



**A Psycho-Analytical Reading of
Tennessee Williams' One-Act Play,
*I Can't Imagine Tomorrow***

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Abstract:

From his early beginnings, Tennessee Williams deliberately made a number of plays emerge from precisely the paranoia which typified his own life. Presented in these plays are paranoid characters who, by themselves, invented worlds in which they sought refuge from spiritual disintegration. Alarminglly conscious of the fragility of the human situation and of the insecurity of their own defences, these characters initially submit to solitary confinement inside their own skins. The destructive pressures build up to a point where seems to be no escape. Uttering an outcry against painful and deadening isolation, they finally accept death as an ultimate good much preferred to a life of loneliness. This can be explained through

Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, a one-actor which addresses itself as a gaudy fantasy derived from Williams' own neuroses. It centres around the theme of suffering psyches, its characters being consumed in a process of self-imposed solitude. It is my contention that the play's characters, or more appropriately, the inhabitants of the world presented in the play, are emotionally disturbed, they experience pain as a result of their overwhelming sense of fragility both spiritually and physically. This renders them voluntary outcasts whose souls dream of salvation. The researcher is inclined, in this respect, to take the soul as an equivalent to life generally and the body to the world at large. The study demonstrates the isolation of the soul from its fragile vessel, so does the human life from the world. Hence the loss of interest in existence and the unreluctant movement of the characters lead, of course, towards self-destruction and annihilation. The present study adopts a psycho-analytic approach, analyzing the play of *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* in a framework

designed to suit the style of the dramatist and the nature of the play targeted for analysis.

Keywords: A Psycho, Analytical , Paranoia , Fragility , Solitude , Salvation.

النفس المعذبة في مسرحية تينيسي وليامز "لا أستطيع تصور الغد"

ملخص البحث:

هدفت الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء علي دراسة ملامح المعاناة النفسية لدي الشخصيات في مسرحية "لا أستطيع تصور الغد" للكاتب المسرحي "تينيسي وليامز"، لقد استطاع مسرح "تينيسي وليامز" أن يفرض نفسه بقوة علي ساحة الإبداع الأدبي في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، ويعد "وليامز" واحدًا من أهم كُتّاب أمريكا وأبرزهم في القرن العشرين، فهو كاتب له نظرة ورؤية درامية عميقة يهتم من خلالها بتناول جوانب الضعف والاضطراب وإظهارها في المجتمع الأمريكي علي وجه الخصوص، وفي المجتمع الإنساني علي وجه العموم، وهدف وليامز من خلال أعماله المسرحية إلي التأثير القوي والعميق علي القارئ والمشاهد لمسرحياته، من خلال مواجهتهم بالواقع الذي يعيشون فيه، في محاولة جادة من جانبه لإقناعهم بتغيير اتجاهاتهم وسلوكياتهم في الحياة لمواجهة هذا الواقع.

"لا أستطيع تصور الغد" مسرحية من المسرحيات القصيرة تخرج من عباءة الفانتازيا

التي تدثرت بها سنوات وليامز الأخيرة بعد أن بلغ الاضطراب العصبي أقصى درجاته،

ومن ثم تدور المسرحية حول موضوع الوحدة القاسية التي تعاني مراراتها بل تستعذب آلامها شخصيات المسرحية في عزلتها الإرادية . إن الشخصيات هنا التي تعيش في عالم مسرحية "لا أستطيع تصور الغد" مضطربة عاطفياً يدهمها شعور بالضعف والتضائل مما يدفعها الى الاختلاء بنفسها والتفوق داخل ذواتها، وكلما توغل القلق فيها أحسّت بعقم الحياة وعبثية العيش فينتهي بها المطاف إلى احتضان الموت .

إن المعنى الدرامي لهذه المسرحية – كما أراه – يتبدى من خلال الرمزية التي يوظفها الكاتب، أعني بذلك أن العالم الذي تقطن به شخصيات مسرحية "لا أستطيع تصور الغد" يوحى بالعالم كله وأن من يقطن ذلك العالم يمثل المجتمع كله أو بني البشر، فإذا أحس الإنسان بالتعاسة في جماعته تطلع إرادياً إلى الموت ووآد الذات . واستعرضت الدراسة ملمحاً من ملامح التألم والمعاناة ألا وهو الاضطراب النفسي وما ينتج عنه من اكتئاب نفسي وعزلة إرادية . وتضمنت الخاتمة أهم النتائج مؤكدة على نظرة "تنيسي وليامز" الأدبية التي اتسمت بها أغلب كتاباته وأعماله.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المعاناة، النفسية، العبث، العيش – العزلة، الإرادية، النفس، المعذبة

INTRODUCTION

Tennessee Williams is one of the most significant playwrights of the twentieth century, and almost certainly the most important of American Southern dramatists. Tennessee Williams is considered by many people to be one of America's greatest playwrights and certainly the greatest ever from the South. He also wrote fiction and motion picture screenplays, but he is notable principally for his plays. Virtually all of these plays are set in the South, yet most of them rise above regionalism to approach universal themes. Tennessee Williams has been described by those who knew him as lucid and maniac, accessible and elusive, kind and cruel, but always enigmatic (Leverich xxii). He frequently

deals with intricate relationships among individuals, as well as neurosis and psychological disintegration. Williams' characters seem to be fractured and insecure, relating dysfunctionally without intimate connection to others or self-identity.

Tennessee Williams's best plays often reflected a tragic dimension and resonated with social and cultural disintegration through a character's personal breakdown. Williams shocked audiences by sanctioning themes such as lynching, rape, incest, alcoholism, homosexuality, drug addiction, impotence, and cannibalism in his plays. However, most of the treatment of these themes dealt with the issues on a personal, rather than on a societal level. His motivation

started early in his career mainly by overcoming and by absorbing emotional and physical shocks from his personal life. He became more self-conscious about the actual writing career and the effects of the writing process later in his life as his successes diminished. The failure of his later plays is often attributed to an overly sentimental and rhetorical repetition of his earlier thematic material.

Understanding the complexities of the human condition is of paramount importance on Williams' agenda. Adler expresses this as follows, "In virtually all of Williams's work during the 1940's and 1950's, delineating and probing character psychology takes precedence over all else" (114), whilst Heilman says;

"Failures of personality are a special theme to ... Williams" and also "(Williams' early) plays deal with hypersensitive, paranoid characters who, from weakness or disability, either cannot face the real world at all or have to opt out of it" (٧٢).

Williams is a tragic dramatist of misplaced forces and characters. He created deep flaws in his characters to demonstrate the relationship between the acceptance of diverse groups of people and the struggle for compassion in daily life. Williams believed that this relationship was that this relationship was the essence of humanity and this fundamental belief led him to the dramatic fond of modern tragedy. He admitted that his writing was source of psychotherapy and that most of

his themes had originated emotionally, organically, and dynamically from his own personality (Leverich ٤٨٨).

Williams always places a character, not the story, at the centre of his dramas and focuses our attention on the character's inner life and challenges. Williams, a gifted developer of characterization, then lets the audience contemplate the character for a while. This creative process allows the audience to discover nuances and subtleties in the characters that would not have occurred if his dramas were plot-based. The writer's consistent efforts was aimed at demonstrating, throughout his career, the plight of the individual who is trapped by his surroundings. Williams was drawn to demonstrating, displaying, and examining the solitude

that occurs between human beings who are not able to resolve physical or emotional problems.

DISCUSSION:

Williams wrote about frustration and the desperate need for communication by people who are society's misfits, or more appropriately loneliness victims. The origins of each play in Tennessee Williams' *Dragon Country* are usually deeply involved with the past, with a lost tradition of former greatness and happiness. Parts of this were to reflect his own life. Sometimes a misfit himself, Williams left home for good at an early age. His mother was overprotective, and he did not like his father. During his childhood, his sister, Rose, was his only friend. Later, she was confined to an institution

after an emotional breakdown from which she never recovered. His father was a travelling salesman who spent very little time with his family and made no permanent home for them as they moved among various Mississippi towns. In a nutshell, the family was marked with anger, tensions, and separateness. As said sparsely elsewhere, the life that Williams led himself is deeply and deftly reflected in his dramatic creations.

Loneliness is one of the scourges of fate. It seems to affect everyone regardless of age or ethnicity. Whether one may be rich or poor, all are equally vulnerable. What exactly is loneliness? It is a *feeling* that intimacy, understanding, friendship, and acceptance are missing from one's life. It is a *feeling* of isolation or separation

from others, a feeling of being all alone. One needs to realize that loneliness is nothing more than a *feeling*, which is just one of the parts of one's psyche (Gallozzi <http://www.personal-development.com/index.htm>).

Loneliness is much more than an inconvenience. There is also the danger of loneliness developing into anxiety and depression. One can become completely immobilized by feelings of self-pity and helplessness.

Often, a writer must be both artist and psychologist, not only creating characters, but also bringing them to life, giving them personalities, conflicts, and neuroses that serve not only to advance the plot, but also to give the reader someone to identify with, apart from the

purpose of the writer who wants to convey his or her message.

Let us approach it in terms of Freud's psycho-analytical theory. Freud asserts that man's purpose in life is to seek and retain happiness, which can be characterized both by the absence of pain or the presence of pleasure. However, this happiness is up to man himself to find. Freud states that "all the regulations of the universe run counter to it ... the intention that man should be 'happy' is not included in the plan of 'Creation' " (Freud ۲۵). So then, in order to be happy, man must search for a way to fulfill his internal needs, and even when happiness is attained, the experience is fleeting: "we can derive intense enjoyment only from a

contrast and very little from a state of things" (Freud ٢٦).

The search for happiness, or what Freud calls the pleasure principle, is seen by Freud as a driving force behind much of man's behavior. This love drive is called Eros, and the powerful desires that result from it can shed light on Williams and his characters' willingness to do almost anything to gain the happiness they feel will come from sex, debauchery, isolation or any other aberrations from the normal, as discussed below. Unhappiness, on the other hand, is much less elusive. Freud cites three principal sources of unhappiness: the human body, nature, and other people. The third source of unhappiness, relations with other people, is thought by Freud to be the most

painful of the three (Freud ۲۶). Interestingly, it is also the only one of the three that man can possibly have any control over: for the most part, he cannot control the workings of his body and what diseases he may contract, and he cannot control the forces of nature, but he can choose his friends. Therefore, it might be suggested that much of a person's motive for behaving in a certain way towards others can be explained by his wish to keep from being hurt by other people.

Indeed, the prospect of suffering does not appeal to anyone, and the idea that we might be able to control it may influence us to act a certain way. Rather than seeking happiness by entering into a relationship which may ultimately cause us pain, we may suppress that urge

and choose instead to stay safely unattached. In this way, man (more specifically, Williams himself, and manifestations of his persona in his lonely characters) tries to find a middle ground between happiness and unhappiness. He convinces himself that although he has not reached the ultimate erotic happiness to be found in a love relationship, or even the happiness that can come from an aim-inhibited or more Platonic relationship, he should count himself lucky to have escaped the unhappiness and suffering such a relationship may bring: "the pleasure principle itself, indeed, under the influence of the external world, changed into the more modest reality principle ... the task of avoiding suffering pushes that of obtaining pleasure into the

background" (Freud ٢٦). This idea helps us understand Williams' defense mechanism of self-isolation which keeps him from forming close relationships, even with those whom it would seem natural for him to trust in his real life, biographically speaking. This, too, reflects upon his created characters in Williams' *Dragon Country*.

Freud saw intoxication as being the most effective method of avoiding unhappiness, but also felt that in order to truly defend oneself, one must engage in voluntary isolation from the world: "Against the dreaded external world one can only defend oneself by some kind of turning away from it" (Freud ٢٧). Or even becoming feeble, fading away, diminishing, and finally

becoming nonentity. The dramatic meaning underlying Williams' *Dragon Country*, is apparently the use of the dragon symbol. The writer employs it to imply the entire world – the world in which all of us dwell. The Freudian notion of self-annihilation in the face of approaching danger is out there in the *Dragon Country*. When man (here, Williams himself, or his own creations in the plays) feels unhappy, or unhappily alone, he resorts to desiring death and self-annihilation (Freud ٢٨), yet all subconsciously. The *Dragon Country*, this collection of plays written by Tennessee Williams, begins, as it were, with an artist whose life is gradually derailed, yet consciously, running steeply into the valley of death where the sun sets off, declaring a

defunct day. The collection ends on a sad note of a frosted glass coffin where some people are buried alive in an attempt to flee the pains of life.

A paranoid feeling of loneliness is a recurring motif in the cluster of Williams' plays as a whole, and is demonstrated in terms of Tennessee Williams' biography and the psycho-analytical theory that could shed light on deep, dim parts of his life sparsely reflected in the works collected as *The Dragon Country*.

Tennessee Williams always wrote with an eye on the Grim Reaper. Many of Williams' early works tragically record death encroaching on the old, and the ancient legends that wind up on the death-heap. Incorporating sarcastic wit with genuine pathos, something like the

Greek mythological catharsis, Williams reveals both the farcical and the tragic aspects of old life. The plays of this era in Williams' life are existentially comic. Therefore, the world of Tennessee Williams is a world of lonely individuals with morbid, morose, psychologically maladjusted sensibilities searching unobtainable forms of happiness that are beyond their mortal reach (Chiari ١٤٢). Williams vividly depicts the violent emotionalism of his plots, and that all his obsessive themes derived from his own experience and in particular from his childhood. Hayman explains the torments of Williams' early life, showing how the themes recur throughout his writing, and looks at the way in which he suggested social and cultural

disintegration through the medium of personal breakdown (۲۸۸). *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* is an example of the drama Williams wrote when he was at a low ebb emotionally.

Tennessee Williams belongs to the writers of the South. In plays from Ibsen to Arthur Miller, typical of the South, there are lonely individuals who succeeded in preserving their mortal integrity at the expense of social acceptance, such as in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* and Miller's *The Crucible*. But in Tennessee Williams' world, defiance of the code results in personal destruction. This argument assertively explains the situation of the characters of *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*: There are only two characters, a man and a

woman. She is ill, perhaps mortally so, and living alone in dark house. The man, her own only friend and equally solitary, dreads returning to the airless hotel room which has become his home. He tries to reach out to her, to help her, but it is too difficult, perhaps too late, for her respond. Their confrontation, sometimes gentle, sometimes tense, becomes a revealing and moving emotional experience as they accept the need to face alone the terrors which might be more easily met them. These two characters are presented by Williams as thus: One and Two are respectively a woman and a man, approaching middle age: each is the only friend of the other (١٣٣).

I Can't Imagine Tomorrow is obviously a drama carrying absurdist features, with a basic situation incredibly akin to, or reminiscent of Ionesco's *Chairs*, Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, or Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, or even Albee's *The Zoo Story* in that there is a problem of communication.

Whereas absurdist drama gives an existentialist interpretation of the lack of communication in modern society, Williams gives a sociological and psychological diagnosis of a disease by which, however, he too was infected. In this vein, however, if proportion be kept, Williams, who hardly springs to mind as a dramatist of Absurd Theatre, has done more than a credible service

in evolving the marriage of American Existentialism to the most suitable dramatic form.

The characters are presented with no individuality, in Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, appearing as numbers. One is an unmarried woman and Two is a bachelor working as a teacher. When the play gets underway, both of them get together as they always do, to exchange a good deal of nonsense. A great deal of their conversation reveals how helplessly trapped they are in a routinely life. One tells Two "I see you every evening. It wouldn't be evening without you and the card game and the news on TV (١٣٤)."

This boring situation, indeed, reflects the situation of Tennessee Williams during all of his life as well as

that of most of his autobiographically conceived "unattached and nomadic" protagonists. As he recalls in his *Memoirs*, one of the decisive moments in his youth occurred when in Amsterdam in 1928, he realized the universality of the feeling of being a stranger and composed a poem which starts: " Strangers pass me on the street in endless throng"(1).

The motif of loneliness is quintessentially an image of the bitter feeling of loneliness that all the characters in Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* suffer. These characters, we may infer from a close perusal of Williams' collection of *The Dragon Country*, have always been wandering as long as the inhabitants of *The Dragon Country* remain literally homeless throughout.

And their souls could never in their mundane lives reach a state of settlement and peace but in espousing death as their last and only resort to flee their painful loneliness.

As it were, it looks like an unchanging, static world wrapped up in tedium and monotony that they both have to face, keep up with it, struggling with the boring loneliness:

Two: Everything's just like it was yesterday evening. The cards are still on the

table. You still have on your white robe with the wine stain on it.

One: I've stayed down here since last night. I haven't gone

upstairs. I finished the wine and I
slept on the sofa. Oh!

No supper tonight. None for me, I
did go into the

Kitchen and opened the Frigidaire,
but the sight smell

of the contents made me feel sick.
(۱۳۷)

One of Tennessee Williams' most effective traits as a dramatist was his own ability to portray the social isolation of individuals who were not adequately acknowledged by society as a whole or anyone in that society. However, Williams often stereotyped foreigners in his works, also employing them as objects of scorn. This paradox in Williams's work is explored, leading to the conclusion that the man himself was

paradoxical in his own beliefs, but seemingly aware of his own inconsistencies.

Both characters are clearly fed up with life. Each one of them has a very pressing problem which causes them to be as preys to such a deep sense of self-imposed estrangement. Though a teacher, the man has a difficulty with speaking, which he describes as 'temporary'. But One objects to providing this justification:

Are you sure? Its been temporary for along time now. How do you talk to

your students at the high school, or do you say nothing to them. Just

write things on the black board? (p.١٣٤)

Two, in his turn, discloses the fact that he has already started to absent himself deliberately from school: 'I've been meaning to tell you. It's been five days since I've met my high-school classes' (p. 134). He further confesses that he went to a hospital to see a therapist but the receptionist met him and offered him an appointment card in which he underlined 'desperately' and 'urgent' (p. 136).

On the other hand, One seems to have a certain difficulty with socializing – an even more serious and pressing problem than Two's. That may be the reason why she has always kept aloof from the community on which she puts the fingers of accusation. Hiding behind

her curtained window she takes a peep at the outside world and describes it as 'dragon country':

The country of pain, is an uninhabitable country which is inhabited, though.

Each one crossing through that huge, barren country has his own separate track

to follow across it alone. (p.١٣٨)

Society, in this sense, becomes as disappointing as 'waste land' in which every human soul has to try on its own way to plan a route for itself. Hence, the futility of the attempt and the disappointing realization that travelers through 'dragon country' are fully not socialized:

If the inhabitants, the explorers of Dragon country, looked about them, they'd

see other explorers, but in this country of
endured but endurable pain, each one

is so absorbed, deafened, blinded by his own
journey across it, he sees, he looks,

no one else crawling across it with him.
(p. ۱۳۸)

In this abyss of self-imposed alienation and of escape from the real world, One and Two choose to separate themselves from the community rather than to integrate. In fact, this kind of solitary free passage, which modern man with his own complacency and passivity thinks he has won, is nothing but a mere loss. Moreover, this sort of self-imposed alienation intensifies the absurdity and the state of anguish which pervade modern society. Bigsby asserts that modern

men's "privatism is not the result of the absurdity of their position; it is the essence of it" (١٩٤٨, ٢٥٨).

Having this conviction of self-imposed alienation, the character of One willingly chooses to separate herself from the society in which he lives rather than to integrate: "I won't cross into that country where there's no choice anymore. I'll stop at the border... refuse to go any further" (p.١٣٨).\

She expresses the same frame of mind as Lawrence's when she uses a parable suggesting that death is an ultimate good much preferred to that life of futility and loneliness:

Once I read of an Eskimo woman who knew that her time was finished and asked

to be carried out of the family home, the
igloo, and be deposited alone on a block

of ice that was breaking away from the rest of
the ice floe, so she could drift

away separated – from – all. (p. ۱۳۸)

Thus One has been awakened to such a miserable
state of isolation in which she lives. She suffers from a
deplorable sense of anguish and agony of her own
making. Indeed people, immersing in such a kind of
depressing world and of self-imposed alienation, are
like animal in a zoo, denying access to other animals
and hence denying themselves both self-definition and
consolation. In this sense, human beings are no
different from those animals which are kept in barred
cages; it is a kind of living which intensifies their painful

sense of isolation. In his *An Unfashionable Realist*, Zaki states "the world is a zoo with every one separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals" (٢١). Thus both One and Two have been awakened to this despicable state of estrangement and alienation. They try to belong to each other but not to the outside world. Both of them wish they could get involved in the tide of life, but they dare not do so. After all, they have no energy. This kind of depression from which they suffer makes them senseless to the movement of life outside. 'I don't have the strength any more', One says to Two, 'to try to make you try to save yourself from your – paralyzing – depression' (p. ١٣٩).

Both, therefore, flee to each other to take refuge; he escapes from his motel, which is like a 'mortuary' ('full of dying old woman that crowd around the TV as if they got their blood and their oxygen from it', p. ۱۳۹), so does she from her monotonous static life:

We have to repeat the ritual, oh, it's you and yes, it's me there's almost nothing

Else said, at least nothing else worth saying. I force myself to carry on a sort of

monologue, with a few interjection from you, such as "Mmm – hmmm".

And I tell you things I've told you so often before I'm ashamed to repeat them.

But I have to repeat them or we'd just sit together in unbearable silence, yes

Intolerable silence. (pp. ۱۳۹–۴۰)

She uses another parable (of the Small man Death) to express the state of loneliness and depression that engulfs her:

I have no place down there. I have no one to visit in the evening. I have no one to

talk to, no one to play with. I have no one, no one. (p.١٤٣)

One feels that Two has the ability to 'strike up some new acquaintances' (p.١٤٦). She tries to give him confidence but in vain. He can not just get that. She, in this sense, plays the role of the psychiatrist to help him restore his lost self-confidence, but in the process she loses her own. Two's 'I can't imagine tomorrow strikes her with sudden pain and grief which both become the theme of her speech till the end of the play. So, she

decides to retire and suggest to be going to meet her end (though she may not be welcomed by 'Death'). It is something she wishes to do alone. Though she is fully aware of the futility and difficulty of the task, she says to herself "It is hard because he has nobody but me and I have nobody but him, but in the Dragon Country, you leave last friends behind you go on alone" (p. ١٤٨).

The autobiographically conceived strangers who are not by the mainstream because of an extraordinary emotionality or imaginativeness are much more frequent on Williams' stage than the strangers of national or regional differences, reminiscent of the paranoia of the American people. Henry David Thoreau defined this spiritual non-conformist as the

man who "does not keep pace with his companions ... because he hears a different drummer"(١٧). However, Williams' outsiders are not as self-confident as Thoreau; their marginal existence is not due to a deliberate civil disobedience on their part, depressively yet, but to the mainstream verdict that stigmatizes and ostracizes them. Whereas Thoreau seems to have been quite comfortable in society's prison, Williams' "anti-heroic" protagonists (١٨) are eternal fugitives who "live on motion" because they refuse to be oppressed by "earthly representatives [who] treat human beings as objects." (١٩) Constant motion is their way (and was Williams' way) of dodging society's assaults, since, as he said, "it is harder to hit a moving target."(٢٠)

For Williams, himself a drifter and a restless soul for all his life, (۲۱) as well as for his depressed, fugitive protagonists, "to accept the role imposed by society is to die (perhaps out of tedium, boredom, and depression"(۲۲). Thus, in order to survive as a poetic dramatist and a human being, he even had to insist: "I don't care to adjust on the level of certain types that appear to be adjusted. No, ... I'd rather stay an outsider, even if it means an outcast,"(۲۳) and he boasted that he had "never made any kind of adjustment to the real world."(۲۴)

Williams' worldview was informed by a dichotomy of stereotypically conceived opposites. His plays present a description of loneliness and paranoid manifestations

of self-annihilated personalities, and vividly depict a state of lack of communication, or disrupted communication between suffering psyches of estranged personalities, eventually engendering a state of everlasting depression and despair.

Against this background, one can resolve Williams' paradox of a mysteriously sudden intimacy that sometimes occurs between strangers, or more precisely estranged characters rather than old friends or lovers (*I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*) (١٣٤). Only strangers, endowed with a capacity for concern and compassion can scale the prison walls of self-centered non-communication sunk into depression and tedium just to enjoy short moments of intimacy engendered by their

imagination. Similarly, Williams' statement that the best place for him to work was "a remote place among strangers where there is good swimming" (Williams, *Where I Live* ۱۹) could refer to the fact that his creativity was most spontaneous when he was far away from the pressures of conformity exerted by outsider society, but in the vicinity of the element of purification, which would eliminate the influence of the surrounding, dysfunctionally communicating world.

In the realistic "social" plays of the forties and fifties, the emotional and imaginative misfits in Williams's drama live in a state of inner exile within the society of saints, isolated by invisible but acutely felt walls. Due to

this change in perspective, the later plays of Tennessee Williams are increasingly private; their suffering, their failures are presented solely through their own eyes(Williams, *Memoirs* ٥١)

The ultimate privacy of Williams' later plays is reflected by their "radical fragmentation of discourse,"(Williams, *Memoirs* ٥٢) which is best exemplified by the insistent use of incomplete sentences in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*. Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* is more straightforwardly autobiographical than the earlier ones; it is written during and after Williams' "Stoned Age,"is "an extensive period of that excess of privacy which is imposed upon a person drifting almost willfully out of contact with the

world" (Williams, *Where I Live* ۱۵۶). It was the period of Williams' sometimes total withdrawal from society when "his work was becoming more and more a folio of memories" (Spoto ۳۲۸).

However, as Savran points out, the "fragmentation of discourse, character, and plot" in Williams's late plays is not only autobiographically relevant as being "symptomatic... of a deep disruption in personal relationships, an almost staggering inability either to communicate or to share any kind of emotional experience"; rather, the fragmentation is also important within the context of American history, since it is "the mark of rebellion, the allegorization of the civil disturbances than being ignited on the streets of major

U.S cities and on so many college campuses"(١٣٥). Just as the incomplete sentence invalidates the accepted hierarchy of syntax, so the decentring of the characters, One and Two in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, i.e. the moving of the ex-centric strangers into the centre of the late plays, overthrows the hierarchy conventional society regards as normal.

In Williams' later plays, the strangers dominate the scene. They intrude upon the privacy of the emotional and imaginative flotsam of society and are quite flabbergasted by the unfamiliar world they encounter. Another change in the later plays of Tennessee Williams is that the strangers frequently come together to support and help each other; they are no longer

solitary wanderers, no longer defencelessly exposed to the attacks of the saints (as Blanche, Laura, or Alma were). Williams' increasingly desperate cry for solidarity among strangers can not be missed in such plays as *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*.

Since Williams himself asserted: "I write about violence in American life only because I am not so well acquainted with the society of other countries" (Where I Live ١٠٨), one can read Tennessee Williams as a writer of universal relevance, who "was a strong and continuing advocate of human rights, especially for individuals whom society marginalized or oppressed, causing them to suffer anxiety and depression, boredom and tedium, monotony and distress." (٥٦) To one's

mind, Williams in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* addresses not only the American society, especially where Williams lived, but all the societies, and he appeals to the social conscience of every society to review its treatment of its strangers, its "decentred and dispossessed" members, with their sufferings, anxiety and depression (Savran ٩٨).

Williams was an iconoclast; he raised his voice in social protest, however, not in the sense that he was a spokesman for an oppressed class but in the sense that his work focuses on the individual who is repressed and oppressed as a stranger by a society of saints who cause him/her to be swept away in depression. Since he himself felt victimized as an ex-centric outsider,

Williams, who called himself "a Humanitarian" rather than a social writer (Williams, *Where I Live* ٦٠), identified with the marginalized, anxious, and depressed stranger, and this is why he could say: "I always thought I was black"(٥٨) and why he "didn't mind telling people [he] was an octoroon"(٥٩).

In this sense, Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* seems to raise a loud voice in the current debate on the concept of a multicultural and pluralistic society from a psychoanalytical perspective, and he admonishes us that such a society should not only review its treatment of the members of the ethnic rainbow, but of all ex-centric, i.e. non-mainstream, people who always suffer from depression resultant from isolation and alienation.

He wants to tear down the wall of non-communication between strangers.

These themes as insensitivity and depersonalization, alienation and isolation, loneliness and depression, violence and death are often presented in Williams' drama through frustrated, neurotic characters who typically inhabit the American South and who are often helpless victims of the more unsavoury aspects of modern life. One of the significant themes in Williams' *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* is the problem of insensitivity and its resultant depersonalization. Often to Williams' protagonist, the world is a desensitized place where people are indifferent to the desires, needs, and sufferings of others. And because of this insensitivity,

resultant in consequent lack of communication and depression, people have become depersonalized; they treat each other more like objects or machines than like fellow-human beings:

Two: It never was easy for me to.....

One: To talk?

Two: As long as I can remember it was difficult for me.

One: To talk?

Two: – To put what I think and I feel into speech.

One: And even to look in the eyes of another person?

Two: – Yes. To look in the eyes of another person, that, too.

One: You always look a little to the side with a guilty expression. What makes

you feel guilty? Is it being alive?

Two: – I–

One: – You?

Two: – don't really know.(١٤٠)

Because of this insensitivity, and guilt common to all human consciousness, people have become depersonalized – a kind of depersonalisation that exists on such a large scale in Williams. In this context, anxiety, loneliness and depression are according to Williams but the 'occupational' disease of the American Existentialism – the tension between what he considers the truth of the human condition and the paranoiac

myth of his country. This sometimes in his plays renders the world unfit for human hesitation:

If there wasn't a thing called time, the passing of time in the world

we live in, we might be able to count on things staying the same, but

time lives in the world with us and has a big broom and is sweeping us out

of the way, whether we face it or not (*I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* 141).

Furthermore, this insensitivity and resultant anxiety and depression eventually boiling down to depersonalization have also engendered a series of paradoxes which seems to confront the unhappy and frustrated Williams' protagonists wherever they turn.

For example, while men are supposed to love one another, often they are malevolent instead; while they are always admonished to be gentle, only the brutish seem to be surviving; and while they are constantly reminded of their importance as human beings, they are treated increasingly like commodities:

Two: I think you're still in pain. Aren't you?

One: If I am, it's my pain, not yours, and I have the right not

to discuss it, don't I? I think a person in pain has the privilege

to keep it to himself. But try out the drugstore tonight and don't go

in there with a long face, go in there with a bright attitude and sit next to

someone that seems to have an extrovert air about them.(۱۴۵)

If Williams' character feels at all, then, he is confused; if he feels more deeply than others, he is bewildered, and finally despairing. He has no one to turn to for a short talk, for a little interesting conversation, and eventually no place to go but the limbo of depression and despair. Thus, the quintessential Williams' theme, the principal dilemma to be found in most of his works, is what to become of sentient people in the worlds in which insensitivity to life and resultant anxiety and depression, finally wrapped up in depersonalization, threaten to destroy them. According to Fritscher, 'Williams is a chronicler of the tension existing between what he considers the

truth of the human condition and the paranoiac myth of his country. His romantic lyricism pleads for optimum perfectibility of the individual in society; his neo-romantic jaundice, confronted with absurdity, subtracts from society his individuals who, confronted with social alienation, question shaking verities of love and God, life and death' (٤). This theme is so central to Williams' philosophy as a playwright that one can barely think of any of his works in which it is not heavily implied, persistently suggested, or overtly stated.

CONCLUSION:

The majority of American critics had come to identify certain elements in Williams' drama as characteristics of a "Williams play", and as this idea gradually reified into a critical paradigm, it created a set of expectations that were used to judge each new play by Williams. The existence of this critical model was acknowledged by Nancy M. Tischler in one of the first scholarly books on Williams' drama, *Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan* (1961):

By now, it should be clear to even the most cursory reader what to expect of a

Williams play. It will be set either in the American South or in a tropical country

On stage there will be a bed or a fountain: the atmosphere will suggest decayed

Past glories. Significant props will include lamps with rose shades or naked light

Bulbs, wine bottle, pictures, shrines, clocks, etc. From the distance will come

Delicate background music while fantastic lighting streaks dimly across the

Stylized stage (٢٩١).

Constructed with details taken from various early Broadway plays, the "Williams play" model grew slowly by accretion, and, for a period in the early to mid-١٩٥٠s, it seemed to work, but as Williams' later plays began to diverge from this model, they were judged be not "Williams plays", and were therefore deemed as vastly lesser works. This critical phenomenon, has

affected not only the later plays of Williams, but also those of Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee and Harold Pinter.

For many years critics investigating Tennessee Williams' manifestations of shame and guilt within his works have considered two aspects of Williams' life: his inner struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality and supposed abandonment of his mentally disturbed sister, Rose, who Williams says, was lobotomized in 1937.

But, what happens when an artist of enormous power lives long enough to amass a body of work that spans nearly half a century? Surely, the work will evolve into different forms over a course of a lifetime, and yet,

generating much ado and criticism. For example the late work of Samuel Beckett is similar to Williams' late plays, especially the collection known as *Dragon Country*, in its truncated language and reductionist settings, and yet, European critics have not devalued Beckett's plays as their American counterparts did unto Williams'.

Tennessee Williams has been a persistent and prolific writer of one-acters, plays that build up an important part of his development as an artist, and yet, often represent some of his best writing. The prominent theme in Williams' late plays, mostly one actors, has to do with the aspects of existential theory such as alienation, isolation, and loneliness, and indeed, several

critics have commented on such themes as expressionistic of man's guilt, his search for truth, and his need for faith, as well as the suggestion that man may find salvation only in love and sympathy for his fellow men. Indeed, Williams is a writer who was inherited a legacy of tension which he more often illustrates the extremes of this tension into a central character, and who, after an interior recognition scene, finds angst of his opposing values sliding into ripe paranoia.

By extension, Williams is an artist who has been concerned in his writings with the anxiety and tension generated in his South. "Anxiety", Williams writes, "is the occupational disease of the American experience;

the tension between what he considers the truth of the human condition and the paranoiac myth of his country has proved the matter of his four-decade literary career" (William, Knightly Quest ٨١). One thinks these tensions resulting in alienation constitute the underpinning motifs of *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*. Therefore, it was Williams' duty to search for truth and faith by exposing for eradication any imbalances which may hinder the optimum perfectibility of the individual and society.

Williams himself sees the artist's role as a willingness to show this tension- a willingness to name it up to a level of consciousness where it can be dealt with. He sees the violent exposure of this tension as a moral duty.

In the latest of Williams' vaudevilles, *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow*, the woman named One, suffering like Laura of *The Glass Menagerie*, but much more articulate, paints the small apocalypse of the isolate. Williams' characters experience such a state of intense romantic yearning, a profound sense of Paradise Lost. An epiphany is rarely possible, but when it occurs, Williams elevates it to an eloquent theatrical moment, sensual and powerful.

By way of summarizing, and from the study and perusal so far conducted, one can make a few conclusions. First and foremost, Williams in his *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* has dealt with one of his profoundly lived and felt themes; i.e., loneliness and

alienation which are expressions of the American existentialism of the time. And a consequence of the conditions of his tumultuous South. Loneliness is but the unifying theme of Williams' whole collection of *Dragon Country* and it occurs through motifs repeatedly developed in the individual plays. Secondly, these themes and motifs have been dramatically developed using different techniques borrowed from ancient and modern drama, such as soliloquy, internal dialogues, props and symbols. Incomplete, meaningless, absurdist language, all through such a type of tragic tension or rather a potential split within the characters. Thirdly, *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* as an individual one-act play is a reflection on Williams' life, and in

several cases is an expression of his own dilemmas and conundrums in his own life, touching upon such themes as the anguish of paranoia, physical and psychological disease, homosexuality and physical depletion, failure and lack of potential to keep on with the people around. Last, but far from being least, Williams has succeeded as an able psychoanalyst of the innermost torments in suffering psyches of characters he lived in or with, dramatizing the incessant, yet futile quest of a restless soul, a suffering psyche for happiness only really to be sought after in truth and faith, paradoxically in a transient world he rightly named Dragon Country.

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