



Al-Azhar University

Faculty of Girls

10th of Ramadan Branch

Dept. of English Language and Literature

Light as a Symbol of the Plights of Tennessee Williams' Heroines:

**A Study of Three
Selected Plays**

By

Dr. Reham Mohammed Abu Zaid

Light as a Symbol of the Plights of Tennessee Williams'

Heroines: A Study of Three Selected Plays

"Art is made out of symbols the way your body is made out of vital tissue" (Williams, Where I Live 45)

"We live in light and shadow, that's what we live in, a world of – light and – shadow" (Williams, Orpheus 92)

"Don't turn the light on!"(Williams, *A Streetcar* 72) shouts Blanche Du Bois, the heroine of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), "fearfully". These words skillfully sum up Williams' technique in using light to symbolize the dilemmas and the plights of his heroines. These heroines are wronged mercilessly from the world around them. However, they can't, because of their weakness, delicacy, fragility or disability, face the world or even cope with it. They are unique characters with distinctive individuality and special vulnerability. Consequently, their uniqueness aggravates their plights in a way that has made the modern readers realize that Williams has created a new distinctive kind of memorable

tragic heroines. Their plights are reflected by Williams' symbolic use of light.

Throughout Williams' plays, there are continual symbolic uses of and references to light. In his famous play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the audience or the readers are "faced at the beginning by a welter of symbols – both linguistic and theatrical – that force upon the realistic surface a conscious, almost allegorical pattern" (Riddel 13). This gives the play a deep dramatic perspective. In order to serve his dramatic aim in showing the wrongness of the modern world to the weak marginalized persons, Williams has produced *A Streetcar* highly rich in verbal and physical symbols. Yet in spite of all the utilized symbols, light has a special exceptional symbolic use.

The heroine of *A Streetcar*, Blanche Du Bois, appears for the first time in the play in "early" darkness of an "evening of May", "the sky...shows...a peculiarly tender blue, almost turquoise which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay" (Williams, *A Streetcar* I, 3). She is likened in stage directions to "a moth" that "her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light" (*A Streetcar*, I, 5). Moth lives only in dim light. The image of the "moth" suggests to the reader not

only beauty and fragility, but also the possibility of the burning easily by the "strong light". This implication will be developed along the play; then it will come true at the end. This may explain her appearance for the first time in the "early darkness" of the evening. Yet, her insistence, after that, to appear only in dim light casts more questions about the matter. Her appearance is accompanied by a kind of "lyricism" suggested by the "blue, almost turquoise" color of the light of the sky suitable for her aristocratic background, her romanticism, her sensitivity, her culture and her refined character, in contrast to "the atmosphere of decay" of the place, Elysian Fields, with its harsh realism, as a symbolic reference to the modern world.

Almost all the events of the play take place in the evening whether early or late in the evening or early in the morning when light is dim. Scene II begins - as Sc.I - at six o'clock in the evening. Blanche and her sister go out. Scene III happens at night. Scene IV starts early in the following morning. Scene V occurs also at the dusk of the early evening. Scene VI is initiated late at night at about two a.m. Scene VII takes place in late afternoon in mid-September (Blanche's birthday). Scene VIII happens after three-quarters of an hour of Sc. VII. Scene IX, comes

about a while later after Sc. VIII in the same evening. Scene X begins a few hours later that night. Scene XI is opened some weeks later, the sky is turquoise early in the evening. The dim light of the scenes helps Blanche to escape to her fantastic world from the harshness of the real world. But, at the end, reality triumphs over fantasy, shattering Blanche's psyche.

The readers can notice that the play, *A Streetcar*, is divided into scenes only. There is no act division in the play. Joseph N. Riddel argues in his essay "A Streetcar Named Desire – Nietzsche Descending" that perhaps the cause is that "the theme disallows a syllogistic progression of human actions in time, while demanding a recurring pattern of conflict and reconciliation that accords with the natural rhythms of passion" (20). Notably, the main theme of this play is 'the inability of the world of fantasy to overcome reality'. This main theme dictates successive patterns of conflicts and fantastic trials of reconciliation. This is exactly what happens to the heroine, Blanche, who suffers from "a recurring pattern of conflict" with the harsh outside world and attempts to make some failed trials of "reconciliation" and escapism. Both the conflict and the failed trials of reconciliation are reflected skillfully by the symbolic use of light.

When Blanche meets her sister, Stella, for the first time, she asks her to "turn that over-light off!" Then she repeats: "Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this *merciless glare!*" (*A Streetcar* I, 7). She is afraid of exposure to bright light; describing it as "merciless glare". Blanche avoids bright light because it will reveal her present miserable state. Light is equivalent to her plight. It will show her vanishing beauty and youth as well as her deteriorated social position as a descendant of an aristocratic background. These constitute part of her psychological problems and her traps from which dim light is an escape or a way out: "I like it dark, dark is comforting to me" (*A Streetcar* IX, 72).

Consequently, all the time, Blanche tries to avoid direct light. She doesn't go out in the daylight or even appear in bright light of the electric bulb. She uses a Chinese colored paper lantern, like a shield, to block out the strong light of the bulb. Apparently, she tries to hide her face wrinkles because she is getting older and does not want anyone, especially Mitch, her would-be fiancé, to recognize her real age. In scene VI, Blanche asks Mitch to leave the lights off, and she lightens only a candle. Mitch tells her: "I don't think I ever seen you in the light. That's a fact! ... You never want to go out in the afternoon. ...

You never want to go out till after six and then it's always some place that's not lighted much. ... What it means is I've never had a real good look at you, Blanche" (*A Streetcar IX*, 72). She becomes so afraid when he decides to turn on the light, he suggests: "Let's turn the light on here". She asks him [*fearfully*]: "Light? Which light? What for?" Then, when he tears the paper lantern off the light bulb; "*she utters a frightened gasp*" as shown in the stage directions (*IX*, 72).

Additionally, light for Blanche is her past lost love for her dead husband, Allan Grey. Lost love is also one side of her plight. She lives after him in loneliness and darkness. She describes falling in love as if "you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me" (*A Streetcar VI*, 56). Her love for her husband revealed the world for her in a vivid bright light. After his suicide, she claims that "the searchlight which had been turned on the world was *turned off* again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than *this—kitchen—candle*" (*A Streetcar VI*, 57). She is an English teacher, and her idea of love is a romanticized poetic one. She thinks that being in love illuminated the world for her. When her husband died, the world turned to be dark.

Extinguished light here is equivalent to lost love for her, which is one of the causes of her misery. Her "romantic way of looking at things, sensitive as it may be, has a fatal weakness: it exists only by ignoring certain portions of reality" (Kernan 9). Her inability to cope with facts of the real world leads to her morbid denial of the truth and her pathological escapism.

Notably, the candles appear most prominently at Blanche's failed birthday party and earlier when she entertains Mitch alone. Blanche tells Mitch that since the death of her husband; there's never been any light "stronger" for her than "this kitchen candle" (*A Streetcar* VI, 57). Life for her has become emotionally dimmed. But candles also symbolize romance, tenderness and beauty, which are Blanche's qualities. The electric bulb, on the other hand, stands for the more unpleasant side of life; it is the harsh glare of reality, which strips away all pretensions, exposing ugly truths. Blanche likes the candles of her birthday cake prepared by Stella but she uses them symbolically to refer to her condition: "candles *aren't safe*, that candles burn out in little boys' and girls' eyes, or wind blows them out and after that happens, electric light bulbs go on and you see too plainly" (VIII, 66). She is burnt like the candle and what is left is the

harsh light of the electric bulb, which is strong and constant. The symbolic burning of the candle recalls the moth-like image of the beginning scene which is burnt by bright light and gives an ominous prediction of Blanche's fate.

Furthermore, bright light represents Blanche's lost wealth, family and estate, Belle Reve, she says to her sister: "I, I, *I* took the blows in my face and my body!" (*A Streetcar I*, 12). She has been subjected to a series of death of the members of her family and to ultimate loss of her ancestral wealth, home and estate. She is left alone and poor to confront the cruelty, the ugliness and the brutality of life. These elements of her past have gone by the time Blanche arrives in New Orleans. Hence, most of the bright light of her life has dimmed. So, she lives in symbolic darkness. Her inner torment and disintegration thus symbolize the lost charming aristocratic South from which she comes and with which she is inseparably entwined. It was to that lost world and the unpleasant one which succeeded it (as in the Kowalski world) that Williams turned later on for his material and for the majority of his settings. Kenneth Tynan sees Blanche as a "desperate exceptional woman". He generalizes part of Blanche's plight as a representative of past noble aristocracy to

symbolize the humiliation of this aristocracy in the modern world, comparing ancient and modern dramas in dealing with it. He writes the following:

When, finally, she is removed to the mental home, we should feel that a part of civilization is going with her. Where ancient drama teaches us to reach nobility by contemplation of what is noble, modern American drama conjures us to contemplate what might have been noble, but is now humiliated, ignoble in the sight of all but the compassionate.

(American Blues 13)

Blanche also uses light imagery to describe the benefits of poetry, music, and art – in contrast to what she considers to be Stanley's primitive nature. These fine things cannot be found in Stanley's flat particularly and in Elysian Fields generally. Darkness envelopes the present place around her. She tells Stella: "Such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! ... In this dark march ... *Don't — don't hang back with the brutes!*" (*A Streetcar IV*, 41). It's fitting that things like art and poetry are described in the same way as love for Blanche – as forms of light

penetrating the darkness of the world. She has lost this light now.

Moreover, light symbolizes Blanche's present distress in Stanley's flat. She is too sensitive, too delicate, too refined and too beautiful to live in the Kowalski world. When she enters it for the first time, there is "blue" light (I, 6). Symbolically, the color "Blue is nostalgic. It is a color that lives in the past, relating everything in the present and the future to experiences in the past" (<http://www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com>). This is what happens to Blanche in Stanley's flat; her past damages her present and her future. She has nostalgia to her irretrievable past. She also tries to hide the shameful side of it; but when it is revealed, it causes her a scandal destroying her dreams with Mitch and leading her to an asylum. Besides, "The color blue, especially in American culture, represents depression and sadness" (<http://www.symbolism.wikia.com/wiki/Blue>). Blanche suffers all the time from depression and sadness. Thus, the 'blue light' which accompanies her first coming to Stanley's flat symbolizes sides of her predicament in it. She confesses to Stella that she is aware of her embarrassing situation – or her predicament – in her brother-in-law's flat: "I *won't* stay long! I won't, I *promise*

I - ...I won't, I promise, *I'll* go! Go *soon*! I will *really*! I won't hang around until he – throws me out..." (*A Streetcar* V, 46). This confession happens when Stella turns on the light covered by a paper lantern. Blanche tries to cover the ugliness of the Kowalski's apartment with a paper lantern. It may be understood that shielding the harsh light isn't just for blocking the plain view of her plight in the world—it's also about blocking the harsh real world from her eyes. She doesn't want to see it clearly. She doesn't want to deal with reality. She wants all ugly truths to be covered with the beauty of imagination and illusion. This is a major defect in Blanche's character. Alvin B. Kernan summarizes Blanche's plight symbolized by the bright light of the electric bulb and her failed trials to escape from it as the following:

In the course of the play Williams manages to identify this realism with the harsh light of the naked electric bulb which Blanche covers with a Chinese lantern. It reveals pitilessly every line in Blanche's face, every tawdry aspect of the set. And in just this way Stanley's pitiless and probing realism manages to reveal every line in Blanche's soul by cutting through all the soft illusions with which she has covered herself.

(10)

As a kind of escapism or a kind of a miserable reconciliation, Blanche uses a Chinese paper lantern to cover the bulb. The paper lantern covers up her own insecurities and her own predicaments symbolized by light (her real age, her fading beauty, her shameful past, her lost estate, her lost family, her lost wealth, her lost love, her loneliness, her sadness, her present miss of the refined elements of culture and civilization, and her present miserable stay at the Kowalski's flat), that constitute Blanche's plight. She can't stand facing the truth and cannot confront the reality, so she covers the light with papers and escapes to fantasy, illusions and lies. Technically, "the lantern is a very useful device as a symbol ... It is cheap and at the same time it is always in the foreground, we can see it throughout the whole play ... and this way we never forget what this symbol stands for"(<http://www.antiskola.eu/hu/beszamolo-beszamolok-puskak>). This paper lantern, as well as other theatrical and symbolic devices, plays an important and effective role on the audience. They have made the play "more remarkable on the stage than in the study, but the fusion of Williams' lyrical and dramatic talents in it has prevailed over time, at least so far" (Bloom 6). Blanche has no realistic solution

of how to rescue herself. The paper lantern masks her painful past and her sorrowful present. But it is only a temporary solution that can easily be destroyed at any moment. A paper world cloaking reality also appears in the song "Paper Moon". While Stanley tells Stella about Blanche's sordid past, Blanche sings this popular song about a paper world that becomes a reality through love (symbolized by light) which she has lost long time ago.

The Chinese paper lantern symbolizes Blanche herself. She purchases this lantern which is normally cheap, collapsible, sphere-or cylinder-shaped, and can come in a variety of colors. Its only purpose is to be a decorative piece to some source of light. By this way we come up to the question why this lantern is an artificial one, why it is made of paper. First of all Blanche recently isn't rich enough to be able to buy a new real lantern, or even a chandelier. Secondly, she probably does not think the Kowalski's flat deserves it. In addition to these, the material of the lantern being paper represents that the lies which Blanche is telling can be discovered easily and she knows that well, she tells Stella: "But I'm scared now – awf'ly scared. I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick" (*A Streetcar V*, 45). The paper lantern also suggests that her story can be torn apart into pieces without making

much effort. As Stanley tears off the lantern she also falls to pieces. By using it, she loses the connection with the real world. She attempts to convince everyone even herself that her lies are true and she tries to become one with them.

The Chinese paper lantern that Blanche has chosen to purchase symbolizes the idea that Blanche believes she can cover up anything and make it appear more beautiful and tantalizing. Like Blanche, the Chinese paper lantern is used to cover something that has not been so appealing. Blanche buries her insecurities in lies and cheap fashion so that she may appear more attractive to others. She masks the lantern with paper as she masks herself with makeup and attractive clothes to hide reality. She is self-conscious of her dilemma so she wants to hide it. Therefore, not only has Blanche chosen to transform a bare light bulb into something more eye-catching, but also she has chosen to live her life in the same way—by constantly renewing herself. Unfortunately, if the paper lantern collapses then all that is left is just a bright light bulb (her real plight) and that is what happens to Blanche when she collapses. She is left vulnerable and exposed confronting her damaging plight. Thus, most people can see her reality. Then, she can easily be shattered into million pieces. Consequently,

in order to protect her delicate state, she covers herself with something that will make her appear less frail and more interesting. In the last scene, when Stanley tears up the paper lantern ruthlessly and extends it towards her, "she cries out *as if the lantern was herself*" as shown in the stage directions (*A Streetcar* XI, 87). At that time, she collapses.

However, Blanche tries to explain the causes of her psychological escapism in many ways. First of all, she is so sensitive to many things like her appearance, how she looks like, the others' opinions about her, her loneliness, and her real age. While speaking about Blanche, Stella asks Stanley to "try to understand her and be nice to her...And admire her dress and tell her she's looking wonderful. That's important with Blanche. *Her little weakness!*" (*A Streetcar* II, 16). Stella, also, blames Stanley for his harsh treatment for Blanche stating that she is *sensitive*: "Lately you been doing all you can think of to rub her the wrong way, Stanley, and *Blanche is sensitive* and you've got to realize that Blanche and I grew up under very different circumstances than you did" (VII, 58). In another situation, Stella says to Stanley: "you needn't have been *so cruel to someone alone as she is*, 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" (VIII, 68). Blanche uses the paper lantern also to hide the wrinkles of her face, because in "the semi-darkness", one can't realize the real age as she thinks. When Stella asks Blanche: "why are you sensitive about your age?" Blanche replies: "Because of hard knocks my vanity's been given. What I mean is – he thinks I'm sort of – prim and proper, you know! ...I want to *deceive* him enough to make him – want me..." (V, 47).

Deception, lying and illusions are other ways out of Blanche's plight, as she thinks. These ways parallel her use of the paper lantern. She practices these ways during her use of it. These ways may be ascribed to another cause of her psychological escapism; her inability to accord with the harsh reality of life. She confesses that she can't cope with life because "life is too full of evasions and ambiguities, I think. I like an artist who paints in strong, bold colors, primary colors. I don't like pinks and creams and I never cared for wishy-washy people" (*A Streetcar* II, 20). She tells Mitch that "There's so much – so much confusion in the world" (III, 34). Accordingly, Blanche refuses the real world, retreating to an illusionary one: "I don't want *realism* ...I'll tell you what I want. *Magic!* 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!*" (IX, 72). Dim light of the paper lantern is equivalent to her illusionary escapism. When he turns the light on and stares at her, she cries and covers her face. She can't stand the bright light of truth. He, then, turns the light off and departs leaving her alone entrapped in her plight forever.

Additionally, Blanche lies to every person she meets while staying in her sister's flat. She thinks that this is a sort of adaptation to any situation. Adaptation is a third cause of her psychological escapism. So, symbolically, it can be said that her paper lantern, which represents her, comes in every size, shape, and color. She is always molding herself to become what she thinks the other person wants. She sums up her accommodating personality with this one line to Mitch: "I'm very *adaptable*—to circumstances" (*A Streetcar* III, 30). Again, this supports the idea that Blanche is willing to become anyone just to please someone or a group of people. Bloom states that: "Blanche yearns for the values of the aesthetic, she scarcely embodies them" (6). Like the paper lantern, Blanche can make herself fit into any room with any kind of scenery. No matter the group she is with or the

person she is dating, Blanche will find a way to make them want her. She easily says: "A woman's charm is fifty per cent *illusion*" (*A Streetcar* II, 21). But, the paper lantern can be easily destroyed exactly as her illusions. Stanley tells Stella in scene VII that Blanche all the time lies and he has discovered all her lies: "she's been feeding us a pack of lies here" (VII, 58). Yet, Stanley is not fooled and confronts Blanche: "I've been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy's eyes!" (X, 79).

In addition to this, Blanche refuses to leave her prejudices against the working class behind her when she has come to Elysian Fields. Stanley understands this and hears her criticizing him severely. These prejudices complicate her situation in Stanley's flat escalating the conflict between them. Consequently, they increase her predicaments. She describes him as: "common" saying to Stella: "he acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something – sub-human – something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something – ape-like about him..." (*A Streetcar* IV, 40-41). On hearing this, he wants to revenge her. He tries to disclose her past asking about her in every place she has gone to and searches for proofs

against her. Then, he rapes her. At the same time, Blanche tries to cover up everything to make it appear more glamorous and more beautiful as a third cause of her escapism. She fills the ugly flat with perfume and ornaments. But Stanley sees past the clothes and décor and has had enough of the lies. To Stanley, those sorts of items do not make a person special because all what they do is to cover up the truth and to turn it into a fake.

Blanche also lies in order to hide her real age deceiving Mitch in order to marry her. She lies in order to secure her future life and to get rid of her present misery. Mitch is younger than her and never married before. So, she lies telling him that Stella is older than her "Just slightly. Less than a year" (*A Streetcar* III, 30). While in fact she is about five years older than Stella. At that time she asks Mitch to put "a colored paper lantern... over the light bulb". The paper lantern once more is equivalent to her lies and deception. She thinks that it will prevent the light of the bulb or in fact the light of the truth. She explains the matter to Mitch as "*I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action*" (III, 30). She wants to delude Mitch to achieve happiness and security. This has an inherent social dimension which is the dependence of women on men at

that time in order to secure their lives. She states to Stella: "I want to *rest!* I want to breathe quietly again! Yes – I *want* Mitch ... *very badly!* Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and *not be anyone's problem...*" (V, 47). In the same way, she has tried to depend on Shep Huntleigh before meeting Mitch. She herself tells Stella, laughing, that she is "a liar" when she was writing a letter to Shep (V, 42). Stella also depends on Stanley in the same way, despite the great differences between her and Blanche in their ways in life. Moreover, Blanche accounts for her past shameful deeds in Laurel to find a shelter and protection with men, although she is ashamed and tries desperately to hide her past from Mitch, so she lies. She explains to Stella the matter as the following:

I've run *for protection*, Stella, from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof – because it was storm – all storm, and I was – caught in the center...And you've got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you're going to have someone's protection. And so the soft people have got to – shimmer and glow – *put a – paper lantern over the light* ...but I'm *scared* now – awf'ly scared. *I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick.* It isn't

enough to be soft. You've got to be soft and attractive. And I – I'm fading now!

(*A Streetcar V*, 45)

Blanche is a tortured soul. However, she has past and present sins. Blanche's name means 'white'. White is the color of clarity and purity. In the course of the play, we discover that her deeds contrast, to some extent, with the symbolic meaning of her name. Blanche "as her name implies," also becomes "the pallid, lifeless product of her illusions, of a way of life that has forfeited its vigor" (Riddel 17). But deeply in her heart, she thinks that she keeps the clarity and the purity which her name symbolizes. Hence, she is always portraying herself as something she is clearly not. She is deceitful in many deeds. She hides herself in shadows and is fundamentally afraid of the light, as she fears it would expose her reality. Blanche confesses to Mitch the same reasons of her past sins, saying that: "I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, *hunting for some protection* ... you said you needed somebody. Well, I needed somebody, too. *I thanked God for you*, because you seemed to gentle – a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in! The poor man's Paradise – is a little peace ... but I guess I was asking, hoping – too much!" (*A*

Streetcar IX, 73). However, when Mitch accuses her of being an "inside and outside" liar, she negates: "Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart" (*IX, 74*). She has contradictions. It is true that she is a liar and hypocrite, but we can also understand, sympathize and pity her, and see her efforts to change reality as springing not from willful deception but from a kind of pathetic idealism or psychopathic escapism. J. L. Styan describes Blanche as the following:

Blanche herself probably remains Williams' most notable creation. It is because she is such an amalgam of contradictions and because all the barbs are directed at us through her alone that the comic-pathetic note is sounded so frequently through the play.

(214)

At the end of the play, Blanche's paper lantern has been removed and torn out by Stanley, her antagonist. The real Blanche is exposed. Coincidentally enough, when Blanche looks at the paper lantern, she screams as if she sees her own reflection. When it collapses, is taken away or even is torn out, all that is left is a naked, dreadful bulb (or plight). Blanche looks in bright light a worn down,

aging lonely poor widow. The torn paper lantern is a visual symbol of her mental breakdown. Gerald Weales comments that:

The word *Victim* comes easily when one begins to talk about the characters in Williams' plays, for the rape of Blanche and her subsequent insanity hangs like a banner over Williams' work, proclaiming him the spokesman for the *defeated*, the *frustrated*, the *beaten*.

(48)

It is not the only time that Williams tackles psychological disorder of his heroines as of Blanche Du Bois, of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He was always preoccupied with it. It is a recurrent theme in his works. He even confessed in his *Memoirs* that: "I am as much of an *hysteric* as ... *Blanche*" (117). His recurrent concern with "the interior psychological state" of his heroines "takes him past the boundaries of the realistic theatre". His plays, with their "emphasis on inner reality", move "toward the subjective" (Scanlan 97). This point may distinguish him from his contemporaries. Early in his life, Williams recognized this disorder when his older sister and soul-mate, Rose, whom he loved so much, suffered

from it. Her illness was mirrored indirectly in his plays either through the heroines' fragility or through psychological disorders or through symbols. He himself was always afraid of suffering someday from the same illness, so he was writing constantly and frantically. His writings were a kind of escapism for him; he himself admitted that: "I guess my work has always been a kind of psychotherapy for me" (*Where I Live* 89).

Depending on the character of his sister, Rose, Williams has created Laura Wingfield; the heroine of his earlier play, *The Glass Menagerie* (1945). In the introduction of the play, Laura is described as having "one leg slightly shorter than the other, and held in a brace" because of "a childhood illness" which "has left her *crippled*...Stemming from this, Laura's separation from the outside world increases till she is *like a piece of her own glass collection*, too exquisitely *fragile* to move from the shelf" (*The Glass* 124). Williams uses "this physical flaw" both "to represent and to account for the flawed nature of her character". It is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual flaw" (Clayton 113). Throughout the play, it is shown that she is not only a physical cripple but also an emotional and psychological one. Her oversensitive nature makes her think that

everyone notices that she is crippled and abnormal. This belief is exaggerated and become a huge stumbling block for her from the normal life. As a result, she retreats to a world of illusion. Her crippled limp then becomes symbolic of her inner feelings. Her brother, Tom, asserts that her problem is not only being crippled but also being different: "Laura is very different from other girls" (*The Glass V*, 166). Although she is the heroine of the play, she has the fewest lines in it. Yet, even when she is not participating actively in the conversations, she is given special attention by the use of light. Wherever she is, she is the visual center of the stage which is always dim to match the atmosphere of memory (narrated by Tom). The playwright describes in the introduction that:

The light upon Laura should be *distinct* from the others, having a peculiar
pristine clarity such as light used in early religious portraits of *female saints*
or *Madonnas*. A certain correspondence to light in religious paintings, such
as El Greco's, where the figures are radiant in atmosphere that is relatively
dusky, could be effectively used throughout the play.

(The Glass 127)

The distinctiveness of the light shown on Laura contrasting the continuous dimness of the stage or the world around her, symbolizes her unearthly existence "as saints or religious figures" or her strangeness, fragility and abnormality. These qualities constitute part of her plight. She has "made no positive motion toward the world" but has "stood at the edge of the water...with feet that anticipated too much cold to move" (Clayton 112). She alienates and separates herself from the outside world encapsulating herself in a world of illusion inside the walls of her flat.

Light shows how pretty and fragile Laura is: "*A fragile, unearthly prettiness has come out in LAURA: she is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting*" (*The Glass VI*, 169). Her fragility, introversion and isolation have made her strange. She is unable to deal with people, to complete her education or even to live as any normal girl. As a result, she retreats to a world of illusion; that is the world of old phonograph records and her static glass animal collection. These ways of escapism are the only way out of her plight. The old records take her back to the past and the glass animals provide her with a fantasy

world and a fantasy companionship. Tom says to his mother, Amanda, about Laura: "in the eyes of others – strangers – *she's terribly shy and lives in a world of her own* and those things make her seem a little *peculiar* to people outside the house ... *she lives in a world of her own – a world of little glass ornaments, Mother*" (V, 166-167). As the colored paper lantern is the only illusionary solution of Blanche's predicament, the glass menagerie is the same of Laura's one. The glass menagerie disperses light shown upon it. Thus, it disperses Laura's plight. That is to say, it protects her from it; from showing clearly how fragile, unearthly, strange and abnormal she is.

Notably saying also that as the paper lantern symbolizes Blanche, when it is torn out, she breaks down confronting her plight; the glass menagerie too symbolizes Laura, when it is shattered, she collapses. When Tom unintentionally breaks Laura's glass collection, she "cries out as if *wounded*". She [*shrilly*] says: "*My glass! – menagerie*" [she covers her face and turns away] (*The Glass* III, 148). In addition, like her, the glass menagerie is fragile, vulnerable and easily to be damaged.

The light of the candles plays an important symbolic role in this play, *The Glass Menagerie* as it does in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The events of the last and the

most important scene completely take place in the light of the candles, when electricity has gone out. The light of the candles can be considered as a symbol of romanticism, this matches the meeting between Laura and Jim O'Connor, the would-be gentleman caller. Instead of the bright harsh light of the electric bulb which shows clearly Laura's lameness and her crippling disability to communicate with others, the pale light of the candles symbolizes a way out from her plight and an end to her abnormal shyness. The candles light may give hope to Laura that she can overcome her predicament, to her mother that Laura will marry Jim, and to Tom that he will find someone to take care of Laura and then he can travel abroad and achieve his dreams of adventures. Yet, soon we can realize that the light of the candles is fragile and can easily be extinguished. Consequently, there is no hope and no way out, Tom says at the end of the play:

I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a *familiar bit of music*. Perhaps it was only a piece of *transparent*

glass ... Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger – anything that can blow your candles out! [LAURA bends over the candles.] - For nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura – and so good-bye ... [She blows the candles out.]

(*The Glass* VII, 208)

After these final heartbreaking lines, Laura "blows the candles out" in a "world lit by lightning"; and has no place for her. By these lines, the play ends declaring the symbolic darkness that now envelopes her life. She retreats again to her illusionary glass world. But this time she becomes broken, like her unicorn. "As lyrical prose," Bloom argues, "this closing speech has its glory" (5). We are left with a lasting inherent effect of grief for Laura.

Moreover, Williams uses the candlelight to symbolize Laura's inner feelings. When Laura finds out that Jim has cut his relation with his high school girlfriend; Laura's face lights up. According to the stage directions; Jim smiles at Laura "with a *warmth and charm which lights*

her inwardly with altar candles" (*The Glass* VII, 192). However, when she knows that Jim is now engaged to a girl named Betty, the stage directions describe that "The holy candles on the altar of Laura's face have been snuffed out" (VII, 202). These candles are put in an old candelabrum "that used to be on the altar at the church of the Heavenly Rest". But unfortunately, "it was melted a little out of shape when the church burnt down. Lightning struck it one spring" (VII, 185). These Christian hints accompanying the use of the candles in this master scene remind readers with the symbolic religious meaning of Laura's name. Laura's name "was borne by the 9th-century Spanish martyr Saint Laura, who was a nun thrown into a vat of molten lead by the Moors" ([http://www.behindthename.com/ name/laura](http://www.behindthename.com/name/laura)). From the beginning of the play, Williams keeps repeating Laura's depiction as a "*saint*" or a "*Madonna*". The sacred candles here in this important scene deepen this depiction. Like the sacred candelabrum, Laura is "a little out of shape" because of her lameness. Like it also, "lightning struck" her while she is still in the "spring" of her life. "Lightning" here is equivalent to her plight. Thus, the symbolic relation between Laura and the candles and their sacred candelabrum is apparent. Laura's charm and beauty

also can be related to the other meanings of her name. The name is "the feminine form of the Late Latin name *Laurus*, which meant 'laurel'. This meaning was favorable, since in ancient Rome the leaves of laurel trees were used to create victors' garlands. It was also the name of the subject of poems by the 14th-century Italian poet Petrarch" (<http://www.behindthename.com>).

Scene seven –as the last and the most important scene of *The Glass Menagerie* in which the climax of the play happens – begins with the delicate light of "the new floor lamp with its shade of rose-colored silk" shown on Laura giving "a soft, becoming light to her face, bringing out *the fragile, unearthly prettiness which usually escapes attention*" (VII, 183). This rose-colored lamp symbolizes her vulnerability and her charm. Then, after a moment "the lights in both rooms flicker and go out". Williams intentionally wanted to stress in this last scene her "*fragile, unearthly prettiness*" to clarify the instant change that will happen to her by Jim. The image of "rose-colored silk" accords with the name given to Laura by Jim as "Blue Roses" and recalls the name and the memory of Williams' sister, Rose, whom Laura incarnates to a great extent. In the same way, Williams, as Tom, can't get rid of his sister's memory; her image haunts him wherever he

goes and in whatever he writes: "Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!" (VII, 208).

However, Jim brings Laura to the normal world of human beings (even if it is temporal) and diagnoses the cause of her plight as: "You know what I judge to be the trouble with you? Inferiority complex! Know what that is? That's what they call it when someone low-rates himself! ... your principal trouble: A lack of amount of faith in yourself as a person...think of yourself as *superior* in some way" (*The Glass* VII, 193-4). He tries to give her self-confidence assuring her that her lameness is not so much noticeable and that she has many good qualities. He tells her that she should get rid of her 'inferiority complex'. He states to her that she is pretty "in a very different way from anyone else" and distinctively different from all the people: "They're common as – weeds, but – you well, you're – *Blue Roses*" (VII, 199). No wonder then that her "shyness is dissolving in his warmth". He kisses her. She accepts happily to dance with him. When they dance, Jim shatters unintentionally the horn of her glass unicorn. Like the unicorn, Laura is strange, lonely, unique and fragile: "Glass breaks so easily" (VII, 198). By shattering the symbolic distinctive layer of glass which isolates and

alienates her, he brings her to the normal world: "Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns". Yet, soon, she discovers that Jim is engaged. Without any comment, she gives him the unicorn as a souvenir. There is no need for it now; it has lost its distinctiveness and strangeness, like her. But, she finds nothing in the real harsh world except heartbreaking and darkness.

Darkness and Light again are tackled symbolically by Williams in his play, *Orpheus Descending* (1957). In this play, light symbolizes also the plight of Lady Torrance, the heroine of this play. Light in this play presents love, happiness, salvation, life, and fertility. Lady has missed these things long time ago; since the death of her father and her miserable marriage to Jabe Torrance which constitutes the greater part of her plight and the only horrible truth of her life. She has lived in a symbolic darkness for about twenty years. Once she thinks that she has achieved these lost delightful things with Val Xavier and faces light, she dies. That is to say, there is no way out of her symbolic darkness and sadness. Like Blanche and Laura, when she faces bright light, she is doomed. "In this context, *light and truth* are basically synonymous.... Light and truth are the similar ideas, the word 'truth' channeling

the author's illustration of 'light' and what it signifies. Light illustrates, emphasizes, and expands the abstract idea of truth" (<http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction>).

Shortly before Lady and Val's death, Vee Talbott, the religious artist, declares that she is blinded by a vision of bright light and then by a vision of the risen Christ: "*Light, oh, light! I never have seen such brilliance! It pricked my eyeballs like NEEDLES!*" (*Orpheus* III, ii, 92). When Lady suddenly finds Jabe on the stairs after hearing her conversation with Val and knowing her pregnancy in the last scene of the last act, she retreats as if she has become "*blind*". Symbolically, she becomes blind because of the bright light of the horrible truth which she suddenly faces. It kills her. Her miserable marriage to Jabe is the clear horrible truth/plight and her love and happiness with Val is a transient illusion. The stage directions describe her reaction when she suddenly sees Jabe descending the stairs and facing her as the following:

Then suddenly she falters, catches her breath in a *shocked gasp* and awkwardly *retreats* to the stairs. Then turns *screaming* and runs *back down* them, her *cries* dying out as she arrives *at the floor level*. She *retreats haltingly as a blind person*, a hand stretched

out to *Val*, as slow, clumping footsteps and hoarse breathing are heard on the stairs. She *moans*: Oh, God! Oh, - God! ... [JABE appears on the landing ... He is death's self, and malignancy, as he peers, crouching, down into the store's dimness ...]

(*Orpheus* III, iii, 111-112)

Although Williams borrowed from the Greek mythology material for some of his plays, he was affected by many Christian characters especially the Christ himself and his suffering that have appeared frequently in his plays. E. M. Jackson discusses this point writing that: "While Williams' symbols are to some degree indebted to the religious legends of the ancient Greeks and of the Northern Europeans, there are ... many figures drawn from Christian ritual"; Williams was "haunted with images of the suffering Christ" (34). In *Orpheus Descending*, Williams wove the two strings together. The heroine, Lady, whose name stands in Christianity for Virgin Mary, presents at the same time symbolically Eurydice, the heroine of the Greek myth of Orpheus. Hence, Valentine Xavier (Val), the protagonist of the play, symbolizes Orpheus and is presented in some scenes of the play as the Christ, as for example in Vee's paintings and in the last scene when he "is incinerated with an acetylene torch"

(Jackson 34). He presents sacrifice and "the martyred force of life and love" of the Christ (Quirino 48). Additionally, Val's full name, Valentine Xavier, contains the names of two Christian saints (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/orpheus-descending>). As has happened in the Greek myth, Lady is saved from death by Val. But, unfortunately, they can't complete their symbolic journey towards life and happiness. Their journey fails. Lady's dying husband Jabe, the antagonist of the play, as produced by Williams, is the living symbol of death, that doesn't die in spite of his fatal illness. He burns Lady's father alive in his orchard, kills Lady and causes the murder of Val at the end of the play. When he calls her in the last act of the play, she says symbolically to Val:

I know! *Death's knocking for me!* Don't you think I hear him, knock, knock, knock? It sounds like what it is! Bones knocking bones... Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you. My skin crawled when he touched me. But I endured it. *I guess my heart knew somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell!* You did. You came. Now look at me! *I'm alive once more!*

(*Orpheus* III, iii, 107)

Lady likens Jabe to "Death" and her life with him as "hell". Notably, the name, Torrance, that Jabe has given her in marriage suggests symbolically "the torrents of the Styx – or of the river which, flooded by the storm at the climax of the play" preventing lady and Val's escape from hell (Quirino 48). Styx is the principal river of the underground world in Greek mythology; on which Williams has depended again in this play. There is a dreadful storm in the last scene before Val and Lady's murder reminding the audience/readers with Orpheus' myth. Symbolically, Williams has wanted to send a hidden message of "the impossibility of satisfactory exit from the existential situation of hell on earth" (Quirino 50).

Lady's marriage to Jabe has caused her sadness, infertility, loneliness and living death. Their store, which is the setting of the play, is always dim: "We always had a problem with light in this store" (*Orpheus* I, 35). Lady lives with him in a symbolic dimness, like the dimmed life of the previous two heroines, Blanche and Laura. The events always happen in the dusk of the evening or at night, also, and inside the dim store of Jabe. Val comes and symbolically enlightens the store and Lady's life, he says: "I do electric repairs" (I, ii, 45). Furthermore, the store is always cold, Lady says: "I'm shivering! – It's cold

as a goddam ice-plant in this store, I don't know why, it never seems to hold heat, the ceiling's too high or something, it don't hold heat at all" (I, ii, 43). Then Val imparts symbolically warmth to her life; she says to him when he gives her his jacket, in a symbolic action, that: "it feels warm all right" (I, ii, 44). But this illusion ends soon. Likewise, her twenty-year marriage to Jabe has been void of any spiritual or religious side; they have never gone to a church, Vee tells Val: "You know, Jabe and Lady have never darkened a church door" (II, ii, 69). But, after Val's work in their confectionary and his love to Lady, she decides to reopen the confectionary on the eve of Easter Sunday suggesting an allusion to the resurrection of the dead. This is emphasized by the way she decorates the confectionery as it appears when the lights are turned on in it in the last Act (III, iii).

Lady Torrance, the heroine of *Orpheus*, is a beautiful woman of social position. Her age is "between thirty five and forty five", but her "figure is youthful". She is older than Val (who is thirty years only), like most of Williams' heroines that are older than their lovers. Yet, when she is not under tension; she "looks ten years younger" (I, i, 34). She is passionate and emotional. She is very nice; Val tells her: "I don't know nothing about you except you're nice

but you are just about the nicest person that I have ever run into!" (I, ii, 51). She is a descendant of an Italian immigrating family. Under tension, she becomes on the border of hysteria; because of her past and present miserable life. She is anxious and can't sleep easily for days without having sleeping tablets, she says to the pharmacist of the 'drugstore' on the phone: "I got to have some [tablets]! I ain't slep' for three nights, I'm going to pieces, you hear me, I'm going to pieces, I ain't slept in three nights, I got to have some tonight" (I, ii, 43). She keeps repeating these words, which prove her anxiety and her psychological disturbance symbolized by the dimness in which she lives.

Lady's anxiety and psychological disturbance are caused by her miserable life experiences. She has been abandoned by her first lover, David Cutrere, leaving her to suffer alone and then to undergo a painful experience of abortion. She says to him when she meets him later: "you know now I carried your child in my body the summer you *quit me* but I had it cut out of my body, and they *cut my heart out with it*" (*Orpheus* II, i, 67). She has suffered terribly at that time, although she has been still young: "I wanted *death* after that, but death doesn't come when you *want* it, it comes when you *don't want it*" (II, i, 67).

Ironically, this is what will be fulfilled exactly in her life. Death hasn't come to her when she has wanted it early in her life, and it comes afterwards when she wants life. Nevertheless, Lady never forgets David. She still has hard feelings towards him. She asks him not to try to see her again or to come to her store. His villainy has obliged her to marry Jabe to get rid of all her financial and social problems after her father's death (another reference – as in *A Streetcar* and *The Glass* - for depending of women on men for managing their lives). Unfortunately, David has married a rich woman also to secure a better life for himself. He is a greedy villain. She tells him: "*you sold yourself. I sold myself. You was bought. I was bought. You made whores of us both!*" (II, i, 67).

The second experience that has caused Lady's psychological disturbance and has led to her present predicament is the death of her father burnt in his orchard. He was burnt by the mob for selling wine to the Negroes (a reference to the existence of the racial discrimination). He left Lady alone and in dire financial and social problems. She has to marry Jabe living with him a miserable life full of hatred and loneliness for twenty years; Val recognizes her feelings asking her: "You feel nervous alone here?" (II, iii, 77). During the course of the

play Jabe confesses to her that it was he himself who has burnt her father and his orchard; he has been the leader of the mob against her father. On knowing this, Lady was completely stunned and disappointed. Her sadness is aggravated, she says to Val: "There's a man up there that set fire to my father's wine garden and *I lost my life* in it, yeah, *I lost my life* in it, *three* lives was lost in it, *two born* lives and one—*not*. I was made to commit *a murder* by him up there"(III,iii, 103).

Thirdly, Lady never has a child during her twenty years marriage to Jabe. She has thought herself having 'secondary infertility'. Her loneliness and sadness have increased so much. She symbolizes herself with "a barren fig tree" saying to Val: "We used to have *a little fig tree* between the house and the orchard [of her father]. It never bore any fruit, they said it was *barren*" (*Orpheus* III, iii, 111). Suddenly, after many years the old barren fig tree has "a small green fig", and so does Lady; she becomes pregnant after all these years: "I've won, I've won, Mr Death, I'm going to bear!" cries Lady and blows the paper horn happily (III, iii, 111). Her happiness never completes. Jabe kills her and causes the murder of Val, the father of her unborn child. The play ends with the complete darkness of the store. The face of dead Lady appears "with

all passions and secrets of life and death in it now, her fierce eyes blazing, knowing, defying, and accepting" (III, iii, 112). One of the dramatic merits of this play is that it "reveals Williams' greater control of the dramatic effects of image and symbol" (Quirino 43). No wonder that the dramatist describes at the very beginning of the play the confectionary in which Lady and Val meets as "shadowy and poetic as some inner dimension of the play" (I, 17). It symbolizes Val-Lady relationship, which contrasts Jabe-Lady marriage. Additionally, the Oriental drapery "is worn dim" but has the "design of a gold tree with scarlet fruit and fantastic birds" (I, 17). It is another symbol to Val-Lady relationship. The gold tree symbolizes Lady, the fantastic birds symbolizes Val (as he is presented many times throughout the play), while the scarlet fruit symbolizes their illegitimate unborn child. This drapery will be the first thing that light will be shed on when Val accepts to have a room and stay in the confectionary symbolizing the beginning of their relationship (II, iii, 75). Their relationship is the only way out of Lady's plight or the only illusionary world in which she escapes from the harshness of the real world.

Lady Torrance always turns on a green-shaded bulb when she speaks to Val. She turns it on for the first time in

Act I, Sc. ii, when Val shows her for the first time his guitar and gives her his "snakeskin jacket" in order to feel warm in symbolic actions to the difference that he will make to her life. Lady turns on this light again in Act II, Sc. iii, when lady asks Val to stay in the Torrance's store at night and gives him a room, she says to him: "I'd feel safer at night with somebody on the place" (II, iii, 75). She also turns it on in Act II, Sc. iv, a few minutes before the beginning of their relationship. This green-shaded light is highly symbolic.

To discuss it in details, Green is a symbolic color of "revitalization and rebirth...it is calming, stress-relieving, healthy, and youthful ...it stands for balance, nature, spring, and rebirth. It's the symbol of prosperity, freshness, and progress...it is associated with vitality, fresh growth, wealth, creativity and productivity" (<http://www.sensationalcolor.com/color-meaning>). All these symbolic meanings have been achieved to lady by her relationship with Val. She comes back to normal life again; she feels healthy and youthful once more: "she throws back her head and laughs as lightly and gaily as a young girl" (I, ii, 51). She stops being anxious and doesn't have sleeping tablets anymore. Correspondingly, in several religions, green is symbolically "the color

associated with resurrection and regeneration". Green is "the color of love associated with both Venus, the Roman goddess and Aphrodite, the Greek goddess". In addition, "the God of fertility in Celtic myths was associated with green"(<http://www.sensationalcolor.com>). Accordingly, all these symbolic meanings and connections can be applied to the relationship of Lady and Val. Lady loves Val so much. Her loneliness and grief end. She becomes pregnant in spite of her previous thinking that she is "barren" and feels happy so much: "I have life in my body, this dead tree, my body, has burst in flower! You've given me life" (III, iii, 110). Thus, the green light symbolizes their relationship and matches with its development. But, soon, it is startled and ended by the bright light of truth. Notably, this green light is "shaded", as it always appears in the play, because it is a symbol of an illegitimate relationship. Lady – as most of Williams' heroines – has tried to find an illusionary escape or shelter in her love for Val from the harshness of the world around her, but in vain.

Although the events of *Orpheus Descending* happen in the symbolic dimness in Jabe's store and the symbolic dusk or darkness outside it, the third and the last Act, III, Scene ii, happens in the Sunset. At the end of this scene,

little before the climax of the events in the last scene (iii), the light of the Sunset turns to be "fiery". It accompanies the escalation and the complication of the events. It symbolizes that everything between Lady and Val will be burned to death; a symbolic reference which reminds the readers with her father and her wealth's burning. Jabe shouts hoarsely, after killing Lady: "I'll have you burned! I burned her father and I'll have you burned" (III, iii, 112). The Sunset is a symbol of Lady and Val's impending and inevitable death. The "fiery" light of the sunset is turned into darkness in the last scene. The blazing flames of the climax of the action and the conflict between life and death turn to be the black color of mourning declaring the triumph of death and the harsh truth of the real world over life and the sweet world of illusion.

This darkness of the last scene is interrupted temporarily by the light of the men's "pocket-lamps" searching for Val and by "a jet of blue flame" of "a blowtorch" (113) which "stabs the dark" and kills Val. Thereupon, flashlights or pocket lamps with their sudden condensed bright light are used in *Orpheus Descending* in time of danger for discovering the truth. They are one of the means of showing the harsh reality. In Act II, Sc. iv, Lady uses a flashlight when she feels afraid that there may

be a thief in the store. Then, she discovers that it is Val who is in the store. Val confesses to her: "you're blinding me with that flashlight" (II, iv, 80). Once, Lady feels happy with Val, she turns the flashlight off and turns on the green-shaded bulb. She escapes to her illusionary world. Accordingly, in Act III, Sc. iii, the men of the city come after Jabe's killing of Lady and his crazy shouting that Val has robbed him and killed his wife. The men gather in front of the store with flashlights in their hands to discover the matter. On finding Val, they burn him to death by the burning horrible "blue flame" of the "blowtorch". They put an end to the illusionary world of love and peace showing the ugly face of the cruelty and mercilessness in the world. Williams reminds the readers / the audience again with the crucifixion of the Christ with merciless hands.

To sum up, Tennessee Williams' dramatic vision can be seen through the plights of his heroines, which are symbolized by his skilful use of light. He sees that there is no way out of the present dilemma of the human beings in the modern age. He created a new memorable kind of heroines in his plays. In contrast to his contemporaries, his plays have appeared as "soft, 'matrist', sickly concerned mostly with women" (Tynan, *Papa* 141). These women,

who are in the centre of Williams' concern, have special abnormal characteristics. They lose connection with the outside world which wrongs them so much. Williams' plays, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *Orpheus Descending* represent clear cut examples of marginalized wronged women. They have abnormal sensitivity, delicacy, fragility and vulnerability that lead to their fatal doom. They are the victims of their internal and external worlds. Additionally, they are deprived of the security offered by either family or marriage. Their plights are incarnated symbolically through various uses of light.

In these three selected plays, Williams uses bright light not only as an ordinary element of the technique but as a symbol of the heroines' plights which they can't face. They try to escape in some way or another to illusionary worlds, but in vain. On shattering these illusionary worlds and confronting the bright light, they are doomed.

Hence, this research paper tries to show, firstly, the importance of using light in presenting symbolically the plights of the heroines of Williams' plays. Secondly, it aims inherently to clarify how generally the modern dramatists tried to depict the predicament of Man in the Modern Age. No wonder that Williams and his contemporaries have tried to draw a picture of the barren

world after the two devastating World Wars and how these Wars have turned it into a "Waste Land", as Eliot's famous poem has tackled it. Thirdly, this research paper, indirectly, tries to clarify how materialism has grinded human beings, turning them to vulgar machines and has abolished the last relics of decent civilized aristocracy. Fourthly, it intends to reveal how sensitive human beings have no place in the modern harshness and mercilessness. It also illuminates how the marginalized, the weak and the wronged can't have their rights or even defend themselves in such a cruel utilitarian world, as a fifth goal. Sixthly, it wants to convey how modern Man is entrapped sorrowfully in a vicious circle of running behind his unattainable aims. The seventh target of this research paper is to demonstrate how the modern life will be chaotic without morals and ethics. Additionally, it attempts to disclose how bright light of truth is often covered with layers of lies and deception. Ninthly, it endeavors to warn that life can be turned dark by the very hand of Man. A significant inherent message of this research paper can be its tenth and last purpose: it calls all people to have reconciliation between each others, to cooperate to have a better world, to support the weak and the wronged, and to turn on the light of peace, civilization and humanity.

Works Cited

- Bloom, Harold. *Modern Critical Views: Tennessee Williams*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Clayton, John Strother. "The Sister Figure in the Plays of Tennessee Williams" in *The Glass Menagerie: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by R. B. Parker. London: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1983.
- <http://www.antiskola.eu/hu/beszamolo-beszamolok-puskak/25303-the-symbol-of-paper-lantern-in-a-streetcar-named-desire-by-tennesseewilliams/download/print>
- <http://www.behindthename.com/name/laura>
- <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/CGG/ID/5102/Light-as-Symbol.htm>
- <http://www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com/color-blue.html>
- [http://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/orpheus-descending# characters](http://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/orpheus-descending#characters)
- http://www.sensationalcolor.com/color-meaning/color-meaning-symbolism_psychology/all-about-the-color-green-4309#.WDQVO9J97IU

- <http://www.symbolism.wikia.com/wiki/Blue>
- Jackson, Esther Merle. "The Synthetic Myth" in *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.
- Kernan, Alvin B. "Truth and Dramatic Mode in A Streetcar Named Desire" in *Modern Drama 1, no.2*. Toronto: The University of Toronto, Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama, September 1958.
- Quirino, Leonard. "Tennessee Williams' Persistent Battle of Angels" in *Modern Critical Views: Tennessee Williams*. Edited with an introduction by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987: 43-54.
- Riddel, Joseph N. "A Streetcar Named Desire – Nietzsche Descending" in *Modern Drama 5, no. 4*. Toronto: the University of Toronto, Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama, 1963.
- Scanlan, Tom. "Family and Psyche in The Glass Menagerie" in *The Glass Menagerie: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by R. B. Parker. London: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1983: 96-108.

- Styan, John Louis. *The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy*. Second edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Tynan, Kenneth. "American Blues: The Plays of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams" in *Encounter*. Edited by Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol. Vol. 2, No.5. London: Panton House, 25 Haymarket, S.W.I. May 1954: 13-19.
- "Papa and the Playwright" in *Playboy*, edited by Hefner, Hugh M. Vol.11, no. 5, Chicago: Playboy Enterprises, May 1964: 138-141.
- Weales, Gerald. "Selected Criticisms" in *Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire: Notes*. Edited by Wilson F. Engel. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1986: 48.
- Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire and The Glass Menagerie*. London: Penguin Books, 1959.
- . *A Streetcar Named Desire, With Commentary and Notes*. London: Methuen Student Editions, 1984.
- . *Memoirs with an Introduction by John Waters*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1975.
- *Orpheus Descending, Something Unspoken, and Suddenly Last Summer*. London: Penguin Books, 1961.

- *Where I Live: Selected Essays*, edited by Christine R. Day and Bob Woods, Introduction by Day. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1978.