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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Staging Desire Androgynously: An Alternative Vision of Identity

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| ABSTRACT
This article examines the intersection of sexualities and identities, with a particular focus on the ways these elements can be transgressed in Western theater. The study postulates that theater represents a distinctive forum for challenging established societal structures, thereby enabling actors and, by proxy, spectators to perform multiple identities that challenge conventional constraints and break traditional expectations. The research demonstrates the dynamic nature of identity formation on the modern stage, illustrating that identity can both reflect societal norms and serve as an alternative to them. This allows for the expression of diverse sexual identities that deviate from the heteronormative order. Consequently, the theater becomes a site for subverting conventional codes and for negotiating with mainstream society the potential for exploring a plethora of non-standardized identities. This process culminates in the crystallization of norm-divergent gender identities.

| KEYWORDS

Sexual Desires, Identities, Gender Roles, Theater, Subversive Art.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Modern theater, with a particular emphasis on the American theatrical output of Tennessee Williams, is a manifestation of the cathartic and social aspects surrounding erotic drives and actions. This art simultaneously liberates and annihilates, as it is shaped by two conflicting energies, namely Eros and Thanatos. The pre-sexual liberation plays examine the corrosive effects of sensual magnetism and sexual compulsion through the use of allusion and euphemism. While delineating the intimate lives of his characters, the playwright is also concerned with the representation of a historical era and its ideology.

Due to the political context of the 1950s and 1960s, which prohibited the affirmation of marginal sexualities, Williams situates desire in a sphere where everything must be decoded, fostering greater complicity with the informed spectator. Despite his oblique treatment of sexuality, he challenges the stereotypical nature of sexual roles and behaviors, as well as the gendered construction of power dynamics, both in reality and in discourse.

By demonstrating that the binary division of society is the source of conflict in social relations, Williams proposes a new way of thinking about the categories of man-woman, masculine-feminine, and heterosexual-homosexual. In contrast to the essentialist perspective, he advocates the androgynous model, which negates the principle of hierarchical categorization and emphasizes the polymorphic and unstable nature of identity.

If we posit that Williams' theater reflects the queer movement in certain respects, we might also consider the possibility that a work of art is queer not only in its aesthetic aspect, but also in its politics. Consequently, the rationale behind this study is to examine the socially committed dimension of Williams' art, which has often been overlooked by critics. In contrast to the prevailing opinion, Williams' primary concerns were social and political issues. "My interest in social problems is as great as my interest in the

theatre."[1] It is evident that Williams' intention was to incorporate a social message into his theatre. As he stated, "I try to write all my plays so that they carry some social message along with the story."[2]

Themes of desire, sexuality, and sexual identity are inextricably linked to gender politics, implicated in social norms, and consubstantially linked to ideology, knowledge, and power. In his article, "Culture, Power, and the (En)gendering of Community: Tennessee Williams and Politics," Thomas P. Adler proposes the following hypothesis: "If politics can be understood very broadly as the relations of power that govern individuals, then…Williams would seem to qualify as a political playwright."[3] Building upon this foundation, the present study endeavors to elucidate the political and discursive implications of Williams' theater.

In his seminal work, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*: *The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams*, David Savran identifies a pivotal moment in the critical reception of Williams. Since the 1992 publication of this queer essay, there has been a growing interest in the ideological, epistemological, and political implications of Williams' work. C. W. E. Bigsby proposes a perspective wherein Williams' radicalism, "lacking a political correlative, tends to be displaced into a sexual subversiveness."[4] In contrast, Savran situates Williams within a continuous spectrum, stating that "there is in Williams's work an almost constant movement back and forth between the political and the sexual."[5]

Savran posits that this pervasive oscillation between the sexual and the political can be conceived as an ever-shifting *continuum*. This writing marks a rupture with the traditional understanding of frontiers, dissolving all boundaries between public and private space, center and margin. Nonetheless, Savran proposes that characterizing this movement as a straightforward displacement rigidifies the two categories. This process establishes a set of parallel dichotomies, contrasting political and sexual, public and private, center and margin.

Although Williams only alluded to homosexual themes in the 1950s and 1960s, he did not fail to arouse the suspicions of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Additionally, he was accused of being a communist, a charge that is often conflated with homosexuality. In response, Williams asserted, "People think I'm a communist, but I hate all bureaucracy, all isms. I'm a revolutionary only in the sense that I want to see us escape from this sort of trap."[6] In his defense, Savran proclaims that Williams "was a writer who called himself a revolutionary and meant it, a playwright who produced a new and radical theatre that challenged and undermined the Cold War order."[7] Savran also asserts that the playwright's political convictions were more profound than those of his contemporary, Arthur Miller.

> Unlike Miller, who (at least in testimony before the House [Un-American Activities] Committee) renounced his former leftist associations, Williams in his *Memoirs* and in interviews dating from 1940 until the end of his life, insisted on his continued commitment to radical political change[8].

In his own words, Arthur Miller claims that Tennessee Williams was not "the sealed off aesthete he was thought to be. There is a radical politics of the soul as well as the ballot box and the picket line,"[9] thereby recognizing the subversive power of his theater. Williams makes a political gesture when he advocates for the rights of homosexuals and other individuals ostracized within a heteronormative society. C. J. Summers argues that:

> Williams seldom questions the origins of homosexuality or charts the coming-out process, but his casual acceptance of homosexuality as a human condition and his serious regard for the plight of gay people and others at the margins of society are themselves political acts[10].

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[1] T. Williams, preface to *Stairs to the Roof*, New York, New Directions, 2000, x.
[2] T. Williams, in: Albert J. Devlin, editor, *Conversations with Tennessee Williams* (Literary Conversations Series), University Press of Mississippi; Complete Numbers Starting with 1, 1st edition (October 1, 1986), p. 5.
[3] Thomas P. Adler, "Culture, Power, and the (En)gendering of Community: Tennessee Williams and Politics," *Mississippi Quarterly* 48.4 (Fall 1995): 649-665, p. 656.
[4] C. W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama,* Vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 33.
[5] David Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1992, pp. 80-81.
[6] T. Williams, in: Albert J. Devlin, *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*, *op. cit.,* p. 292.
[7] D. Savran, *Communists, Cowboys and Queers*, *op. cit.,* ix.
[8] *Ibid*, p. 79.
[9] Arthur Miller, *Timebends: A Life*, New York, Grove Press, 1987, pp. 180-181.
[10] Claude J. Summers, "'The Charm of the Defeated': The Early Fiction of Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams," in: *Gay Fictions Wilde to Stonewall: Studies in a Male Homosexual Literary Tradition*, Continuum, New York, 1990, p. 155.

Williams' canon encompasses a diverse array of individuals, many of whom are situated on the margins of American society. The author employs the "fugitive type" as a symbol of marginalized individuals in an assimilationist society. These characters, whether vagrant artists, homosexuals, drug addicts, prostitutes, or gigolos, all epitomize a visceral rage to survive and express themselves. All of these individuals are driven by a certain negation of authority and are charged with the mission of challenging the *status quo*. Consequently, they serve as instigators of upheaval on numerous levels, including sexual, social, and religious.

Williams has dedicated his artistic career to representing the mutilated, as illustrated by the character of Celeste in *The Mutilated*: "I'd say, we all have our mutilations, some from birth, some from long before birth, and some from later in life, and some stay with us forever."[11] The playwright has consistently aligned himself with the castaways of life, on the margins of society: "Mutations are another word for freaks. For God's sake, let's have a little more freakish behavior—not less."[12] Williams's underlying message is that all human beings are deformed in one way or another, and that it would be wise to allow a greater degree of unconventionality by embracing these disfigurements rather than trying to suppress them.

In this respect, Williams seems to have anticipated the queer moment he cherishes and unreservedly endorses: "My place in society then [1949] and possibly always since then, has been in Bohemia. I love to visit the other side now and then. But on my social passport, Bohemia is indelibly stamped, without regret on my part."[13] By conceptualizing sexual desire as a catalyst for the transformation of social and cultural norms, he has positioned it as a foundational element of queer transgression. In this regard, James R. Keller observes that:

> Queers are symbolically central and socially peripheral. As it is the case with Tennessee Williams, the culture is willing to co-opt his fame for its own purposes, to take credit for his work and his life at the same time that it rejects its humanity, assuming that somehow his creative impulses are separate from his sexual predispositions. Williams is symbolically central insofar as he contributes to the nation's cultural identity and to the city's fame, but at the same time he is, in the eyes of local moralists and religious hysterics, suitable only for exclusion from the public space[14].

Themes of monstrosity and marginality are pervasive in Williams' work, where characters frequently compare themselves to, or are compared to, freaks. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), Blanche Dubois' song references the renowned American circus Barnum and Bailey, which featured a gallery of freaks. "It's a Barnum and Bailey world / Just as phony as it can be / But it wouldn't be make-believe / if you believed in me!"[15]

In *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), *Princess* Kosmonopolis, whose real name is Alexandra Del Lago, underscores the marginalization of non-conformists within repressive societies, thereby reinforcing Blanche's idea of "becoming-freak":

> PRINCESS:—I wasn't always this monster. Once I wasn't this monster. And what I felt in my heart when I saw you returning, defeated, to this palm garden, Chance, gave me hope that I could stop being the monster that I was this morning, and you can do it, can help me.
> CHANCE: …I'm not that kind of monster.
> PRINCESS: You're no kind of monster[16].

Perceiving change as a fundamental principle of life, Williams, through his character Chance Wayne, maintains that "to change is to live…to live is to change, and not to change is to die."[17] *In her discourse, Princess* extols the tenacity of misfits, asserting that "monsters don't die early; they hang on long. Awfully long. Their vanity's infinite, almost as infinite as their disgust with themselves."[18] While Princess is perceived by Chance as "a nice monster,"[19] the children of Cabeza de Lobo in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) are equated by Sebastian with the ugliest of all monsters: "Don't look at those little monsters…If you look at them, you get

[11] T. Williams, *Dragon Country*, New Directions Book, 1970, p. 87.
[12] T. Williams, « Something Wild », *Where I Live: Selected Essays*, New York, New Directions, 1978, p. 14.
[13] T. Williams, *Memoirs*, London, W. H. Allen, 1976, p. 100. In: Nicholas De Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage*, London; New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 69.
[14] James R. Keller, « Tennessee Williams Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Hypocrisy, Paradox, and Homosexual Panic in the New/Old South », in: Carlos L. Dews and Carolyn Leste Law, editors, *Out in the South*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2001, p. 155.
[15] *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Streetcar Named Desire and Other Plays*, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 187.
[16] *Sweet Bird of Youth*, 1959, *Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980*, New York, Library of America, 2000, p. 217.
[17] *Ibid*, 210.
[18] *Ibid*, p. 230.
[19] *Ibid,* p. 166.

sick of the country, it spoils the whole country for you."[20] In *Orpheus Descending* (1957), Carol Cutrere is similarly depicted as a social pariah. She uses sexuality as a weapon to challenge her society. Her status as a vagrant is emblematic of her rejection of domesticity.

The rupture with the *status quo* leads to the marginalized being perceived as aberrant and results in their exclusion by those who uphold social and moral codes. Gerald Weales notes that "Williams told again and again the story of an outsider, one of the fugitive kind, who by virtue of his (or her) differentness—his artistic inclinations, his sexual proclivities, his physical defects—becomes a victim of an uncongenial society."[21]

In his 1953 play *Camino Real*, Williams depicts the rebellious nature of his characters' resistance to the normalizing forces of the dominant social order. "You have a spark of anarchy in your spirit and that's not to be tolerated. Nothing wild or honest is tolerated here!"[22] The term "wild" serves as a pivotal concept in the playwright's philosophical framework. This concept is imbued with hedonistic and emancipatory connotations pertaining to notions of naturalness and freedom. Williams defines his ambition as follows:

> My desire was to give these audiences my own sense of something wild and unrestricted that ran like water in the mountains, or clouds changing shape in a gale, or the continually dissolving and transforming images of a dream. This sort of freedom is not chaos nor anarchy[23].

The primary theme of *Camino Real* is freedom. In the aforementioned passage, Williams employs the metaphor of flowing water to illustrate the permeability of boundaries that define identity differences, sexual or otherwise. These images of vital transformation are of great significance to Williams' aspiration for social upheaval. The playwright espoused libertarian ideals and strove to create, rather than merely describe, a free society. This is evident in his preface to *Camino Real*, in which he celebrates the spirit of the vagabonds.

In Williams' theater, the symbolic figure of the freak functions as a critique of social conformity through its anarchistic attitude. Consequently, it contributes to the defiance of established conventions that generate social hypocrisy and double standards. In his work, Williams employs monsters to illustrate the futility of attempting to homogenize diversity. Accordingly, as Leslie Fiedler postulates, the figure of the freak becomes a source of anxiety:

> Only the true Freak challenges the conventional boundaries between male and female, sexed and sexless, animal and human, large and small, self and other, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth[24].

Strictly sensu, the art of William is not an art of provocation. Yet, the manner in which it resists the established order conceals a contentious message and a disturbing potential that could lead to profound social and political changes. In *Camino Real*, the playwright establishes the artist as the founder of a new order through the character of Lord Byron:

> But a poet's vocation…is to influence the heart in a gentler fashion than you have made your mark on that loaf of bread. He ought to purify it and lift it above its ordinary level. For what is the heart but a sort of—A sort of—instrument!—that translates *noise* into *music*, chaos into—*order*…—*a mysterious order!*[25]

[20] *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Tennessee Williams Plays 1957-1980*, New York, Library of America, 2000, p. 143.
[21] As quoted by Stephen S. Stanton, editor, in: *Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1977, p. 61.
[22] *Camino Real*, in: *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, Vol. 2, New York, New Directions, 1971, p. 487.
[23] Preface to *Camino Real*, p. 420.
[24] Leslie A. Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1978, p. 24.
[25] *Camino Real*, p. 507.

In his essay "Something Wild,"[26] Williams defines the artist as the instigator of a new order that is neither imposed nor inherited, but unique to him alone. Williams' work is constructed as a counterweight to the imposed order. This process is intended to deconstruct norms. Williams emphasizes the subversive nature of theater and art in general:

> Art is a kind of anarchy, and the theatre is a province of art…Art is…anarchy in juxtaposition with organized society. It runs counter to the sort of orderliness on which organized society apparently must be based. It is a benevolent anarchy: it must be that and if it is true art, it is. It is benevolent in the sense of constructing something which is missing, and what it constructs may be merely criticism of things as they exist[27].

In an interview conducted in 1976, Williams made the following declaration: "All good art is essentially revolutionary, in the wide sense of revolutionary…It has to be implicit; revolution is implicit; not explicit, but woven into the fabric of the work."[28] Subversion determines the quality of art: "All quality art is subversive, in form or content. And the greatest art is subversive in form and content."[29]

The troubling inquiries posed by Williams regarding sexuality and the broader concept of gender, encompassing social sexual identities, are at the core of contemporary queer thought. His writings are situated "between the blocks of the framing majority law,"[30] in a breach of freedom that Abraham Moles would call interstitial[31]. Arguably, the term "queer" is a form of resistance to established sexual norms. It provocatively challenges the predictability of conventionality. Queer is, in essence, the art of resisting sexual norms, the art of never being where one is expected to be. It is simultaneously a non-identity and a tool.

One question naturally arises: can we attempt to analyze the work of a gay author without taking this sexual characteristic into account? Although Williams has chosen not to engage in homosexual militancy—"I do not have a faggot, a homosexual, a gay audience. I write for an audience"[32]—and despite his claim in a 1981 interview that his homosexuality had little effect on his writing—"I don't think the sexuality of writers is all that interesting…It has no effect…on their ability to portray either sex"[33]—his homosexuality is not entirely divorced from his overall identity. His sexual orientation presented him with an early challenge: the discrepancy between his self and his appearance. It also led him to recognize the performative "secret self"[34] constructed by the ego and its masks as coping mechanisms.

Williams has initiated a rupture in a societal framework that is deeply entrenched in the binary logic of cognition. He has challenged the widely held belief that men are masculine and women are feminine by positing that the essence of humanity is originally androgynous. In this regard, his work exemplifies the dissolution of the traditional monolithic identity. The non-phallic vision of masculinity is at odds with patriarchal norms, just as the representation of femininity does not fit into a purely normative logic and is therefore not entirely in line with binary ideology. Williams' art challenges the conventional dualistic structures of sex roles and gender relations, overturning the norms of patriarchal society. This destabilization of traditional norms imbues Williams' art with subversiveness:

> Williams's destabilization of mid-century notions of masculinity and femininity is accomplished, in part, by his ability both to expose the often murderous violence that accompanies the exercise of male authority and to valorize female power and female sexual desire[35].

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[26] This essay appeared in *The New York Star* in November 1948, originally titled "On the Art of Being a True Non-Conformist." It was then published in 1949 as the introduction to the second edition of *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays*, and reprinted unchanged in subsequent editions.

[27] T. Williams, "Something wild…" *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays*, New York, New Directions, 1953, vii-viii.

[28] George Whitmore, "George Whitmore Interviews Tennessee Williams," in: Winston Leyland, editor, *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, volume 1, San Francisco, Gay Sunshine, 1984, p. 316. As quoted in *Communists, Cowboys and Queers*, p. 144.

[29] Pierre-Louis Fort, « Le théâtre de Sarah Kane », *Marginalités et Théâtres : pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, Proceedings of the International Symposium organized by: The Center for Theatre Studies (Le Centre d'Etudes du Théâtre) at the University of Paris XII, September 19-20, 2002, Saint-Genouph, Librairie Nizet, 2003, p. 85. My translation.

[30] Abraham Moles, « Les Mouvements religieux aujourd'hui. Théorie et pratiques », *Cahiers de recherches en sciences de la religion*, Bellarmin, volume 5, Laval, Canada, 1984, pp. 85-108. My translation.

[31] Abraham Moles « Liberté principale, liberté marginale, liberté interstitielle », *Revue française de sociologie* Vol. 7, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1966), Sciences Po University Press, pp. 229-232.

[32] As quoted in Stephen Stanton, editor, *Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[33] Dotson Rader, *Tennessee: Cry of the Heart*, New York, Doubleday, 1985, p. 348.

[34] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1978, p. 3O8.

[35] D. Savran, *Communists, Cowboys and Queers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

Williams' work engages with gender as a malleable entity, suggesting that identity can be fixed and fluid. In his work, gender categories are hybridized. They are not innate but rather a product of social and cultural construction. From his theatrical matrix emerges the notion that "identity is no longer a fixed norm or reduced to a binary alternative; rather, it is a kind of gallery where we construct and deconstruct our fluctuating identities according to the codes we choose and assume."[36] It would be anachronistic to suggest that Williams created a queer theater before the concept itself was formed. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the concept of queerness is relatively recent, yet its reality is much older.

The queer concept appeared to us to be analogous to the older concept of androgyny, not only in its multiplicity and the upheavals it induces, but also as a symbol of that very ambivalence that is characteristic of William's work. As the playwright states, "We omitted the androgyne, the one in between. I think I have in me all three genders."[37] It signifies elusiveness and divergence from the norms to which it belongs: "Any attempt to *define* androgyny reveals an ever-evasive concept which takes us to the limits of language."[38] Androgyny highlights the polymorphism of gender and challenges the rigidity of hierarchical sex roles, thus representing a refusal of the conventional gender system. The transgressions of androgyny and the reclaiming of the margins are very appealing to queers.

Williams' advocacy of an identity paradigm that acknowledges the plurality and porosity of gender boundaries challenges previously established ideological certainties. His conceptualization of the self appears to be more in tune with the dynamic and complex nature of the human experience. In his nonconformist aspirations and exploration of alternatives to the binary normative logic, he exposes the ways in which patriarchal society strives to naturalize gender hierarchies. Williams' art resists any unipolar vision of the world:

> The whole meaning of all my work is that there is no such thing as complete right and complete wrong, complete black, complete white. That we're all in the same boat…All creation is the boat, not just one nation, not just one ideology, not just one system[39].

The quest for identity among characters in Williams' works is problematic in that it is not defined by the object it aims to achieve, but rather by a state of lack and longing. The quest thus becomes a dramatization of desire, perpetuating a state of deprivation and frustration. Similarly, Williams himself remained an unfinished, fragmented artist.

Ultimately, the aspirations aroused by writing were unfulfilled: "Writing for me is a continual see-saw between rapture and despair which leaves me so exhausted, nervously and physically, that I actually believe each play reduces my life expectancy by several years."[40] His disillusionment was further compounded by the fact that writing was as essential to his happiness as sexuality. In 1943, he informed Windham that:

> There are only two times in this world when I am happy and selfless and pure. One is when I jack off on paper and the other when I empty all the fretfulness of desire on a young male body. There must be a third occasion for happiness in the world[41].

By portraying characters as wrestling with the regime of normality, Williams highlights the discrepancy between the desires of the anti-conformist individual and the demands of a community that seeks to regulate its members. The author's message is not one of optimism. The characters are rendered powerless by the laws and social norms that marginalize them. Tennessee Williams' writing is tragic, aligning with Nietzsche's conception of realism, while simultaneously exhibiting an underlying tone of promise.

The marginalized figures in the plays challenge the traditional referential framework and prompt social renewal in a world where they feel out of place. Consequently, these individuals identify new possibilities outside the walked path. The demise of the free-spirited musician Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending* did not mark the end of the "fugitive kind." The torch was then taken up by the marginal Carol, who embodies the indomitable free spirit.

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[36] Christian Authier, *Le nouvel ordre sexuel*, Paris, Bartillat, 2002, p. 133. My translation.
[37] George Whitmore, "Interview with Tennessee Williams," *op. cit.*, p. 318.
[38] Francette Pacteau, "The Impossible Referent : Representations of the Androgyne," in: Victor Burgin, James Donald et Cora Kaplan, editors, *Formations of Fantasy*, London, Methuen, 1986, p. 62.
[39] T. Williams, in: Albert J. Devlin, editor, *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*, *op. cit.,* p. 90.
[40] Lyle Leverich, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1995, p. 331.
[41] Donald Windham, editor, *Tennessee Williams' Letters to Donald Windham, 1940-1965*, New York, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 105.

Despite the characters' egregious transgressions, Williams meticulously historicizes, contextualizes, and relativizes their actions. Should value judgments emerge, we discern ironies directed not at the individuals as such, but at moral and social conventions. In his portrayal of outcasts, Williams seeks to show the potential inherent in each individual to retain his or her humanity, even when confronted with the brutal force of their animal, or worse, bestial nature. Some characters make a breakthrough in the face of severe constraints. These alternative realms, while not always able to withstand the rigid norms, at least provide an outlet for the "legless birds" doomed to live between heaven and earth.

In the characters' world of perdition, however, there is a star that twinkles in the darkness, a light that points to the horizon, as a sign of impending freedom. In the depths of his pen, Williams offers hope for acceptance. He longs for a world where human aspirations are actualized. In *Something Cloudy*, *Something Clear*, Clare declares that the dream is, in fact, a reality. This assertion encapsulates the playwright's vision as a realist idealist: "Dreams are true, they're the truest things in the world, only dreams are the truest things in the world."[42] The dream, adds Gutman in Williams' *Camino Real*, is one of the driving forces behind the revolution: "Revolution only needs good dreamers who remember their dreams."[43] Tennessee Williams is not a fantasist or delusional writer; rather, he is a visionary who posits that our desires possess the capacity for genuine human transmutation.

In conclusion, the study employs the lens of Tennessee Williams' early theatrical creations to inquire into the factors that serve as a driving force influencing the motivations and actions of characters. Williams' portrayal of outcasts and their transgressions is embedded within their societal framework, offering a nuanced view that critiques moral and social conventions rather than the individuals themselves. The study identifies a recurring theme of hope and the realization of dreams in Williams' works. The portrayal of revolutionary aspirations in the plays suggests that dreams are an alternative reality. This perspective illuminates the genuine capacity of desire to drive social change. Furthermore, the study elucidates the malleability of human agency in challenging cultural conventions. This is evidenced by the characters who transgress heteronormative standards, thereby highlighting the adaptability of identities. The research thus concludes that theater has the potential to be a subversive medium for exploring the complexities of selves and desires. In his oeuvre, Tennessee Williams advocates for a more inclusive understanding of gender and sexuality. This is achieved, among other tools, through the use of leitmotifs and innuendos..

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