (*Full weep*) I…can't…remember. I…can't…remember! […] Why can't I re*mem*ber

anything?

B: I think you remember everything; I think you just can't bring it to mind all the time.

A (*Quieting*): Yes? Is that it?

B: Of course!

A: I remember everything?

B: Somewhere in there.

A (*Laughs*): My gracious! (*to* C) I remember everything! (*Women* 344-5)

When A is confronted with the reality that her memory is not complete, she is instantly calmed down by B's appeasement, and her mood improves. It is important for A to be able to convince herself that she has not lost anything, even though what is on the surface remains the same. We can see from this exchange that she fears and rejects the idea of losing anything from her "whole."

These fears and rejections are not only internal but also physical. A's left arm is suspended by a triangular bandage, rendering it useless. A has a metal pin implanted in her arm to hold the bone in place. However, as the bone itself wears away without recovering, the pin becomes loose and brittle. That she complains about her arm hurting every time she is taken care of by B shows that the arm has no function except to burden her. The doctor's recommendation for amputation is thus reasonable.

However, although A forgets many things, she never forgets that she made the doctor promise that he will not amputate her arm.

B: [,,,] she makes him promise that he'll never take the arm off, and won't let anyone *else* do it either, and he

promises—assuming she'll forget? Probably; but she won't. There are some things she never forgets. (*Women* 328)

The dismemberment of her body is an act that will make visible the fact that she has lost something, and that her complete form is being undermined. It is understandable, though by no means rational, that A, who fears losing, continues to refuse amputation. The way she laments the fact that she used to be tall but has shrunk can also be considered to be in the same vein.[5] As mentioned above, A desperately resists the ravages of her old age.

Throughout the first and second acts, we repeatedly see A losing other things apart from her physical and mental health: the things she originally had—money, jewelry, family, and friends—increasingly go missing, and the perfect whole A was trying to maintain gets, over time, compromised and grows way beyond her reach. Albee relentlessly weaves into his play the way A resists but cannot overcome the passage of time.

This irreversible loss is symbolized by the depiction of A breaking a glass. The scene of the actual breaking does not appear on stage, but after A leaves the stage for the bathroom, the sound of a glass breaking is heard. When A returns, she reports, in a good mood, that she has annoyed B by breaking it, but this action takes place immediately after the description of the malfunctioning arm mentioned above. The sound of breaking the glass symbolizes A's fragile and broken body, and we get the image of A as being irreversibly dismantled.

Further, prior to this, there is a direct reference to the actual shattering of A. A leaves her seat for the bathroom twice during act one, but when she returns the first time, she complains to B for not coming to her aid. The replies that B and C give to this

are as follows.

> A (*Flailing about*): Hold on to me! Do you want me to fall!? You want me to *fall!*
> B: Yes, I want you to fall; I want you to fall and shatter in…ten pieces.
> C: Or five, or seven. (*Women* 319).

In other words, there is the expression "A being shattered" when she leaves the stage for the first time, and there is the sound of glass breaking when she goes offstage for the second time. The sound of glass breaking has the effect of reminding us of A's vulnerability.

If we regard A before her old age as a perfect whole, the losses she has experienced until she is ninety-two are numerous. When A's dialogue increases in the second half of act two, it is primarily about her losses. In act two, B has experienced the death of her father, but A has experienced the death of not only her mother but also her husband.[6] In addition, friends and people she has known have also died as the years go by, which means that death is an irreversible loss of connection, a condition that can never bring A back to her full form again.

As we have already confirmed, Albee did not intend to write this play as revenge against his adoptive mother. Nevertheless, he includes the description of A being thoroughly dismantled and disintegrated. Again, this is not a play "for" his adoptive mother. Therefore, there is no reason for Albee to write this play as a tribute to A's, or Frances', whole being when she was a powerful, tall, and imposing woman. Rather, it should be noted that although Frances' physical and mental decline was rapid by the

time she was in her nineties, Albee says that he was struck by the way his adoptive mother managed to hang on to what was left of her and never admitted defeat (*Stretching* 167). In the first act of the play, A is in the midst of declining and writhing, refusing to admit that she is in such a state. By thoroughly dismantling her and portraying her in an unrecoverable state, Albee paradoxically brings her remaining sense of self-respect and pride to light.

2.3 Multilayers of Time: Future Possibilities and Denials

In the second act, A can be said to be the embodiment of the consciousness and pride of the first act's A (or Frances). However, B and C deny A's state, and A also denies B, C, and the young man (The Boy) who appears on stage but has no lines. What is the meaning of this exchange of negativity toward each other in this play?

Considering this, it is important to note the multilayers of time created by the simultaneous presence of A, B, and C on stage. According to the records of the director Laurence Sacharow, the costumes of B and C in act two are designed to match the period in which they are thought to have lived, counting backwards from the age of A. By matching the type of fabric, the unity of the three is expressed (Sacharow 121).[7] In other words, we can think of the second act not only as three people of different ages existing in the same space, but also as a mixture of three eras—the era when one person was ninety-two, fifty-two, and twenty-six. It is possible to think that these three eras are blended together to create this non-realistic space. Why this is important is that the mixing of the eras not only brings together three

people with different levels of experience but also creates a difference in the temporal distance they have with death.

This is articulated best by C, who points to the bedridden dummy A and says with rage, "I will not become… *that!*" (*Women* 355). Murphy writes about A, B, and C that "[t]hrough them, Albee presents the audience with three responses to the reality of death" ("Threnodies" 104) and that C mainly shows denial. Near the end of the play, when the three characters talk about the best time in their lives, C says, "*I haven't* had them yet, have I? All done at twenty-six?" (*Women* 382) as if to plead again and again. C denies the reality of her future that A and B tell her or the dummy A shows her. She wants to believe in all the possibilities of a bright future that lies before her.

Unlike C, B, who has experienced enough of life to understand that she will eventually die, is sometimes shocked by what A says, and when A says, "You deny me? […] I suppose you do too" (*Women* 382), she just lowers her gaze to avoid A's glance. B and C are far away from death for now, and so they have hope and anticipation for life. What this shows is that B and C's denial is nothing but a rejection of the fact that their future selves are going to become A—they are unable to face the fact that A (or dummy A) is waiting in their future.

A, on the other hand, makes the following statement as she ends her exchange with the younger two.

> A: […] Well, that's all right: I deny you too; I deny you all. […] (*General*) I 'm *here*, and I deny you *all*; I deny every *one* of you. (*Women* 382; emphasis original)[8]

A is the person who is closest to death, or even experienced death

in the form of a "premonition," the only one who can look at her own life from a bird's eye view. She is the only one who can deny the existence of B and C, who can dream of a life other than the one A has led. B and C hope to change their future by trying to deny A's existence, but A's denial denies their hopes and possibilities—it expresses an acceptance of the life of a person who is about to be completed (or, in other words, terminated).

A's answer to the question of the best time of her life—"When it's all done" (*Women* 384)—is suggestive. From her narrative, we can see that she has accepted her grief and loss as a part of her past and is not trying to fight against death. As I mentioned in chapter 2, Albee was influenced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying*, and as Murphy points out, A in act two arrives at the final stage of accepting death, which is, of course, "acceptance." According to Kübler-Ross, this stage is not a happy stage but one where emotions seem to have disappeared.

> Acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost void of feelings. It is as if the pain had gone, the struggle is over, and there comes a time for "the final rest before the long journey" as one patient phrased it. (Kübler-Ross 110)

A's life is full of disappointment and loss. Her strict but fair parents, her close sister, her wealthy marriage: all of these are now in the past, and A tells us how each of them were lost. The A in act one and the dummy A in act two show that she has reached the final stage of her life where she can accept all the losses and disintegrations in her body and mind and in her relationships over the past ninety-two years as a part of herself.

In the last long line of the play, A says that she has reached "the point where you *can* think about yourself in the third person without being crazy" (*Women* 384). Now she looks at herself objectively. Even her wetting herself, mentioned in act one, is now a means of confirming her own bodily function that is left for her that day.

As discussed earlier, Albee emphasizes A's physical and mental decline and material and relational loss. Therefore, I argued that her complete form is irreversibly lost. However, when we see A's attitude in the second act, her life itself, which incorporates even this irreversible loss, emerges as one complete whole. When asked whether he could have written this play before his adoptive mother's death, Albee said, "I don't think it would have occurred to me to do it until 'the subject' was complete" (Gussow 353; underline mine). It was only with the death of Frances that Albee, using her as his model, was finally able to describe the complete form of A.

2.4 Premonition of Death: The Reigning "Subject"

So far, I have discussed that A in the first act is gradually undermined by aging and loses her appearance from her youth, but that her existence itself, which enables her to live out her life, including this damaging reality, is the complete "whole" of hers. Finally, by considering the relationship between The Boy and A, I would like to discuss the effect of the death scene in which A receives a premonition.

The fourth character in this play, The Boy, is A's son, Albee himself. Just as in reality, The Boy, after a quarrel with his mother, leaves home and later returns to her.[9]

There are numerous references to this son from the first act, but he never appears on stage at that point. He is always treated as an absent figure, and A continues to wait for him.

In the second act, The Boy appears on stage when he is mentioned. The first thing to note about him is his appearance. In his introduction, it is stated that he is about twenty-three years old, but we know from A and B's remarks that this is the appearance he had when he left home, not the one he should have in the realistic time shown by dummy A. Favorini points out that the son's departure from home keeps him and his mother at that point, that they will always be "the son who left" and "the mother who was left" (Favorini 210).

As Bruce J. Mann points out, The Boy has no lines in the play, and ever since his appearance, he remains in the more realistic dimension with dummy A and does not hear the words with which A, B, and C address him (Mann 13). In other words, he does not enter the inner world of this woman, which is, in principle, composed of A, B, and C. What the play shoes is not a parent and child who have a warm relationship, but, as A says, an obligatory and role-based parent-and-child relationship.

It is only when The Boy finally responds to A's words that he enters the scene. There, A tells him that she has seen a premonition of her death.

> (*Silence.* A *moves to the bed, sits on it, opposite from him.* A *speaks directly to him; now he can hear her, can respond*)
> A: I had a premonition. I know you say there's no such thing, but I *had* one. It was I died. (*Women* 381)

The scene of her own death, A tells us, was lonely, and The Boy "acted out" his grief for the people around him (*Women* 381). In response to A's lines, The Boy makes a gesture of crying but does not argue.

This scene is based on Albee's final visit to his mother.

> For Albee, it was a scene directly from life, from his final visit to his mother, after she had died. "I may have made it a little more dramatic," he admitted. "Isn't that what a playwright does? I remember the visual image of going into the hospital room and finding her lying there dead in the bed, and the chauffeur and the maid sitting stage right of her. Isn't that interesting that I said my visual memories involve stage right and stage left?" (Gussow 356)

Although Albee accepted his mother's death in an extremely theatrical way, the "scene" he saw and experienced is not performed on stage. It is only told by A. To consider the reason for this, I would like to recall that, in the discussion before, I considered that A is the person who can deny the hope and possibility B and C have and have the broadest view of her own life.

Dummy A has only had a seizure and is not dead, but A already understands and accepts, albeit somewhat emotionally, what will happen at her death. By not letting The Boy act out the scene or not even letting the playwright Albee produce it as a performance but by making him recreate it as a narrative from her own mouth, A becomes the "subject" of this play, half-consciously reigning it. A denies not only B and C but also The Boy, but the denial

directed at him (or Albee, who is clearly related) is not about the possibility of the future, but about the denial of his role as a writer who dominates the play with a bird's eye view. As Albee says that this play is "about" Frances, and that her death "completes the subject," A's life from her youth to the very end is fully shown in the play.

2.5 When it all Ends

In this section, I mainly focused on A, deciphering the fact that she experiences several losses in the first act and is often depicted as shattered into pieces. In addition, on the contrary, I also considered that, in the second act, A reigns as the subject of this play, showing pride and acceptance in what is left of her life. A, modeled on Albee's adoptive mother Frances, whom Albee did not come to like until the end of her life, is portrayed as a powerful and domineering woman. Still, Albee himself said that "[v]ery few people who met my adoptive mother in the last twenty years of her life could abide her, while many people who have seen my play find her fascinating. Heavens. what have I done?!" (Albee 168). Frances' charms and personality form the foundation of the play's complex dramatic structure.

C. W. E. Bigsby argues that this work is not about reconciliation between Albee and the memory of his adoptive mother but about reconciliation between people themselves and their lives (Bigsby 151). In the play's final scene, A's dialogue becomes more resonant when we see her as a woman who has lived a long and fierce life.

A: [⋯] I was talking about⋯what: coming to the end of

it; yes. So. There it is. You asked, after all. That's the happiest moment,

(A *looks to* C *and* B, *puts her hands out, takes theirs. Continued*)

When it's all done. When we stop. When we can stop. (*Women* 384)

Here, taking B and C's hands, A peacefully accepts her death. With her death, there is no longer any "experience that has not been experienced" for her. In other words, death raises her perspective to the broadest possible level, and she accepts both the hopes of her youth and the misfortunes that come with age as parts of herself, thus completing her life. Through this play, which portrays the fictional life of Frances, Albee shows how death completes a "whole" human life.

Conclusion

In this final chapter, I focused on two late, self-reflective, and introspective plays of Williams and Albee. *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* deals with Williams' past love affairs and other forms of love he experienced in his youth, which he looks back on from 1980, the time he actually wrote the play. *Three Tall Women* is a biographical play about Albee's adoptive mother, and, at the same time, partially an autobiographical play that shows how Albee understood his mother at last. Though the themes and subjects of the two plays are different (the beloved and the unloved parent), both playwrights drew inspiration from their real lives.

Reality, which I defined as "selves in an unchangeable

situation," includes a person's whole life with happiness and despair, denial and reconciliation. In these two plays, reality is finally depicted as something to be reconciled with, something to reunite with the person's mind.

Conclusion: Facing and Embracing Reality "As Is"

Life offers unchangeable and unacceptable things. Tennessee Williams' and Edward Albee's lives began with such things around them: dysfunctional families, not being able to fit in at school, their homosexuality, and so on. To survive these, they started to write from an early age. Williams, who was still "Tom" at that time, was thirteen when he was first published (Spoto 20). Albee wrote his first drama (though it was a sexual farce and was thrown away by his adoptive mother) at twelve (Gussow 18). Throughout their lives, they wove the frustration, anxiety, rebellion, and uncertainty regarding who they were into their art.

This thesis took six plays, three of each playwright, and examined how they tackled reality. Again, reality is not the condition around individuals—it is individuals who are surrounded by a certain condition. In other words, it is not "what" is around them but "who" is surrounded and "how" they will deal with it. By discussing the early, middle, and late plays of each playwright chronologically, this thesis teased out the similarities in how the playwrights and their characters faced reality.

Chapter 1 examined how the characters found refuge from their reality. When they cannot achieve or return to what is required to be normal or ideal, they create an illusionary world where they satisfy the norms. However, there are differences: Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* cannot return to the real world and retreats into her magical world, while Martha and George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* choose to face their harsh reality. Still, though where they end up differs, the characters in both plays attempt not to look directly at how they do not meet the norms and avert their gaze from what is

requested of them. Williams and Albee's early plays are battlefields where reality fights illusion. To be with an illusion is much more comfortable, but once it grows too strong, reality starts to collapse.

In chapter 2, reality fought reality. *The Two-Character Play* may seem like it is reality against fiction, but for Felice and Clare, writing/acting "The Two-Character Play" is by no means fictional. They are not engaged in the play itself but in producing the play extemporaneously. That is how they try to fight the cold and deserted environment in which they are left in. *The Lady from Dubuque* deals with parallel worlds, an infinity of realities. Elizabeth and Oscar are mysterious, but they are here to give Jo a chance to get what she wishes for: love and understanding, two things Albee may have wanted from his mother. After all, Elizabeth is a substitute mother. In the play, Jo's surroundings fight to dominate one another, and her reality changes at the last minute, letting her rest in peace. These two plays also illustrate how the playwrights themselves fought their way through their failures. Both of them succumbed to a hard time after their early successes. But Williams kept on writing, and Albee too, experimenting with dramaturgic structures. They too, like the characters, were fighting reality by producing in reality.

In chapter 3, the battle finally ends: reality becomes something in which one anticipates their past, present, and, perhaps, future. Past sufferings and failures are forgiven and understood. The present becomes a calm, comfortable time-space where the characters can let themselves be as they wish. It is only near the end, close to death, that people understand who they actually are. The unchangeable may not have changed. People and things that were lost are never returned. Still, the

unacceptable has changed, or, to be accurate, one changes to become accepting of the unacceptable. *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* lets us see August in 1980, who is now able to understand how he loved and/but used Kip and others in his life, asking for forgiveness and praising their beauty. *Three Tall Women* shows us how a young woman changes into an old lady who knows what happens in her whole life and comes to understand and accept everything that happened to her.

The curious thing is that, although the characters (along with the playwrights) come to accept, or even embrace themselves, including their failures and flaws, they undergo a transformation to be able to do so. They recreate themselves over the years to be able to embrace their realities. Facing reality as is might seem like they are as they were since the beginning. However, what I mean here is the form they finally take. Such a transformation takes time, suffering, and effort. Both playwrights went through all of these to become who they were at the end, and these changes manifest as characters in their plays.

In 1983, Williams died a mysterious death. He was found with a barbiturate cap stuck in his throat. Whether it was on purpose or an accident, only God knows. Albee lived longer until 2016. In 2002, he wrote *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?,* which won the Tony Award. Written in a realistic style, the play tackles an unfamiliar theme: bestiality. Although *The Goat* is somewhat bizarre, I still think that Albee was dealing with the problem of "how" people deal with something unchangeable or unacceptable. While maybe he does not write about how one becomes able to accept love affairs with a goat, he does throw in the question.

To embrace reality is to embrace oneself. Throughout their

lives, Williams and Albee both enjoyed success and endured tough times. In the end, they made themselves able to embrace their past and who they were and are.

Notes

Introduction

1. For Williams, I referred to the chronology in *Tennessee Williams: Plays 1937-1955* and *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* by Donald Spoto. For Albee, I referred to Mel Gussow's *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey* and the biography in *The Edward Albee Society*.

Chapter 1

1. The name of the mansion where Blanche and Stella grow up, Belle Reve, comes from a French word meaning "beautiful dream." Blanche's lost "beautiful dream" refers to her future with Allan and her life living as a lady. The lost mansion's name is both symbolic and ironic. In addition, as Nancy M. Tischler explains, while Stanley and the others symbolize the birth of a new Southern life, the loss of Belle Reve symbolizes the loss of Blanche's dream life and the loss of tradition in the South (Tischler 52).

2. In scene one, Blanche tells Stella, whom she has not seen in a long time, that she has gained a little more weight, which can be attributed to Stella's pregnancy. While Blanche continues to obsess over her appearance and clings to her past glory, Stella has started a new life and is pregnant. The difference in the sisters' lives is also reflected in their different attitudes toward their appearance.

3. When Mitch asks Blanche what she does for a living, she replies that she is an English teacher and says the following about her

students:

> BLANCHE: [···] Their literary heritage is not what most of them treasure above all else! But they're sweet things! And in the spring, it's touching to notice them making first discovery of love! As if nobody had ever known it before! (*Streetcar* 500)

For a teacher to raise the topic of sexual and love life and not academic work when referring to her students, is somewhat unnatural. These lines, then, reflect Blanche's promiscuous lifestyle. Alternatively, when talking about her young students, perhaps Blanche is associating them with her relationship with Allan and recollecting their falling love and getting married at a young age.

4. Marc Robinson, writing about the sexual depictions in Williams' work, states the following:

> Sex in Williams is never merely titillating, never without a deeper drive that goes beyond the physical. Norman Mailer once said that the thrill of watching Williams's plays in the fifties was that you could sense the homosexual subtext to all the erotic scenes. But that seems beside the point. If there's any subtext to the sex scenes, it's a far less glamorous one: In all of these scenes, characters plead for acknowledgement from the person in front of them. (Robinson 49)

Robinson's assertion that sexual relationships are meant to be

recognized by the other person can be considered in two ways in the context of Blanche's relationships. Her relationships can be considered a stepping stone to finding someone who would protect her. In contrast, her relationships with younger men signal that she is still searching for the meaning of existence that Allan never gave her. In my opinion, by being with young men, she is still trying to stay close to Allan.

5. Clum notes that Blanche's accusation of Allan in public, on the dance floor, rather than in their private room, and the fact that it was made in terms of "himself" being disgusting rather than "his act" or "his sexual orientation" cause Allan's suicide (Clum 122).

However, I disagree with the first reason. It is true that Blanche accuses Allan in public, but nowhere in her statement does she include words suggesting his homosexuality. This, I believe, does not count as a case of outing, where someone reveals another person's sexual orientation without their consent. In *Cat*, Brick rejects Skipper on the phone, and Skipper chooses death. In the same way, Allan would have killed himself even if Blanche had accused him in private. The problem is not so much that Allan's sexuality was exposed but that he felt despaired that there was no one to forgive him for it.

In this respect, Clum's latter reason is correct. Blanche's accusation does not show any kind of humanity to Allan, making it seem as if his sexual orientation is the only thing that represents him. If Allan's homosexuality, which he does not accept and which is generally considered "disgusting," is the only thing that makes him who he is, and if people say they cannot accept that, it is no wonder that he commits suicide.

6. The title was written with soap on the mirror of a restaurant called The College of Complexes that Albee visited in 1954. According to Albee, he laughed and "dropped it from mind," but, as Gussow notes, he did keep it somewhere in his mind (Gussow 87).

7. In act three, George claims that his parents took him on a trip to the Mediterranean Sea as a graduation present. When Nick asks, "Was this after you killed them?" George and Martha stare at him and dodge his question (*Woolf* 284). The older couple, who are skilled at playing word games, may not necessarily be telling the truth throughout the play but are simply working together to blur the boundary between reality and fiction by involving Nick, Honey, and the audience.

In contrast, Nick and Honey do not have the language skills or understanding to take over the game, so they cannot stop the second game from revealing what is probably a true story.

8. The two couples, according to Toby Zinman, remain unaware of each other's names until the end, and that is no certainty that Honey is really the young lady's name or just a nickname given to her by her husband. In addition, Honey only calls Nick "Dear," whereas George and Martha call each other by name. George and Martha, Zinman concludes, are not typified characters but, unlike the younger couple, characters with individuality (Zinman 44).

9. The intertextuality of various genres, such as the inclusion of a phrase from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, is seen in the play. This

is based on the premise that the characters and the audience, many of whom are “college types,” as George puts it, are capable of understanding such intellectual wit.

Chapter 2

1. In this thesis, I used the final version of *The Two-Character Play* that was published in 1975.

2. As Felicia Hardison Londré points out, *Out Cry* has a metatheatrical effect in that it begins by addressing the real audience and gradually incorporates them as the audience who came to see “The Two-Character Play” (Londré 99).

3. In *The Sandbox*, an early play of Albee's, a character named Young Man appears as an Angel of Death. Albee dedicated the play to his Grandma Cotter, the only member of the family he loved. The Young Man stays beside the dying Grandma until she passes away, telling her that he has come to her as her Angel of Death (*Sandbox* 94).

4. According to Gussow, *The Lady From Dubuque* had a former title: *The Substitute Speaker*. “In the original conception, Jo, the wife who is sick, dies in the first act, and her husband, Sam, dresses up in her clothes and assumes her identity: He becomes “the substitute speaker” (Gussow 309–10). Though there is a great difference regarding who "the substitute speaker" is, both the original and the final play use a substitute to depict what Jo needs on her deathbed.

5. In act one, Jo calls Sam “Sambo” as a nickname (*Lady* 602). At

this point, Oscar has not arrived on stage. Since the word "sambo" is a cruel way of addressing black people, it may be said that this nickname forecasts the interchangeability of Sam and Oscar in the proceeding act.

6. Albee notes Elizabeth's character description as "*a stylish, elegant, handsome woman; splendid for whatever her age*" (*Lady* 558). But we cannot draw any concrete information from this, such as her age or appearance. Thus, the only specific information of Elizabeth's is that she is from Dubuque.

7. Oscar and the male guests tie up Sam when he franticly denies Elizabeth and Oscar's identity (*Lady* 641). As we will shortly discuss in the main text, the guests buy Elizabeth's insistence that she is Jo's mother and, therefore, see Sam as a disturbing character. Sam loses his freedom in a place where it should have been his own.

8. To be accurate, Carol, the newcomer to the guest-group, has some doubts about Elizabeth and Oscar's identities. She does not find out who they are, but she has the most unbiased view among the rest, which lets her at least consider the truths of Elizabeth and Oscar. She may be the only character the audience can sympathize with, for she has doubts, confusions, and never-answered questions.

9. This is especially true for Oscar. Jo does not call Oscar by his name. She only calls him "Sam" in her illness-blurred consciousness. For Jo, Oscar is not anyone special; he is an unspecified man who acts as an ideal husband, or, in other words,

in a way she wants Sam to act. Roudané considers that Jo and Sam lack love in their relationship (*Albee* 121), but, although their thoughts may differ, they both call each other by their names until their final parting. They obviously have love for each other; they just do not know how to show it.

Chapter 3

1. The reality of 1940 is disturbed by the scenes in which Hazel, Frank, and Tallulah appear, as mentioned earlier. Here, we become aware that the present August is in 1980.

2. Attilio Favorini writes about the similarities between this play and *Memoirs* in terms of their nonlinearity.

> Like the *Memoirs*, *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* allows for a much freer flow of time and event than does *The Glass Menagerie*. […] Similarly, *Something Cloudy* deliberately blends present and past and superimposes incidents from different memory planes one upon the other. (Favorini 145)

3. At the beginning of the play, it is revealed that A believes herself to be ninety-one years old, and C asks her what the pride in taking just one year off her real age is (*Women* 310). Before her death, Frances also says that she is one year younger than she actually is (Gussow 25), so from the beginning of the play, it is evident that it incorporates true stories.

4. When referring to the bedridden A, I will refer to her as "Dummy A."

5. A associates her height with her strength, as she recalls that she was once tall and strong (*Women* 351). A severely laments the fact that her spine is shrinking due to the effects of osteoporosis (*Women* 341), and this is another scene that shows her confusion and fear of being transformed into something else from what she once was.

6. Both A's mother and husband suffered a disease for a long period, and A does not want to talk specifically about its consequences. One thing that is clear is that A's mother, who was fair and strict in her youth and devoted to her daughters, became A's enemy as she got older. By the end of her life, their relationship became terribly bad. In addition, the relationship between A and her alcoholic sister deteriorated. The relationship losses A has experienced include not only "death" but also "psychological separation."

7. Cynthia Bassham, who played C, remembers that Albee was also adamant about matching the shades of the three women's clothes for act two. According to her, "it was very important to him that we look like we belong together" (Solomon 167). This shows that Albee wanted A, B, and C to be connected to each other.

8. "Everyone" mentioned here includes The Boy who visited dummy A, but he will be discussed later in this section.

9. In fact, Roudané states that the setting of Albee leaving on his own will is ironic in that he was actually thrown out of the house

by Frances (*Albee* 140).

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