TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
A STUDY OF SYMBOLS IN THE EARLY PLAYS

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M. PHIL. DEGREE

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TO WHOM SO EVER IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Miss Hoor Talt worked under my supervision. Her dissertation on William's early plays is the result of her own fruitful study.

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INTRODUCTION

Before Williams modern American drama appeared to be suffocated because of the lack of new themes and theatrical devices. The need for a change was felt and expressed by Wilder in his introduction to his Three Plays. He found that American drama at that time needed to be changed. A new life was brought in the art by putting less emphasis on the stage decorations and more on the symbolic possibilities by various interpretations. When Williams came to be known as a playwright, O'Neill was a great dramatic force. Almost at the same time, the playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Albee were dealing with the social themes of contemporary American society. The young American playwright had to write plays differently.

Williams did not take up any social themes. He attempted to write plays which took the audience to the inner man. Drama in Williams' hand became a means to know which had not yet been presented on the stage. His plays deal with men and women who are not essentially normal human beings. The unidimensional angle to drama has been transformed into a multidimensional approach in Williams's artistic handling of themes. Symbols are a means to achieve their effect.

After Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams is perhaps the most significant American playwright. The present study
is an attempt to discuss symbols in Williams's early plays. Three early plays have been discussed here critically out of which two are those which established his reputation as a dramatist. These three early plays are:

1. **Battle of Angels** (1940, revised later in 1957, as *Orpheus Descending*)


Most of the studies of his plays have either been biographical or psychological. Francis Donahue's study of Williams's plays is basically related to the playwright's life while Norman Fedder's book on the same subject is an attempt to trace the influence of Freud on his writings. An attempt has been made to study symbols in relation to the plot and character. The hints of the symbolic study have been provided by the playwright himself in his own writings. In the foreword of his play, *Camino Real*, he has regarded symbols as the purest speech of drama. He thought that a symbol in a play had only one legitimate purpose which was to say a thing more directly simply and beautifully than it could be said in words.
He also told a student in Philadelphia that he hated images for the sake of images. Thus, symbols in his plays reveal the complexities of the characters and help us understand the invisible world of men and women in the plays. Symbols in Williams's plays, however, also suggest a feeling of his awareness of the other worldliness.

Two objects have been attempted at in this study. First, it has been shown how Williams's artistic handling of the symbols sharply focusses the theme of his early plays. Secondly, it has been critically discussed how this technique helped the playwright to unravel the psychological complexities of the characters.

Though Williams wrote his plays under the dominant influence of O'Neill, he made a significant departure from contemporary practices. Like his contemporary playwright, O'Neill, he also concerned himself with the tragic story of the lost souls and dealt with them in his plays sympathetically. Williams has concentrated in his plays on the individual idiosyncracies and psychological abnormalities of his characters. The influence of Freud on his dramatic art is an established fact. He, therefore, used symbolic devices to make his audience see those psychological abnormalities and complexities from which his characters appeared to suffer. He, unlike a
realist, dealt with the hidden man rather than presenting on the stage the man as he apparently appears to us. His artistic handling of the symbol should be regarded as a device to make us understand man's abnormalities sympathetically.

Williams's approach to drama is based on non-realism. The invisible in his plays is more important than the visible. Symbols in his plays are the colours which depict the souls of his characters. They enable the audience to see the ambitions, desires, longings, frustrations and disappointments of the men and women in his plays. Williams's use of symbols is directly related to their inner worlds.

Symbols in his plays are related both to the themes and characters. The titles such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *Battle of Angels* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* all suggest symbolically men's earthly predicaments. Williams has also used symbols to universalise certain individual situations which he has presented in his plays. In the following chapters certain major symbols have been discussed critically in relation to the themes and the characters of the plays mentioned above. Proper assessment and critical evaluation of Williams's handling of this artistic device have been evaluated in the individual chapters which are devoted to the early plays.
Chapter I

BATTLE OF ANGELS

The play *Battle of Angels* is highly symbolic. The abundant use of symbols is its characteristic quality. Williams has used symbols in this play for two purposes. First, the symbols help us understand the hidden complexities of the characters. Secondly, they heighten the meaning of the play.

Some of the most meaningful symbols have already been pointed out by the playwright himself in the prologue and the epilogue. The meaning of the play can only be fully comprehended by adopting a symbolic approach. Let us examine the recurrent symbols.

The very title of the play, *Battle of Angels*, is highly symbolic and it would, therefore, be in the fitness of things to discuss its symbolic implication. The very title suggests that Williams visualized human life to have been constituted by the conflict between the forces of good and those of evil in the world.

The characters in the play, like the angels in heaven, represent the two forces eternally antagonistic to each other. Williams thinks that both good and evil constitute the human nature. The title of the play symbolises human predicament on the earth.
Cassandra Whiteside, the major protagonist, is made to perform the role of a soothsayer. She foretells doom of Myra Torrance, Val Xavier and that of herself in the concluding part of the play. She knows that it is difficult for a noble and sensitive soul to survive in this harsh and cruel world. She expresses herself thus:

Sandra: The atmosphere is pregnant with disaster. .... Now I can hear it.

Val: What?

Sandra: A battle in heaven. A battle of angels above us, And thunder, And storm.

(Act III)

We conclude from this brief conversation that the whole atmosphere is surcharged with thunder and storm symbolising the battle which is going on among the angels in the heaven. An attempt has been made to give an earthly atmosphere. The earthly conflict in the play is thus related to the metaphysical tussle between good and evil. The world in which Williams's character live is that of corruption, disease and death. The earthly inhabitants are mentally and physically diseased. The references to cancer, sexual perversion,
lust and bigotry suggest the corrupt state of the world in the play. Man has been aspiring for his salvation but there is no hope because there seems to be no God, no Christ. Who can then save him from doom and decay?

The world is made up of light and darkness, with the darkness predominating. Satan is coeternal with God. These two opposite forces are at war with each other. The dark forces crush light leaving the world totally black. Man aspires for light and love to make his existence meaningful but it is all in vain. For the time being he regards love as a panacea of all his ills. But it often proves to be a great source of his suffering.

In such circumstances the poor harassed man finds himself helpless. He cannot face the fatal forces which are cramping on him continuously. Being defeated, he surrenders himself to his inevitable doom and destruction. He finds atonement in self destruction. This is the cause of human tragedy and this has been clearly pointed out by Williams in the Battle of Angels where almost all the characters meet their doom in one way or the other. Myra is shot dead by Jabe and he himself dies of cancer. Val is lynched and Cassandra is drowned. They fall victims to the circumstances in which they find themselves trapped.
Fox is a significant symbol in the **Battle of Angels**. The references to the fox have been on two important occasions in the play. Val tells Myra:

> I lived like a fox. I hunted and fished but most of the time I was hungry.

*(Act I, Sc.i.)*

And on another occasion he says that he is fed up with his wanderings. He does not want to live, "like a fox that's chased by hounds".

*(Act II, Sc.i.)*

Thus, fox is equated with sex which is a recurrent symbol in Williams's plays. It has been derived from Lawrence's short story entitled 'The Fox'. Here in this play Val Xavier is made to come into an old community of the South like a fox who creates a great commotion in the coop of the hens. He is a heterosexual among the sexually starved women. His arrival makes all of them mentally disturbed. Menfolk develop great jealousy and envy against him because of his sexual virility while the womenfolk look at him with hungry eyes. Cassandra tells Val:
Dont you know what those women are suffering:
Sexual malnutrition. They look at you with eyes that scream "Eureka".

(Act I)

Williams, like Lawrence, believes that sex is a great mysterious force which determines and guides human action and behaviour. It is a sacred gift bestowed upon mankind. Those who do not acknowledge this fact cannot lead a happy life. This basic human urge cannot be suppressed. It can, however, be utilized properly.

But here sex is both resurrective as well as destructive. A critic has rightly pointed out that:

..... In the Battle of Angels
the destructive force of abused sexuality is far more dominant than the regenerative power of the sexual relationship.

---
But it may not be exactly true because the life-giving function of sex is equally important in the *Battle of Angels*. The sexual relationship between Myra and Val is regenerative. Her unborn child is its evidence. But at the same time it is destructive because the sexual intimacy of Val and Myra brought about their doom. Further the relationship between Myra and Jabe are sterile. For Cassandra sex is a means to escape from a desperate situation. Vee Talbot is a sexually hungry creature. She diverted her sexuality towards religion and ultimately failed to determine whether it was Christ or Val for whom she had been hankering after.

On the contrary, in the case of the woman from Waco it is nothing more than lust. The sexuality of the menfolk is marked by impotency. Due to their impotency their womenfolk are sexually hungry. They are all attracted towards Val. Such a state of affairs clearly proves that abused sexuality is really destructive.

One remarkable thing to be noted about Val is that he is not an active fox. He is presented as a passive heterosexual. Although he awakens Myra to a life of sexuality, he cannot be regarded very active. It is Myra who makes advances. In the beginning of his life at two Rivers Country he seems to be scared of women because he has been much abused due to them.
To Cassandra he confesses:

Val: I want to keep this job.
Every place I've gone to
it's been some woman I finally
had to leave on account of

(Act II, Sc i)

He hates to be regarded a 'Male at Stud'. He thinks that he is not like Cassandra. He wants to lead a normal life. But later on, he could not resist Myra's sexual charms and started making love with her. Myra's own life is quite different. She has been impregnated by Val. Her own life is full of joys and new hopes. She is no longer a barren woman. And this life of love and regeneration, however short it may be, is far better than the contemptible barren married life with Jabe. She confesses her guilt to her husband frankly and frantically without any fear of the consequences.

When Valentine Xavier makes his initial appearance at the famous Lorraine Mercantile Store of Two Rivers Mississippi, he presents himself in a strange outfit. He is wearing a snake-skin jacket. Valentine Xavier's snake-skin jacket appears to have a symbolic meaning in the play. The symbolic significance of the jacket has been pointed out by Eva and Blanch:
Eva: It's marvelous how fresh and clean it stays.

Blanch: Other things get dusty, but not the jacket. What was it that Memphis newspaper woman called it? "A Souvenir of the jungle."

Eva: A shameless, flaunting symbol of the Beast Untamed.

(Epilogue)

Val, therefore, symbolises the untamed wild animality, grace, beauty, virility and freshness. 'He is also a symbol of manhood and freedom'². He is a peculiar man. He has been introduced by the dramatist as a man of about twenty five years, fresh, primitive and virile with freedom of body, and a strong physical appeal. (Act I). Cassandra's is a woman's point of view. She loves him because of his snake-skin jacket, those eyes; and as one who used a special technique in fitting on shoes. It is his beauty and wild nature which has charmed her. (Act II, Sc.i)

What Cassandra says is the feeling of all the womenfolk of the Two Rivers County. Since Cassandra is honest and frank, she has expressed her own impressions about him.

2. Francis Donahue: The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams p.83
Others, like, Eva, Dolly, Beaulah, Blanche and Vee have the same feelings but do not express them out of prudery. Myra too is at once attracted by the fatal charms of Val, the moment she meets him, although she maintains a certain kind of reservation in the beginning. Val's attraction makes high school girls flock around him. They come to the store not to buy shoes but to feel thrilled by his looks. His dog-like eyes and charming manners have disturbed Myra's mental peace.

These qualities make Val stand in sharp contrast to all the men and women of the town. They all seem to be sexually maladjusted people. For example, Jabe's relation with Myra is sterile and abhorring. The married life of Vee and Sheriff Talbot is far from being a normal relationship. Thus, all are presented as victims of perverted and unnatural sexuality. In such a world Val's animality is not only unique and peculiar but highly challenging to their ways and manners. They are corrupt and rotten. They are all deprived of pleasure of the flesh.

But with all his sexual appeal, Val is not merely an untamed beast. He is an innocent person. He is more sinned against than sinning. He is rather a passive heterosexual. He is tired of wandering and being involved with women. He wants to settle down and live a normal life like
the normal people of the town. But the moment when he met Myra was fateful. Her town became hell for him. On the very first day Cassandra advises him to run away from that dark town. He does not pay any heed to her. He is entrapped in this harsh and wicked world. His tragedy is the tragedy of all the virile, attractive and wild people in the world. He is not fit to live in such a dark world of bigotry and sexual perversion. He is, therefore, killed leaving behind him his ever fresh snakeskin jacket which became the most unique thing among all the articles connected with the tragedy which are, later on, put on display for the visitors at the store which has been changed into the Tragic Museum.

The Torrence Mercantile Store and Myra's Confectionary stand in sharp contrast to each other. While the one symbolises the drab reality, the other is associated with the imaginary world of illusion. The significance of these symbols have been suggested by Eva and Blanch in the Prologue when they showed the Tragic Museum to the tourists. She told them that the Mercantile Store was the harsh and drab reality. But Myra's Confectionary was the place where she had kept her dreams.

These symbols reveal what Myra's mental attitude was in the past and how she is in her present situation. In the past Myra was quite young and beautiful. She recalled one
night in the vine across the Moon lake she looked very beautiful in her fine dress. She had silver and white stars in her hair and had seen the lovely silver cape Jasmine blossoming. She was the object of everybody's gaze. The photographers and autograph seekers had surrounded her from all sides but she had kept on laughing and singing.

Every night she used to go to the vine orchard with David who had loved her. Both of them loved each other. But after some time David had left her and married a wealthy girl. Myra was then heart-broken and wanted to die but she married Jabe because he was the next best thing, although there was no love between them. The contrast suggested by the symbolic meanings of the Mercantile Store and Confectionary unravel her unpleasant past and the dreams which have kept her alive.

The relationship between Jabe and Myra has always been destructive. Their world is dark and gloomy. She has been living under the shadow of death. Now she is weak in health and her nerves have been broken. She feels lonely. Very often she wishes to die but she cannot because she regards life more sacred than death. So long as one is alive one can do anything which one likes but the moment one dies, everything is over. All the doors are closed. Death is nothing but darkness.
Val happens to meet her like a saviour when she had given up all hopes for life. He awakened Myra to a life of flesh. There is no question of what is moral or immoral, decent or indecent. All that matters is love. Val and Myra love each other intensely. They consummate their love in the back room of the store. After this she feels her life worth living. She is full of new hopes and joys. She decorates the store according to her heart's desire. It is made to resemble the orchard across the Moon Lake. She becomes alive once again.

It is this Confectionary where she has kept the memories of the past alive. Whenever she looks at it she is reminded of her lost love, her nights with David, her own dances and the tributes which are so dear to a woman's heart. The whole scene comes to her mind like the flash back of a cinema slide.

Upstairs the store Jabe is dying of cancer but he is not ignorant of his wife's illicit relations with Val. And the Good Friday night when Myra is in a frenzy of emotion confesses her pregnancy by Val to Jabe, he shoots and kills her. Her last words are:
Oh, look! The lights have come on in the confectionary.... That is what I wanted! Not death but David — the orchard across from Moon Lake!

(Act III)

Later on the confectionary is burnt and Val is lynched. The reference to Friday associates Myra's death with the idea of crucifixion. Her death is symbolically the beginning of a new life. It may be concluded that Myra, in spite of being defeated, succeeded in her own way. She fought desperately for her ideals. She offered her resistance to the best of her power but ultimately lost the battle because the mighty forces of wickedness and cruelty were too strong to be defeated. She lost the battle because she could not adjust herself with the harsh realities of life. Corruption, hatred and bigotry constitute the reality of the world. It is a place where soft sentiments and emotions have no place. To the standard bearers of the noble ideals the world says 'go' and the grave says 'come'.

The fig tree which had grown in the backyard of Myra's father's house symbolizes Myra's entire life. The barren plant resembles meaninglessness of her past. But now like the lady herself, it has started bearing fruit. Val thought
that the tree would remain barren. But one spring Myra saw a little fig in the tree. She became so happy that she put all her Christmas ornaments over that tree but unfortunately the fig was struck down in a storm in the same spring.

There is a great affinity between Myra and this fig tree. The fate of both is the same. Myra, like the tree, was thought to be barren for a long time by the people. They did not know that it was all due to fruitless relationship with her husband. It was all sterile and poisonous. This is the reason why she could not become a mother.

Val meets her and they fall in love breaking all the norms of ethics and morality. They consummate their love and, Myra is conceived. It is a matter of great rejoicing for her. She gets what she has been desiring all these years. Now she will not be thought sterile and barren like the fig tree. And as the tree was struck down by a sudden storm in the same spiring so was Myra killed at the time after confessing her pregnancy. Her last words are quite meaningful:

Isn't it funny that I should remember what happened to the fig tree? It was struck down in a storm ..... For what reason? Because some things are enemies of light and there is a battle between them in which some fall ........

(Act III)
The fig symbolizes her own life which is swallowed by the darkness. There is always a battle between the good and the evil. One of them fails and the other succeeds. Jabe represents darkness while Myra represents light. She is shot dead by Jabe. She falls and he becomes victorious because in the play it is evil which ultimately triumphs over good.

It is significant that Myra dies after the removal of her barrenness. Thus the idea of life-in-death is suggested by the playwright. Her death is also compared to the idea of crucifixion.

On that fateful Good Friday when the church bell was ringing for the prayer, Myra witnessed a white moth in the window of the car. It seemed to be quite young and inexperienced. It has just come out of the cocoon with the expectation that outside would be all sun shine, light and gold. But it proved to be a nasty cold spring full of rain. The moth was really very beautiful. It has a string of pearls about its whiskers.

The symbol of the white moth is highly poetic in its conception. The white moth symbolizes the aesthetic, innocent and delicate persons whose precarious survival in the world of harsh and cruel realities is quite a problem.
Myra herself is the white moth in the Battle of Angels. While she was young, she expected much from the world. She was happy, bright and gay. She had spent her youthful days and nights in singing and dancing. But after marrying Jabe her life becomes worse than death. She becomes the picture of death-in-life.

This happens in our real life when beautiful and tender creatures come into conflict with the ugly and mighty forces. They are killed and destroyed. It is tragic that nobody pays any heed to them. Although they seem to be insignificant, they make or spoil human lives. It is these small things that sweeten or embitter our life journey. Although the beautiful, sensitive creatures, like Myra, do not matter much in the world, they make it worth living.

Jabe Torrance is the living symbol of death and his Mercantile Store is virtually a hell where he rules supreme. He is the prince of darkness. Poor Myra, being his wife, is forced to live with him. When the play begins, Jabe is presented dying of cancer in the room upstairs. Myra is seen living under a great psychological strain. Her entire self is broken. There seems to be no end of her misery. She always thinks of medicines and operation, pills and capsules; morphine and sleeping tablets. As a result she herself becomes a patient of nervous
breakdown. Her nerves are always tense. She finds herself miserable due to the lack of sleep. That is why she uses Luminal Tablets for a good sleep. She is unable to face the reality so she wants to live in her own illusions by taking Luminal Tablets. All these references to diseases and medicines symbolize the diseased earth.

Jabe is reduced to a skeleton. His thin hollow and death pale face on the pillow looks like a skull. When he walks, Myra thinks it is a ghost that is walking. He wears a night skirt which is like a shroud. His mere touch makes her flesh crawl. She has been bearing this for the last several years from the day of her marriage. It signifies that Myra is always confronted with the death-like darkness which is ever-ready to destroy her. Jabe symbolizes all those negative forces which ultimately destroy the good and the beautiful. These black forces finally succeed and consequently Myra is totally destroyed.

This symbol of death takes another dramatic turn when we are told that Jabe is dying upstairs while Myra is coming back to life. Myra tells Val that a battle has been going on between them for the last ten years. It is a battle between life and death. She is filled with a new life while he is dead inside.
Knocking on the ceiling and the dark steep stairs that lead to the room upstairs symbolize the approaching death. Knocking on the ceiling by Jabe is repeated throughout the play which reminds us of the Porter Scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The repeated references to the knocking in the play remind us how Shakespeare used the same device in his play *Macbeth*. The two dramatists, however, achieved dramatic effects which are quite different from each other. In Williams's play the idea of the approaching death is made more awful by this device. But, at the same time, it is knocking at Myra's own conscience. Her agonizing predicament is, therefore, visualised. Should she allow the dark forces of death to capture her? Or should she struggle for her survival? The moral implications of her pregnancy is also suggested by the repeated attempts to knock at the ceiling.

The atmosphere of the Porter Scene and that of this scene in the *Battle of Angels* is identical. Torrence Store is much like the hell because it is inhabited by the people who have been living like the dead. In the hell there are dead people but here we see living people as dead.

It is Jabe who has been knocking all the time and poor Myra, like the Porter, answers the call of the Prince of
darkness. And whenever he knocks, she becomes upset with pain and fear. The symbol of knocking has been used by the dramatist for creating a suitable atmosphere for the tragedy. It increases the gloom and darkness. It reminds us of hell and Satan throughout the play.

The room upstairs in the store is really a hell inhabited by Satan in the garb of Jabe. The stairs leading to the room are dark, narrow and steep. They are not ordinary stairs for climbing and coming down. They are symbolic of the ascent and descent of death. Its ascent by Myra suggests her confrontation with death while Jabe's descent suggests the inevitable doom and destruction.

So long as Jabe is in his room upstairs, the negative forces are latent and asleep. Myra is at ease with the approaching death. She is lost in the very world of her Confectionary. But the knocking awakens her suddenly and makes her whole being tremble out of pain and agony.

Towards the end of the play, Jabe is seen descending the dark stairs. His shadow precedes him down the stairs and his slow approach is like that of a ghost. He comes for the last time to destroy Myra and her beautiful world of illusion. Now we witness the two opposite forces symbolizing life and
death coming into conflict with each other. He came downstairs only to shoot and kill Myra and also to burn the beautiful confectionary. In this way, the dark and steep stairs suggest the sudden and quick fall of black forces which are always bent upon destroying all that is good and beautiful.

The dark sun glasses of Cassandra Whiteside symbolize her disgust against the existential phenomenon of evil and wickedness and the desire to escape into the world of ideal beauty and truth. While Myra finds it difficult to see the naked light of the bulb and covers it with the Chinese paper lantern, Cassandra wears dark sun glasses to protect herself from the scorching light of the world. The harsh and cruel world pricks her very soul. Escape is the only alternative left for her in such circumstances. That is how such persons protect themselves.

She is:

-physically delicate with translucent skin and luminous eyes as though burnt thin by her intensity of feeling.

(Act I)

She is the remnant of aristocracy. She feels herself cut off the main stream of society. She is maladjusted. She tells Val that both of them have been cut off from the bond of the
civilized world. They both are damned because they have
Byronic spirit and cry for freedom. She is rotten and neurotic.
She tells Val why she uses dark sun glasses:

I wear dark sun glasses over my eyes
because I've got secrets in them. Too
much of something that makes one rather
disturbing.

(Act II)

She is a poor lonely soul tossing to and fro on the
surface of life. She finds some relief in running and moving
from one place to another. She invites accident but death is
so cruel to her that in each case she always remains unhurt.
She continues her 'going out' in search of peace and happiness. She wants to establish meaningful human relationships.
But nowhere she found what she had been longing for. She
remained lonely as ever before.

Cassandra's fast driving of the car symbolizes her
loneliness. She is as lonely as Val and Myra. The theme of
loneliness is one of the major one with Williams. He believes
that all are suffering due to their loneliness. They are
persons who are in quest of human relationship which alone can
provide some meaning to their existence. But alas! the more
they try to get it, the more they lose it. They, as a result, seem to be imprisoned in their own skins. They meet people, talk to them, know their names, shake hands and do all sorts of things, yet they remain stranger to each other. Their loneliness increases and this is why they adopt the way of escape in one way or the other.

The red cape of Cassandra is a significant colour symbol which suggests her sexual indulgence. As pointed out by a critic that 'the religion of flesh has a most eloquent apostle in Cassandra.' Through the red cape Williams illustrates the role which sex plays in human life. Cassandra's is the problem of sex which is everybody's problem. The fulfilment of this desire can either make or mar human personality. Williams realised its force and preached for its proper gratification. He wants to liberate it from the cellers of prudery. Sex is a great blessing. It is something very pious and sacred. Cassandra speaks about it thus:

... I think that passion is something to be proud of. It's the only one of the little alphabet blocks that give us to play with that seems to stand for anything of importance. (Act III)

Sex for her symbolizes physical pleasure and the desire to live and enjoy it. It is because of this reason Cassandra asks to go out for 'jooking.' Cassandra means drinking, driving, indulging in sex and physical contact. Such is the meaning and purpose of sex according to Cassandra. That is why she shows her interest in Val and asks her to lead a life of flesh. She is a "kiss and good bye type of woman". She is not like Myra. To her sex should be free from all sense of decency and indecency. It is above all man-made codes of ethics.

Jabe's cancer symbolizes the ills and corruption of which the southern American society was suffering from at the time. In the Battle of Angels Williams depicts a decadent society chiefly inhabited by Myra, Cassandra and Val. Myra's life became an unceasing tale of misery. She remained a dead person unless Val came into her life. Val's intimate friendship awakened Myra to the desire of enjoying the pleasure of flesh. But this new desire ultimately led both of them to the path of destruction. Cassandra is also socially misfit. For them the society is not fit to live in. That is why all destroy themselves in one way or the other. Myra is shot dead. Val is lynched and Cassandra is drowned.

The Christ's picture in the play is a dramatic attempt to suggest Val's Christian virtues. Vee's vision of Christ and her painted picture symbolize the spiritual level of human
existence. Perhaps it also symbolizes the concept of Second Coming. The suffering man can redeem himself provided he is capable of being spiritually touched by Christ's message. Thus, the religious symbolism adds the spiritual dimension to the meaning of the play.

Vee has sublimated her sexual desire into religious exaltation. She painted the pictures of the saints and Christ according to her own impressions of them. Once she saw the vision of Christ and painted him. In her mind Val is identified with the Saviour.

Val's coming to the town symbolizes the Christian myth of the Second Coming. He comes to the evil land after a lot of wanderings. This land is a wasteland of corruption where the inhabitants are sexually and morally degraded. They are suffering from fanaticism hatred bigotry, jealousy and envy. They need a saviour who could offer some salvation to them.

Val, the Christ figure is presented as a very beautiful man, untainted by corruption of the world. He is something wild-like, fresh and virile. He combines within himself sex and spirituality. Val's lynching bears close resemblance with the idea of Christ dying on the cross.
The role of the saviour assigned to Val is very complex. His own involvement with Myra, his talk on what is decent and what is not, his advice to Myra to give over doses of morphine to Jabe in order to get rid of him and his role as a male heterosexual further complicate and heighten the meaning of the symbol.

The picture of Christ suggests the religious note. According to Benjamin Nelson:

A lavish amount of religious symbolism was squandered on a situation which neither called for it nor was able to sustain it with any degree of dramatic credibility'.

It does not appear to be a sound judgement since the dramatic theme has a pronounced religious tone. Religious symbolism in the Battle of Angels, therefore, seems to be in complete agreement with the general atmosphere of the play.

The Blond woman symbolizes sex envy. She has come from Waco Texas. Williams has himself described her thus:

There is something remarkably sinister about the woman's appearance. She is hard-dyed blond in a dark suit. Her body is short and heavy but her face appears to have been burned thin by some consuming fever accentuated by the mask-like make-up she wears the falsely glittering gems on her fingers which are knotted tight around her purse.

(Act III)

She appears in the play at the end and claims that Val had raped her. She lodged a case of rape against Val and since then she had been looking for him. She went to many towns such as Canada and Mexico. She represents the rage of a woman of lust. If Myra and Cassandra are capable of great love, the Blond woman is capable of hatred and revenge. She came in the life of Val as a great suffering to ruin his very life. She is the representative of the mighty forces which are bent upon destroying innocent persons in the world. She is in complete agreement with Williams's scheme of things. She is introduced in the play as an agent of destruction and torture. She inflicted torture on Val. After the destruction of Val, she disappeared. The Conjure Man is the symbol of Christ visiting the earth - His own kingdom. His coming to
visit earth after Val's death symbolizes the idea of crucifixion and identified him with Christ dying on the cross. His death suggests the idea of redemption coming after suffering.

Conjure Man is an old Negro from the Blue Mountain. Myra gave him odd jobs in her store. It is he before whom all tragic events take place. It is he who claims that he knows something which he does not tell to anybody. He appears at odd times in the play. His silent behaviour creates a dreadful feeling in the hearts of the people. His gait, smiles, movements and the way he offers his obeisance, are really very awful. Dolly is scared to death. Myra too became afraid of him. He appeared when she was thinking of her child who was not yet born. He knows that Myra is conceived by Val. It is he who rescues the snakeskin jacket of Val and offers it his obeisance as if it were a god.

The Conjure Man is present throughout the play from the prologue to the Epilogue, although he does not directly take part in the action of the play. He has seen all the events. Everything is in his knowledge. Nobody can escape from his attention.

Thus, we see that in the Battle of Angels Williams has dealt with the suffering of man in the world. A critic has rightly pointed out:
There is no opportunity for salvation in the *Battle of Angels* because its universe will not allow it. Mortals may seek it in love, but if the angels destroy each other, what chance have mortals.  

Williams's *Battle of Angels*, therefore, poses before the audience the essential human predicament which has been further taken up in *Orpheus Descending*, a later version of this early play.

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Chapter II

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Symbolism in *The Glass Menagerie* exposes the hidden psychological complexities of the main characters in order to enable the playgoers see their invisible world. Williams has a poet's weakness for symbols. This artistic device in his plays presents a world of fantasy and twilight out of which emerge shadows and forms that loom over the grim realities of life.

Tom, the narrator as well as a character in the play, expresses the dramatist's aim by pointing out that he is the opposite of the stage magician and tries to give illusion that has the appearance of truth. He also claims that he gives the playgoers truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. Williams has used symbols as an artistic device to create the illusion of the reality. Symbolism is the dramatic necessity in *The Glass Menagerie* and not merely a decorative device. With the help of certain symbols the playwright presents the soft and delicate feelings in concrete terms.

The most significant symbol is that of the glass menagerie itself. It symbolizes Laura's beauty and fragility which is the major theme of the play. In the 'Production Notes'
to the play Tennessee Williams writes:

When you look at a piece of delicately spun glass, you think of two things, how beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken.

Laura Wingfield (created after Rose Williams) is beautiful and fragile. She is bound to be dashed and broken into pieces like a delicate piece of glass. It is to escape from the heavy weight of adverse circumstances that she has to take refuge in the world of her illusions.

The glass menagerie symbolizes Laura's desire for an escape from the world of reality into that of her own illusions. For her, the world of illusion was more powerful than that of the reality. She tries to forget the bitterness of her life by playing with the animals figurines she has collected. Her attachment with them is absorbing because they all look like a picture of her own self.

She is too fragile to move out of her narrow self. She can ill-afford to leave her own world. Her attachment to the glass pieces has been repeatedly emphasized in the play. Amanda Wingfield becomes angry with Laura because of her obse-
session with the glass figurines and advises her to get herself married with a nice young man. She listens to all that quietly but, when Tom's coat struck her collection, she cried out painfully as if she herself was hurt. This incident suggests that glass menagerie symbolizes Laura's own extremely sensitive soul.

Laura's illusion symbolized by the glass collection is the kind of the world that her own mother cannot understand because the old lady belongs to a different world.

The menagerie symbol concretizes the timidity and shyness of Laura's character. Williams himself describes Laura's fragile beauty thus:

A fragile, unearthly prettiness has come out in Laura:
She is like piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual not lasting.

(Sc. VI)

The menagerie is, therefore, a complex symbol which suggests Laura's fragile and sensitive soul and also, at the same time, her world of illusions into which she made an escape. Thus, the invisible introvert personality of Laura has been concretized
with the help of this symbol.

This, perhaps, sums up Williams's own views about all the fragile creatures of the world. Laura herself symbolizes all the pretty and fragile persons who are not adequately adjusted with the realities of life. Nobody pays any heed to such sensitive creatures. They are broken the moment they come into conflict with the harsh and bitter realities of life. Jim, the man of the world, mercilessly tells Laura that he was not made of glass. During the dance when the horn of the unicorn was broken and Jim felt sorry for it, Laura uttered what appeared to her the truth of her life.

It is no tragedy, Freckles.

Glass breaks so easily.

No matter how careful you are.

(Sc. VII)

The breaking of the unicorn symbolizes the broken-heartedness of Laura herself. The glass figures are closely associated with her own world. The playwright has made us see the delicate feelings and emotions of the young girl in the concrete form of the menagerie symbol.

This shows that a sensitive person, like a piece of glass, is fated to be broken sooner or later in this cruel
world of harsh realities.

If the glass menagerie symbolizes Laura's retreat from the harsh reality, the Blue Mountain symbolizes Amanda's escape into the world of her past glory. She has nostalgia for the past which was all sun-shine while the present is bleak and sad. Between these two worlds she moves like a shuttle weaving the threads of her life. Whenever she is disgusted with her present life she resorts to her past. She gets consolations in the reminiscences of the good old days.

For Amanda the Blue Mountain symbolizes the beauty and glory of her past. In her own youthful days she was quite and charming. She was very popular and a much sought-after Southern belle. She had a number of gentleman callers. Most of them were rich planters. She had finally chose Mr. Wingfield as her husband who was extremely handsome but careless and irresponsible. This marriage was bound to end in a fiasco. She frequently feels to have become young again. Throughout the play the memories of the past filled her Heart with excessive emotions. She becomes extremely happy whenever she thinks of her Blue Mountain days.

The blue in Williams's plays is the colour of the past memories and reminiscences. The symbol of the Blue
Mountain poignantly contrasts Amanda's happy past with Laura's sad present. The old lady could not dissociate herself with her past.

The Blue Mountain stands for the old culture while St. Louis represents the new Southern culture. Amanda's past was much better than her present which she is confronted with in the form of the problems of her two children, Tom and Laura. Although Amanda lives in St. Louis, she carries the old world atmosphere with her. She tries to bring up her children in accordance with the social norms of the old Southern life. She wants to make Laura a 'Southern belle'. Her chief concern was to find out gentleman callers for herself when she was young. Her son - Tom, though a poet by heart, is forced to work as a clerk in a warehouse. She herself is compelled by the circumstances to do the work of a salesman. In spite of her keen interest in the success of her children, she has failed miserably to get them adjusted properly in society. Tom and Laura are different from the normal boys and girls.

Amanda's sense of morality differs from that of her son. She doesn't like her son to read a novel by Lawrence. That is why she had sent the book back to the library. Thus, we see that Amanda is the product of the values which are entirely different from those of her son.
The frequent references to Tom's visits to the late night movies and drinking wine symbolize his escape into the world of adventure from the drab reality of life. He is a man of literary ambition and his soul aches for adventure but he is fully fettered and imprisoned in the deadly monotony of his job at the warehouse and burdened with the responsibilities of a nagging mother and crippled sister. He is, thus, totally trapped by the unpleasant circumstances in which he has been living. He tries his best to free himself from these bondages. He resorts to drinking and visits the movies that make him insensitive to the drab realities, at least, for the time being.

Tom Wingfield believes that he discovers himself only when he runs away from these fetters and escapes in the world of adventure. In the movies he sees deeds of heroes on the screen which satisfy his desire. This is expressed in the conversation between the son and the mother:

Amanda: But, why-why, Tom are you always, so restless? Where do you go to nights?

Tom: I - go to the movies.

Amanda: Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?
Tom: I go to the movies because I like adventures. Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies. (Sc.IV)

Amanda says that everybody does not have a craze for adventure. Tom tells her mother that a man is a lover, a hunter and a fighter by instinct. He loves adventure and this, as he believes, will turn him into a perfect man.

Tom is Williams's own character. He represents the playwright's own concept of man being a hunter, adventurer, wanderer and a poet, all rolled into one. He is the symbol of Williams's concept of a perfect man.

Tom is also a poet. He wants peace and loneliness to carry out his pursuits. He wants to go away - far away from this world - to study and to write without hearing lectures of his mother. His mother neither understands her son nor her daughter. He thinks himself in a coffin but does not know how to come out of it.

His life in the warehouse is in no way less unpleasant. He finds his job very disgusted. It is not a work but drudgery. His soul is above it but being oppressed by
the circumstances he works there against the dictates of his conscience. There he sweats for the sake of his mother and sister. There is nobody with whom he can converse except perhaps Jim O'Connor who recognises his literary talents and calls him 'Shakespeare'.

Such is the monotonous life of Tom at home and at the warehouse. His spirit yearns for freedom to fulfil his literary ambitions. So he decides to leave his house and his menial work. His mother rebukes him:

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

But he does not go to the movies. Now he hates movies where people enjoy movement instead of moving. He makes his final escape. He narrates:

I left St. Louis .... and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps attempting to find in motion what was lost in space. (Sc.VII)
He moved and moved, he walked the streets nights and days. He tried to forget his home, his mother and dear sister Laura but could not. He is more faithful than intended to be' (Sc VII).

The 'fire-escape' is a poetic and highly suggestive symbol which the dramatist has used in this play. In the very beginning of the opening scene Williams describes the Wingfield apartment in the stage direction, as follows:

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with slow human and implacable fires of desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.

(Sc. I)

The Wingfield family is the representative of all the lower middle class families who live in small rented flats in a huge building. They are all burning in the fire of desperation. The dramatist takes the Wingfield family as a small study and makes a socio-cultural investigation of all the
people who lead such miserable life. They are the products of the modern world which is characterised by industrialisation and urbanisation as opposed to the rural community of the past.

This was the time when America was groping in the darkness. Its economy was dissolving. Tom, the narrator makes a suggestive remark in this connection:

In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labour, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis.

(Sc. I)

Wingfields are economically depressed and disturbed, and mentally twisted people. The main cause of their trouble is economic. Mr. Wingfield, the father and the head of the family, deserted his family permanently. The desertion, as we know, is a poorman's divorce. The desertion of Mr. Wingfield deprives his children from paternal love and affection. They develop a hatred for their father. This desertion makes the family a broken home and the consequences can easily be contemplated. His wife, Amanda is burdened with the care of her two children. She leads a life of humiliation. In order to
assist the family she sells magazines. When she is short of money, she works as a salesman. Her poverty is hinted at by the dramatist when she sends Laura to ask for some butter. Tom works at a warehouse to support his family. All of them are trapped by the gloom of their present life.

They live in their own narrow world as isolated beings. They are socially isolated. They are cut off from the main stream of life. Tom works at continental Shoemaker's but he does not know anybody, nor anybody knows him. Even Jim who calls him 'Shakespeare' and recognises his poetic talents is not known to him. Tom does not know whether he is married or not. This "sense of isolation is especially apparent among the urban middle classes who lead mobile and secular lives". (1)

The isolated individuals, be it noted, resort to drinking or become mentally disordered and consequently they become a prey to illusion. All these can be seen in the lives of Tom, Laura and Amanda. Tom finds escape in movie; Laura in her glass menagerie. Amanda thinks of the past when she was young and charming. They live in their worlds of illusion. They are misfits and socially maladjusted beings. They are badly crushed under the heavy weight circumstances.

Thus, the fire-escape symbol suggests that all the Wingfields are burning in the fire of their desperation. The fire is implacable. Economic condition of the family is the cause of frustration. Due to this they are burning.

Fire, when it is related to Laura, symbolizes her repressed sexuality. She is an introvert and a victim of inferiority complex. She is abnormally shy. Her career at the Rubicam's school had ended in a fiasco. She had confined herself to her glass menagerie which sublimated her biological urge for art. Jim O'Connor tries to bring in her some self-confidence and she is momentarily roused but when she comes to know that Jim is engaged with Betty and going to be married very soon, she breaks down. She is finally frustrated and makes her final withdrawal into the world of illusions.

Her mother, Amanda, is equally disappointed. Her sole aim is to make her children successful. Her love for her children makes her a nagging mother. Whenever she is frustrated she looks back to her past days at Blue Mountain. This vision of the past offers her a great relief from the present life. Her present life at St. Louis is quite different from her past life. All the members of the family are in a trap. It is rather a vain struggle on the part of Tom to seek an escape from his work and home. There seems to be no way out.
They make abortive attempts to escape from the harsh and bitter realities of life.

The Dance Hall is significantly called Paradise. Music and dance create an atmosphere which is more beautiful than the actual reality. The persons of artistic temperament seek an escape into the paradise of their dreams. Thus the Paradise Dance Hall symbolizes the escape into the world of ideal beauty and truth from the fever and fret of the ugly sordid existence. In the beginning of the fifth scene Tom describes the Paradise Dance Hall thus:

Across the alley from us was the Paradise Dance Hall. On evening in spring the windows and doors were open and the music came outdoors. Sometimes the lights were turned out except for a large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling. It would turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbow colours. Then the orchestra played a waltz or a tango, sometimes they have a slow and sensuous rhythm. Couples would come outside, to the relative privacy of the alley. You could see them kissing behind ash-pits and telephone poles.
That is how the audience are made to see their own paradise which lies hidden in their own minds. All here enjoy the sensuous dance and music. They are unmindful of the great social happenings which are taking place in the world. They have forgotten themselves in the world of music. They have become insensitive to the problems of the real world. The Paradise Dance Hall symbolizes in the play the playwright's own concept of man's earthly paradise. Moreover, the use of Paradise symbol is ironical in the context of the story of the play. An effective dramatic contrast is thus provided between the ideal and the real.

The Hall is rather a Hell or Purgatory where sinful souls are enjoying sensuous music of waltz and tango in the deceptive rainbow light. It is like regaining the lost paradise with the help of dance and music.

Thus the Paradise Dance Hall provides an opportunity to the people of the middle class for a temporary escape into the world of ideal beauty.

Among several symbols used in the play, the photograph of Mr. Wingfield is in no way less important in its significance. It suggests different things to different persons. It is deeply related to the destinies of Amanda and her children.
It sets the very tone and atmosphere of the play. For Jim the picture of his father indicates the beginning of his unhappiness.

What he tells here is the sad memory of his father when he had last heard of him.

..... The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan .... containing a message of two words - "Hello - Good bye". (Se I)

That is why a feeling of sympathy is aroused with the help of this symbolic device.

Such was Mr. Wingfield who had made himself conspicuous by his absence. His presence is felt by all the characters as well as the audience throughout the play. He is like a catalyst who moves others but himself remains stationary. However, his influence can easily be seen on Tom, Amanda and Laura.

To Tom the photograph of his father is the very image of adventure. He has been able to shun the world and make a complete escape. It is for this reason that he loves his father. He wishes to break the fetters that has held his soul in bondage. He finds great affinities between
himself and his father. That is why he too wants to desert his family. But there is one marked difference that his father never thought of the family and Tom could not detach himself from the emotional ties of his home.

For Amanda the photograph of her husband is symbolic of bygone days - sweet as well as sour. It reminds her of the days which she had spent at the Blue Mountain and this was enough for Amanda to fall in love and marry him. This was an unfortunate marriage because Wingfield was proved to be a selfish husband. He was a drunkard and has no sense of responsibility. He left her and went away. God knows where.

So far as Laura is concerned, the photograph of her father and the family records left by him are the part of her illusion. Whenever she gets time she looks into them although she is rebuked by her mother again and again.

The picture of Wingfield reminds Amanda of the unhappy past which she has been trying to transform into a happy present. He affected the entire family. It is he who had sown the seed of destruction and is solely responsible for the disorganisation of the family as a whole and the disintegration of the individual members. Hence, the photograph of Wingfield is not a dead picture of a smiling youngman
but that of the past casting its shadow on the present.

Tennessee Williams has used the character of Jim O'Connor as a symbol of the outside world. He is the gentleman caller. His part is very crucial in the play. The play in its original script was titled as "The Gentleman Caller" but, later on, it was retitled "The Glass Menagerie" which is more poetic and meaningful. All this indicates that the gentleman caller is the central figure. Describing Jim O'Connor, Tom tells the audience:

He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow apart from. (Sc. I)

Jim symbolizes the world of reality.

To the three members of the Wingfield family - Tom, Amanda and Laura - Jim seems to be the 'emissary from the real world' from which they have been set apart for a long time. They are all victims of circumstances. The condition of their lives forced them to seek consolation in the world of their illusions.
Jim O'Connor is a young man, healthy, frank, extroverted and humorous. He is a shipping clerk at the continental Shoe-makers. He has been a hero – an athlete and singer at the high school. He is ambitious to climb up the social ladder. He is worldly wise and thoroughly materialistic in his outlook. Compared to him the Wingfields are quite opposite. They are totally cut off from the main stream of life. They are isolated individuals – lonely and frustrated. They are uncommon and unique people.

Laura's contact with Jim brings about a healthy change in her attitude towards life. He talked and joked with her. While dancing with her he broke the horn of the unicorn which was Laura's favourite. The glass figurine unicorn signifies Laura's uniqueness. When the horn is broken, the unicorn has become a figure of horse. There is nothing particular about it. This suggests that Laura like the unicorn has ceased to appear a unique person and has become a normal person of this world of reality. Donahue seems to have rightly remarked:

When the young man breaks the horn of the unicorn, the one element that had made it unique, she is not disturbed. Symbolically, her calm reaction represents her desire now to become a normal
person and no longer remain
a unique individual apart from
others.(2)

She becomes a normal person only for a little while. But when Laura came to know that Jim was engaged to marry another girl, she tragically withdrew into the world of her illusions. They ultimately proved themselves to be only reality she had known.

Rubicam’s Business College where Laura was enrolled in a secretarial course symbolizes the world of reality which she does not face because she has not been attending the college since the very beginning of her admission. She has been visiting the parks and gardens, the art museums and the bird houses at the zoo. This shows her escape from the world of reality. And Amanda’s attempt to make herself-supporting ends in a fiasco.

It is not for nothing that Laura has been compared to the 'Blue Roses' in the play. This epithet is highly suggestive, poetic and symbolic. It is because of her uniqueness and abnormality that she has been called 'Blue Roses'.

She is in her own way as beautiful as roses. She is pretty and charming but she is unique and uncommon. She is different from the rest of the people. She is very delicate and tender. To think of Laura is to think of beautiful and delicate things like the flowers and the glass.

Unique things such as Laura and the Blue Roses normally do not exist in the real world. It is her unearthly prettiness which distinguishes her from normal girls. Tom describes her uniqueness thus:

... other people are not such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You are one time one. ....

Well, you're - Blue Roses.

Laura finally emerges as a delicate, moth-like, fragile and unearthly creature. For such sensitive persons the world is not a fit place to live in. They are bound to be doomed sooner or later. Laura is no exception to this general rule. She meets her doom the moment she came out of the world of illusion. She realised that she was unfit for this world. Jim failed her when she needed her help most. Jim went away after the declaration of his engagement with some other girl. She made the final withdrawal from the real
world into her own glass world. "Her brief joy is snuffed out of her and her loneliness is only intensified (3). Blue Roses must not bloom in this harsh and bitter world.

If Blue Roses symbolize Laura, the jonquils symbolize Amanda's love for the past and her life at Delta region where she had spent her youth. This romanticised past is Amanda's world of illusion. The yellow jonquils symbolize her past glory, youth, beauty and vivacity.

Before the arrival of Jim O'Connor Amanda makes arrangements not as a mother but as a young girl thinking that the gentleman caller is coming to meet her. She became young once again. She carried a bunch of jonquils and the 'legend of her youth is nearly revived feverishly' (Sc VI). She tells Laura of her past days when she was the belle of a small Southern town in Delta region. It is the lost paradise which she has been trying to regain. Her past is bright and beautiful like the fairy-land.

But if she lives in the past she does not ignore her present. In crucial moments she acts bravely. The romantic becomes a practical minded woman. She compromises the past

and the present: the illusion and reality. Her freshness symbolized by jonquils is never vanished although under great mental stresses she becomes a little disappointed. She remained romantically attached to her past. At the end of the play, this belle of yellow jonquils, while consoling Laura, acts very sincerely and beautifully. "Her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty" (Sc.VII)

Being a memory play the symbol of light and dark is prominent. In the Freudian psychology the conscious part of the mind is the area which determines and controls our actions. Mind has been divided into three regions - the conscious, unconscious and the subconscious. The Freudian psychologists mainly concerned themselves with the first two regions. In The Glass Menagerie, the light and semi-dark effect suggests the conscious and the preconscious region of the human consciousness. When the past memories are brought back to the conscious from the preconscious region the stage is lighted.

The candle light used at the end of the play suggests more than one thing at a time.

First of all it suggests Laura’s ethereal beauty and her world of candle light in contrast to the harsh light
of electricity or lighting. Laura's world of escape is the world of make-believe. This world is far more beautiful than the world of actualities which is full of pain and sorrow, fret and fever. It offers no balm to her agitated soul. It further suggests the ethereal being of Laura. She is fragile and moth like. She cannot become a citizen of the real world. She is a misfit and fugitive, an isolated lonely soul. She is out of place and out of tune. She does not have the courage to face the grim realities because this is not a fit place for Laura to live in.

Secondly, the candle light is the memory of Laura in the heart of Tom. At the end of the play Tom addressing the audience tells that he was turned out of his job at the warehouse for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe box. Then he left Laura and has been wandering like the gypsy from one place to another. He has been moving from place to place, from city to city but he cannot escape from the memory of his home and especially of Laura. His out-cry is highly pathetic:

Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be.

(Sc. VII)
Further, if the play is to be regarded full of religious significance, and in fact which is not, the candle light suggests the church candles. There are religious symbols such as the Madona, the use of the screen legend 'Annunciation' and the reference to 'Ave Maria'. And as candles are blown out after the Mass in churches, Tom asks Laura to snuff out the candles. These religious symbols highlight the ethereal aspect of Laura's character. The playwright intends to suggest that some kind of spirituality is attributed to her character.

The use of candles is, however, very significant from dramatic point of view. Since it is a memory play the light of the candles may symbolize Tom's faint remembrance of the past. Their blowing out suggests the end of hope for Laura. The only possibility left for her now is to go back into the world of her own illusion. That is why Tom asks her to blow out her candles and bids her goodbye.

Rainbow is the symbol of love taken from Lawrence's novels. But in Williams's play it represents the concept of harmony which is the essential condition for love because when different colours are blended together, we see the rainbow. The rainbow of love is, however, broken here.
Williams's use of symbols in this play appears to be psychologically related to the complexities of his characters. They have also been used to highlight the theme of illusion being opposed to reality. The invisible has been thus made visible with the help of the symbols.
Symbolism in *A Streetcar Named Desire* has helped Williams to highlight the plot and unravel the motives and hidden complexities of the characters. At the very outset he visualises the entire life of man on earth in terms of desire and cemetery. These two terms not only constitute the basic theme of the play but also universalise the theme. In this play the playwright has dealt with the human desire which is the very basis of human life and which also keeps man in the state of restlessness. It stimulates him to perform all sorts of actions, good as well as bad. So long as man is alive he desires for certain things. We cannot think of a man without desires. That is why desire is the very basis of human life. The title of the play symbolises the idea of all the activities of life being originated by the desire. It is this desire which made Blanche ride the car named Desire to reach the Elysian Fields. She tells us that she has been told to take a streetcar named desire, and then transfer to the one called cemeteries and ride six blocks and got off at Elysian Fields.

The desire to live is common and strong in all men. All want to live according to their own desires. The desires,
however, differ from person to person. Blanche's desire is to get protection and love. It is her leitmotif. She needs someone to help and support her. This urge leads her from one person to another but she gets nothing but frustration everywhere. She runs madly after love but she never gets it. She came into contact with all sorts of men who offered her a night's shelter and then had thrown her away as something rotten and useless.

The desires of other persons, say of Stanley and Stella, are quite different. They possess strong desires to quench their carnal thirst. They are in search of opportunities to quench their desires.

Belle Reve, the home of Blanche and Stella, suggests a symbolic meaning. It is associated with the Southern culture which has nearly collapsed and crumbled. Blanche tried to save it from total annihilation but failed and it had slipped through her fingers. She desperately attached herself to the dying civilization of the 19th century. She was the true child of the dying culture. She was perfectly aristocratic and cultured in her behaviour and manners. This led her to think herself someone in particular and superior to others. Every inch she was a lady. Her flowery dress and shining ornaments; her refined speech and dignified behaviour; her
reservedness and a certain contempt for what is mean and ugly are all symptomatic of her aristocratic temperament. She is proud of her culture. But the more she clung to it, the more alien she became. She was a poor lonely figure in the crowded world. She was a stranger, a misfit and maladjusted creature. She represented the baffled and the wounded conscience of the humanity.

The name of Blanche DuBois suggests the duality of human nature. Man is made of two opposite elements. He is both spirit and flesh. Sometimes he acts like a god and at another time, he acts like the Satan. This duality of human nature has been clearly stressed in the character of Blanche. She is a woman of antagonistic qualities. She is a strange mixture of good and evil, moral and immoral, real and unreal; love and hatred. She lives in two worlds- the real and the imaginary, the past and the present. She does all that which she basically abhors. She hates all bestiality yet she indulges in sexual acts to the extent of whoredom. She condemns the life of flesh yet she masochistically adopts it. She becomes too fleshy and earthy. She has a deep and natural hatred for Stanley Kowalski because of his bestiality, yet she admires his virility. She takes refuge and shelter in Elysian Fields, though she regards this place no better than hell. She is tender and delicate like a moth but when occasion demands she acts like a tigress.
in her self-defence. She tells lies to Stanley and to the world but she reveals the whole truth to Mitch. She begins to love Mitch whole-heartedly but when he thinks that she is a whore she resists his advances with all her might. And when she feels the devil in her, she does not hesitate to kiss the newspaper agent. She is fond of wearing white clothes but occasionally she is clothed in red satin. She is, no doubt, a bundle of contradictions but she is not a hateful person. Inspite of her bestiality and excessive sexual indulgence, she is pure. Blanche has been rightly regarded as essentially a spiritual character. No other girl was more tender and trustworthy than Blanche but the people like Stanley abused her and force her to change herself. Now she is fully trapped in the clutches of circumstances. She is torn and broken by the inner contradictions. She is a beautiful and noble creature who ignores her deeds. Dichotomy is the most distinctive feature of her character. It makes her character more complex and complexity, we are made to believe, is the basic source of our lives.

Williams's admission of complexity in human nature is best revealed here. In Blanche's character Williams presents his concept of complexities being unified in a single character.

And this is what makes the play universal and lasting.

The union of Stanley and Stella is symbolic of two enormous social forces of aristocracy and democracy. Stanley is an antithesis of Belle Reve. He is no more than a brute. But Stella, being more practical-minded but less sensitive than Blanche, makes an adjustment with Stanley. Blanche protests against this union but Stella cannot be convinced because she has pledged her life to Stanley for the needs of her belly and sex. Stella is aware of the price—her culture and tradition—which she has paid for this marriage. And when she thinks of the price she closes her eyes tightly. In order to forget it she sleeps, reads comics, visits movies and plays the game of cards. "She is buried alive in her flesh." She knows that Blanche is right. She has not forgotten Belle Reve. She has simply rejected it because her marriage demands it. She is convinced that her old culture cannot survive in this world. Had she been as emotional and sensitive as her sister, she could have reacted differently. But she is different. There is much earthiness in her and this leads her marriage with Stanley. The adjustment has been knowingly made by Stella. Her union with him signifies that aristocracy is out of date today. It is the

age of common man. Aristocracy must surrender to democracy. Blanche cannot do it even at the cost of her own life.

The next major symbol is Elysian Fields. It stands for the present world inhabited by people like Stanley Kowalski who is the embodiment of crude energy. He leads a sub-human life and is given to the satisfaction of his carnal desires. He hates refinement and terms it prudery.

To Elysian Fields Blanche comes as an intruder. She comes to her sister's house to disturb the peace of the house like Satan. She is an uninvited guest. In the presence of each other, Stanley and Stella, are always ill at ease. If Stanley wants to live according to his own philosophy of life, Blanche must make a quick exit from the world of Stanley. Blanche is a threat not only to Stanley but to Stella. She does not like Blanche to be present in Elysian Fields. That is why Stella heartily desires the marriage of Blanche to Mitch. When Blanche is gone, it will be all right for Stella and Stanley. Therefore, Blanche must be removed by hook or crook. With this view Stanley brings the bus-ticket for her. He discloses Blanche's past to Mitch. And finally rapes her to make her departure quick. She is left totally ruined torn and broken. According to a critic:
In the final scene Blanche is led from the house to an asylum, lost forever in the illusionary world in which she sought shelter from a vital and overpowering reality with which she cannot cope. (3)

Blanche is taken to the asylum by a doctor and a matron. She is not willing to go away. She resists and struggles with the matron and falls down on the floor. The doctor looks at the fallen Southern Belle with kindness and raises her from the ground. Blanche is suddenly brightened up and walks with the doctor as if she is led by a gentleman who had shown her the courtesy due to a high born lady. She leaves the stage and the Elysian Fields with the impression that culture and refinement are the qualities which distinguish man from the brute.

The ethical quality of Blanche has been symbolized through the symbol of moth. When we see Blanche for the first time on the stage "she is dimly dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace and ear-rings of pearl, white gloves and hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or something about her uncertain manner as well as her clothes that suggest a moth". (Sc i.)

The above description beautifully suggests the ethereal quality of Blanche. She is beautiful who is doomed to be destroyed in the world of brutes. Moth is the recurrent symbol in the plays and stories of Tennessee Williams. Beautiful things cannot live, he makes us believe, in this world of harsh realities. Man with all his claims of progress in science and technology is becoming indifferent to human values. He is becoming a wild beast.

The symbol of moth rightly describes Blanche because she is afraid of the naked bulb light. She is too weak to face the world of mammoths. Her culture and tradition seem to be anachronism in the world where people have not yet thrown off their animal instincts. This is the reason why Blanche is out of time and place. She is a frail lonely creature. Like a moth she runs after every light to get warmth and love. Blanche indulges in sexual activities because "she attempts to fight loneliness with sex". However, a meaningful company, love and protection were all denied to her.

The 'coloured paper lantern' signifies that she preferred her own world of illusions rather than seeking adjustment with the reality. Her beauty is fast dying. She has, above all, her own beauty and personal charm. Although

4. Ibid. p. 141
she has lost everything, she has not yet lost her desire to live. She still wants to have someone who could offer her love and protection. Although she knows that the world is not fit for her to live in yet she lives in her own world of illusions. Blanche says:

Blanche: I'll tell you what I want. Magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it. Don't turn the light on.

(Sc. IX)

According to Nelson "she has no illusion about her illusions". She wants to live in her illusions. That is why when Stanley discloses her past to Mitch and he tears the paper lantern off, she forbids him. But Mitch tears the paper lantern off.

The whole world of Blanche's illusions symbolized by the paper lantern is shattered. The romantic glow she had given to the ugly world has now been extinguished. A few minutes after the fall of the final curtain Blanche's belong-

5. Ibid. p.145.
ings are packed. Stanley asks if anything is still missing.
And the stage directions read:

He crosses to the dressing-table
and seizes the paper lantern,
tearing it off the light bulb and
extends it towards her. She cries
out as if the lantern was herself.

(Sc XI)

The paper lantern is broken and shattered and along with it
her own world of illusion is broken to pieces.

The references to the hot tub bath suggest Blanche's
neurasthenic character. She removes her physical tensions by
taking continual hot baths. Throughout the play Blanche is
seen either swilling down liquor or taking hot tub baths. Her
habit of taking liquor reveals that she wants to relieve
herself from the anxieties, inhibitions and frustrations.
What alcohol does to her mind, the hot tub bath does to her
body. Blanche becomes an alcoholic because of her unavoidable
circumstances in which she lives. Blanche like Laura, is
unfit to live in this world of harsh reality. She tried to
seek an adjustment with the reality but all in vain.
Hot tub acts as a depressant. It is not a stimulant but an anaesthetic exercise. However, Blanche feels refreshed, happier, more sociable and more capable of coping with the problems and frustrations after taking a long bath. In the very beginning Stella informs us:

She is soaking in hot tub to quiet her nevers. She is terribly upset. (Sc. II)

On her birthday while Stella is completing the decorations, Blanche is soaking in the hot tub because "it cools her off for the evening" (Sc. VII).

Stanley accused her of too much bathing but he could not see how tired and worried Blanche was. She explains to Stanley:

I take hot baths for my nerves. Hydrotherapy, they call it. You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of course, you don't know what anxiety feels like. (Sc.VIII)

Blanche feels that she is refreshed and purified after hot-baths, in fact, she remains as tired as before.
She remains as tired as before. She makes a futile attempt to rid of her anxiety which is so deep rooted in her being that neither alcohol nor bathing can do anything. Her anxiety is psychological. In fact what she needs is the warmth of human love which she has been long deprived of. Hot tub bath cannot provide her the warmth she requires. Hers is the tragedy of a fragmented soul.

The candle light has been associated by Tennessee Williams with all such characters who are derelicts, outcasts, misfits, fugitives and maladjusted in the society because of their birth and character or temperament. They are anachronisms trapped in a world 'lit by lightning'. They are unfortunate, lonely and frustrated beings fighting a losing battle against the mighty forces of society. Their tragedy is caused by their non-conformism. They suffer because of their hyper-sensitivity, shyness, over-refinement or beauty. The dramatist has sympathies for them. They are like candle light. They cannot live in the world 'lit by lightning. This is the reason why in The Glass Menagerie Tom asks his dear sister Laura to blow out the candle for the world which is now-a-days lighted by lightning.

Blanche cannot live in the world of Stanley. He represents the outside world of harsh realities. It is a world
which has nothing to do with what is good and beautiful. It pays no heed to old culture and tradition. It is a world of flesh, cold reason, sex and sensuality.

In this dazzling light symbolizing reality, everything is exposed with all its ugliness. For example, when Blanche was merely a sixteen years old girl she discovered love. She married a very handsome young boy but he was homosexual. This exposition shocked her to such an extent that her very personality was disintegrated. She holds herself responsible for his death and consequently suffers from a sense of guilt. She roamed like a fugitive in search of love and protection but always failed to get any one of them. She became convinced that a candle cannot burn in the world where wind blows so hard. In the world of harsh realities delicate and fragile things cannot survive.

Being a candle Blanche finds her very existence in great danger. When Stella goes to the kitchen at night and starts lighting the candles, Blanche remarks:

His auntie knows 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.....

(Sc.VIII)

All the noble qualities and virtues are suggested by the

suggested by the candle light. And the tragedy of the modern world is that it is devoid of beauty and nobility, culture, refinement, art, music and poetry. The denizens of the present day material world are unable to see and understand them because they are guided by cold reasons. They live in a world lit by lightning. There is no place for the qualities of the heart and soul. Human emotions and passions do not exist for them. They are concerned only with the flesh.

Stanley makes his first appearance on the stage with a red-stained package of raw meat from the butcher's. The 'raw meat' suggests the primitive age of hunting and the desires of the flesh. Williams points out that in spite of our progress in art and culture man is basically the same. This idea is illustrated through the character of Stanley Kowalski, the male protagonist of the play. He gives the package to Stella:

He heaves the package at her. She cries out in protest but manages to keep it; then she laughs breathlessly.

(Sc i.)
This package is very remarkable. Immediately we are presented with the image of a crude animalistic man. Williams presents Stanley as a hunter coming home with the prize of hunting. Stella is a little hesitant but when she catches the package, she laughs heartily. This signifies the pleasure which she gets out of her union with the brute like Stanley and her acceptance of the ways and manners of her husband. Brutes overcome culture and tradition.

Stella discards her aristocracy for a life of flesh offered to her by her husband who is nothing more than a brute. With this union Stella seems to be contended. They both indulge in the game of love-making and are always in search of opportunities to get it. Stanley at one place reminds Stella:

When we first met, me and you,
you thought I was common. How right
you was baby. I was common as dirt.
You showed me the snapshot of the place
with the columns. I pulled you down
off these columns and how you loved it,
having them coloured lights going. And
wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay.

(Sc. VII)

6. Ibid. p. 133.
Stanley beats Stella when he is drunk on the 'poker-night'. She goes to her neighbour, Eunice, but very soon they are reconciled. On this occasion Blanche is very perturbed and terrified but Mitch consoles by telling her that they are crazy about each other. (Sc iii) And when Blanche talks ill of Stanley, Stella silences her with the remark that she loves him.

The 'ape' is related to the 'raw meat'. It suggests that man is basically an animal who is busy in satisfying his carnal desires. Stanley Kowalski has been described as an 'ape' who is an embodiment of animal force and crude energy. He is against all human values. He leads a sub-human life. To him, it is the flesh that matters not the spirit. He is concerned with satisfying the needs of his belly and sex. He has been summed up by Blanche thus:

He acts like an animal, has an animal 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, ....

(Sc. IV)
Stanley presents the negative forces of society that are bent upon destroying the accumulated wisdom of humanity. Today the world is producing Stanleys who are against noble thoughts and actions. They are a great threat to art and literature, religion and morality. Now the question is which one we should choose between them, culture or barbarism: Stanley or Blanche. Tennessee Williams seems to tell us that we should guard our culture and tradition if we want to fulfil and achieve the aim and ideal which we have set before us. Humanity is marching to that goal, therefore, beware of brutes. Overcome them or they will overcome us.

The activities of the poker night suggest that the whole society is nothing but a group of apes and brutes who have no sense of decency, refinement and culture. The Poker players are Stanely and his companions Steve, Mitch and Pablo. They are all alike in their thoughts and behaviour. They are wearing coloured shirts, solid blues, a purple, a red and white check, a light green. They are gaudily dressed and since apparel proclaims the man, we can easily judge what kind of men they are. The colours of their dresses suggest that they are vulgar people. The stage directions describe:
... and they are men at the peak of their physical manhood as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colours. There are vivid slices of watermelon on the table, whisky bottles and glasses. (Sc. III)

While playing the cards, Steve narrated the story of the cock and hen that tells us the type of joke they like. It is a coarse joke. The players are enjoying unchartered freedom.

The poker night vividly describes that Stanley and his friends are brutes. It seems that man has not changed inspite of all his efforts. He is still an ape as he was in the very beginning. Today barbarism is gaining ground. If man does not change himself, all our efforts will be shattered to pieces.

Cock- the gaudy seed-bearer symbolizes Stanley's nymphomania. He is the heterosexual male who views and interprets things in terms of sex. He is interested in women because they are objects of his sexual satisfaction. Note the following conversation with Blanche:

Blanche: I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell over you.
Stanley: That's right.

Blanche: You are simple, straight forward and honest, a little bit on the primitive side I think. To interest you a woman would have to -

Stanley: Lay ...... her cards on the table.

(Sc. II)

And if she does not lay her cards on the table she cannot cast a spell on Stanley, however, glamorous she may be.

At the close of the first scene in a stage direction Tennessee Williams describes:

Stanley: ... the centre of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, like a richly feathered male bird among hens.... his heartiness with men, his appreciation of rough humour, his love of good drink and food and games, his car, his radio, everything that is his that bears his emblem of the gaudy seed bearer.

(Sc. i.)
This sums up the whole sexual urge. He is conscious of his brute force. He acts and reacts in the like manner. All the time he is seen wearing rich gaudy dress like a cock that walks among hens. Blanché tells Stanley very frankly that she thinks that her sister has married a man.

This manly force of Stanley is the only plus point in his favour. In all other respects, he is simply a brute, an ape. To quote Benjamin Nelson:

He is the ruler of his domain, ruling literally as well as figuratively by means of his penis. For Stanley sex is equated with domination and animal force in his driving element(7).

The song sung by Blanche and the Mexican woman selling flowers have been symbolically used by Tennessee Williams with great skill. These techniques testify to the fact that Williams is a poet-dramatist who creates fine poetry out of the common speech.

In the second scene Stella asks Stanley to be sympathetic towards Blanche. He must understand Blanche.

7. Ibid. p.140.
She is not basically bad. She has passed through great ordeals in her life. The song of Blanche coming out of the bathroom presents her real character and situation. The refrain is:

From the land of the sky blue water,
They bought a captive maid.

(Sc II)

This means that Blanche (Stella as well) is like a captive maid brought from Belle Reve to live in the dirty house of Stanley. She finds herself trapped in the world which is governed and dominated by brutes like Stanley.

Later on, when Stanley lays bare the secrets of Blanche's life at Laurel, she sings:

It is only a paper moon sailing
over a card boat. But it wouldn't
make believe if you believe in me.

(Sc III)

has been very poetically used by the dramatist to symbolize the idea that Blanche is not what she apparently appears to be. Apparently, she is a whore but, in fact, she is not so. What Stella says of Blanche is quite true.
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.

(Sc. VIII)

When seen and judged in this light Blanche becomes an object of our genuine sympathy and pity, not a dirty person to be laughed at. Blanche's tragedy has been caused by the circumstances. It is the tragedy of all the people. It is the tragedy of the woman in general.

Further, when Blanche tells Mitch frankly the whole story of her life at Belle Reve, her life which was full of joys and sorrows, of romance and its failures, of life and death, the Mexican woman's voice selling flowers, is really very symbolic. Her tone is very appealing. Her flowers are for happy festivity as well as for the dead. They match with Blanche's description of life and death at Belle Reve. The stage direction describes the woman vendor:

A Vendor comes around the corner.
She is a blind Mexican Woman in a dark shawl, carrying bunches of those gaudy tin flowers that lower class Mexicans display at funerals and other festive occasions.

(Sc. IX)
We hear true poetry with all its powerful suggestiveness.

The Polka tune and the Varsouviana music symbolize Blanche's complex emotions. For example Stanley tells Stella about Blanche while she is bathing and when she comes out of the bathroom, she recognises that something wrong has happened and her mental condition has been expressed by 'the distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown'.(Sc.VII). Williams brings out the sadness of Blanche's heart.

Harold Mitchell is a conformist type who knows how to be adjusted with the reality. He is symbolic of the need of human relationship arising out of a deep loneliness. This has always been one of the major issues with Williams and he has posed this problem in many of his plays. Mitch is as lonely as Blanche and like Blanche he, too, needs to establish a tender and true relationship with someone in a world where human contact is vitally needed. Without this contact life is meaningless. It is, therefore, the most beautiful necessity of life to love and to be loved by someone. Mitch and Blanche need each other:

Mitch: You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be you and me, Blanche?
Blanche: Sometimes—there's God—so quickly.

(Sc. VI)
For a while they are in love with each other. This love is the greatest source of peace to Blanche and she is thankful to God because Mitch provided her a cleft in the rock of the world that she could hide in.

But in the tragic world of Tennessee Williams this relationship is not possible. It is denied by alien forces which impinge on it. Blanche's final effort to find a new meaning with Mitch is completely shattered by the fated events of the past and the brutality of the present. As a result of this failure Blanche as well as Mitch is sad and remorseful.

This is not only the tragedy of Blanche and Mitch but the tragedy of Laura and Jim; Myra and Val. Behind this tragedy is the hand of time or circumstances. Time, we are given to believe, is the only factor of human tragedy. The poor souls are caught by cruel circumstances from which there is no escape. Laura, Myra and Blanche all have noble qualities of character but they lack the vitality to preserve them against the hostile time and the world.

Water is a traditional symbol of purity and it has been employed by Williams for the same purpose in the play. Blanche wants to clean herself of the sins she had committed
in her life. As a young girl, we are told, she was pure tender and trustworthy but the world brutalized her. She passed through a series of crises in her life. Her husband whom she loved deeply committed suicide and left her alone in this wide world. Her home was shattered. She lost her plantation, her parents, her aristocratic culture and beauty. Consequently, she became a neurotic, a derelict and misfit. She resorted to smoking and drinking. She ran desperately in search of love and warmth but got nothing except frustration. She became a whore due to socio-psycho-situational factors. Now she is a lost soul. She is conscious of her sins and guilt. She wants to make herself pure by wiping out the stains of sin from her body and soul. For this purpose she takes baths hot and cold. She washes herself again and again as Lady Macbeth washes her hands but the stains of guilt and sin remain as they were before. She thinks of the sea which alone can make her neat and clean:

Blanche: I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I am going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I am going to die on the sea.

(Sc XI)

All through her life she used mineral water to clean herself which did no good to her. Now she thinks that
she would be made clean by the salt waters of the ocean after her death. That is why she wants to die on the sea.

Colours such as white, red and blue have also been utilized by Williams in this play. They are very poetically and artistically handled. They are used to universalise the theme and expose the duality of flesh and spirit of the human nature.

First of all, let us take 'white' colour which symbolizes Blanche's beauty and purity. She wears white fox furs. She is compared to a white lily and to a white moth. This suggests that she is pure, beautiful, delicate, tender and fragile. To think of Blanche is, in fact, to think of white things. She explains her name:

Mitch: Miss Du Bois?
Blanche: It's French name. It means wood and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods. Like an orchard in spring.

(Sc. III)

Her very name is white but she is tainted with sin. Herein lies duality in her character. She is like a fallen angel,
essentially pure and beautiful but fallen and degraded. She is basically good but the world ill-treated her. Through this symbol Williams makes us see the beauty of Blanche's soul.

The red colour symbolizes her sexuality. Blanche is generally seen clad in white but occasionally she is seen clothed in red satin robes. She wears flowered prints. She is very particular about her dress. Clothes are her passion. Others like Stanley and his friends wear red clothes too, but their red clothes reveal their primitive nature. Blanche's red clothes suggest her indifference towards conventional morality. She did not have normal sexual relations either with her husband who was a homosexual or with the people who came into her life after the death of her husband. She came in touch with all sorts of men but they simply abused her and discarded after their sexual gratification. Her soul remained thirsty as usual. She could not fill the gap which she felt in her being. Although she appears to be refined, yet she is basically an animal with sexual passion. She praises Stanley because of his masculine virility. She tells Stanley:

I like an artist who paints in strong, bold colours, primary colours. I don't like pinks and creams and I never cared for wishy-washy people. That was why, when you walked in here last night, I said to myself-"My sister has married a man". (Sc.II)
This is the only good thing which Blanche sees in him. Mitch, who came into her life at a later stage, is not a fox. He is one of wishy-washy people. He is a victim of Oedipus complex. That is why he could not establish any meaningful relationship with Blanche. The desire to get a permanent home has been denied to her.

The 'blue' colour is used for the past memories. This is one of the recurrent symbols in Williams's plays and stories. In The Glass Menagerie, the Blue Mountain symbolizes Amanda's past life. In the same way the blue eyes of her dead husband remind Blanche of the good old days when he was simply a boy; and she was only a girl of sixteen. She loved him very dearly. However, she still keeps him alive in her memories. The love-letters which she wrote to her are so sacred that if Stanley touches them they would become dirty. She tells about her husband to everyone she happens to meet. She becomes lyrical in his praise when she talks of him. She found him and lost. After that her life has been a tale of untold suffering. The word 'blue' has become her favourite as it reminds her of her past. She praises Stella's unborn child thus:

I hope that his eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles, lighted in a white cake.

(ScVIII)
While describing the eyes of the child, she thinks of the blue eyes of her own husband.

At the close of the play she tells Stella what appears to be premonition of her own death:

And I'll be buried at sea sewn
up in a clean white sack and dropped
over board— at noon— in the blaze
of summer— and into an ocean as blue
as my first lover's eyes.

(Sc. XI)

She wants to die after being purified. The memories of her past continue to haunt her. The colour symbolism enables the audience to see the hidden purity of Blanche's soul. White is the colour of her soul while red symbolizes her immoral sexual life. Symbols in A Streetcar Named Desire are directly related to the hidden attributes of the characters and they are, therefore, essential for understanding the meaning of the play.
CONCLUSION

The major symbols in Williams's plays highlight the agonizing conflict between man's sensitivity and the harsh and cruel realities of the world. The poor and harrased man fights against the mighty forces of the society. The desire for an escape into the ideal world has often been suggested by the symbols. The escape, however, cannot be a permanent reality. The playwright's artistic handling of certain symbols suggests this essential duality in man's nature. Man's inability to fuse the reality with the ideal constitutes the essence of his tragic predicament. This world itself may be regarded as one of the causes of his suffering because Williams considered it imperfect and fragmentary. Man is a dweller of the imperfect world. The whole world has been divided into two groups - the good and the evil symbolised by light and darkness. The dark forces in his tragedies ultimately crush the light and leave the entire world dark.

Man wanders in search of peace and a permanent location. He aspires for love and tries to establish a meaningful human relationship but all in vain. Laura, Blanche and Val are wandering souls in search of love and peace. All that they want is denied to them and they have to seek refuge in their own worlds of illusion.
The menagerie of Laura and Blanche's waiting for the distant calls symbolize the world of illusions in which Williams's character prefer to hide themselves instead of facing the bitter realities of life.

Laura rejected the reality and took a permanent refuge into her own world of illusion symbolized by the glass menagerie characterizing her fragile and extremely sensitive nature. Such a sensitive creature cannot face the reality.

Blanche wants to get protection and love in her life. She wants someone to provide her with a permanent home. The urge for protection, warmth and love leads her from one place to another but she does not get what she has been longing for. During the course of her struggle she destroys herself. She finally takes refuge in drinking. Her very self is lost and she feels herself lonely.

Tennessee Williams wants to impress upon his audience that the beautiful, innocent and tender creatures do not survive in this cruel and harsh world.

The idea of the ever-present conflict between the desires of the flesh and the spiritual aspirations has also been suggested by the symbols. The tension between the flesh
and spirit is suggested in his plays by the fox and moth symbolism. Fox is equated with sex which is a recurrent symbol in Williams's work. It has been derived from Lawrence. Val, in the Battle of Angels, is like a fox who is a heterosexual among the women who were all sexually hungry.

In Williams's plays, like Lawrence's novels, sex is the basic urge and a significant force. The frequent references to the red colour symbolise this hidden urge. Sex is resurrective as well as destructive. The regenerative spirit of love is suggested by the fig tree in the Battle of Angels. The sex relationship can also be destructive as it has been shown in Jabe - Myra relationship. Their relationship is sterile and futile.

Certain symbols in Williams's play project the playwright's own world of ideas. He identifies himself with his characters. Like his characters he has become the spokesman of the decadent culture of the Southern American society. The white and blue colour symbolism suggest how the playwright tried to reconstruct his own world on the imaginative plane.

Tennessee Williams is the protagonist of certain romantic ideals. He creates for himself a new poetic
subjectivity in drama by dramatising purely personal experiences of his characters. He dealt with the individuality of man instead of representing the larger social problems of contemporary society.

Williams has adopted psychological approach in his plays. The problems of his characters have been universalised. There are frustrated personalities in his plays. His main characters suffer from their own inabilities to face the grim realities of life and, therefore, they want to escape into world of fantasy, alcoholism and sexual promiscuity.

Sometimes, the actual meaning of his play is often lost to the audience because of too much symbolism. In some of his plays symbols fail to sharply focus the theme as the consequence of which the story appears to be left without a proper conclusion.

But in his use of symbols Williams is more poetic and lyrical. In The Glass Menagerie we see it in the context of Jim O'Connor and Laura. John Gassner says that 'poetic naturalism' is the greatest source of his strength.

Williams's treatment of symbols in his plays has brought him closer to the poetic approach. As a dramatist,
he was primarily interested in making his audience see the psychological complexities of the modern man. The recurrent use of certain symbols makes us see the invisible world of his characters. Williams's symbolic approach helps us understand how contemporary world was torn between the forces which are mutually antagonistic to each other.

Violence, cruelty, harshness and indifference of the real world are contrasted with the delicacy, softness and sensitivity. Williams asks how can a sensitive soul survive in such a world? The study of symbols in his early plays betrays the playwright's primary concern for the preservation of the sensitive and the beautiful. The real does not harmonize with the ideal. The two do not identify with each other as the consequence of which the sensitive souls are perished. His plays are the tragic stories of their destruction.

Williams's use of symbols has a unique flexibility. They, however, enable the audience to see the inner world of his characters. Sometimes his plays, particularly the Battle of Angles, are over-burdened with too many symbols which ultimately leave the audience confused and bewildered.
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