THE ARTIST-Figure IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’ LATER PLAYS:
A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

During the last 20 years of his career, Tennessee Williams created in his plays a significant number of artist-figures. In his lifetime, and to some extent up to the present, both this subject matter and the aesthetics of his representation of it have appeared to many as proof of a loss of creativity, displaying a tendency to rehash and indulge uncontrolled dramatizations of his neuroses. This study argues that while the later artist-figures share characteristics with their predecessors in Williams' early plays, they are meaningful specifically with reference to the author's experience as a dramatist in the sixties and seventies.

In looking at the theatrical context of Williams' practice in these two decades, this study relies on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the artistic world as a field of struggle and power. It establishes an interaction between Williams' portrayal of the later artist-figure and his own experience. Williams' own figural position within the theatrical field, his perception of "theater people," and his disillusionment with his art consequent to its loss of cachet, oriented his practice, informing the image of the artist-figure as a victim, a "spaceless" and doomed individual. In chapter 1, I investigate the settings of the artists' lives as destructive artistic environments which reflect Williams' own. In chapter 2, I study their antagonists, those artistic agents who, in large measure, determine the
meaning of their art and practice in commercial culture. The basic argument in chapter 3 is that when artistic practice loses personal significance for the artist-figures, mostly because it is controlled by others, it tends also to become an antagonistic force.

The artist-figure in Williams' late work figures the playwright's own subjection to commercial agents. His artists represent his indictment of the commercial theater (Broadway) that during his lifetime largely determined the value of his art and his reputation. But, I suggest, Williams' own fiction about commercial theater, namely his unrestrained (though understandable) perception of Broadway as the normative theatrical stage, played a significant role in his practice and plight. Ultimately, this study contends that the significance of Williams' portrayal of the artist-figure lies both in the author's personal sense of his practice and in the context of the theatrical culture, both of which were in deep turmoil during his later career.
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INTRODUCTION

For most critics (popular and academic) the apex of Tennessee Williams' reputation and genius as a dramatist lies with his plays of the 1940s and 1950s. His numerous plays of the sixties and seventies tend to be ignored by most people, because almost all of them were commercial failures. In this sense, the plight of Williams' later plays is taken to be representative: they illustrate "bourgeois" ideology, which perceives commercial success as "intrinsically a guarantee of value," failure as an "irrevocable condemnation," and "a writer without a public [as] a writer without talent." Dramatically his later plays are assumed to be inferior to, say, The Glass Menagerie (1945), A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955), or simply as proof of his "decline."

Several theories compete in accounting for the perception of his later plays as dramaturgical failures. Their common idea is that these plays are too autobiographical, rehashes of old themes and characters, filled with unbelievable and unsympathetic characters, and they show a general loss of control of the dramatic medium. That Williams' later plays are autobiographical is incontestable; this subject-matter is intrinsic to his writing--for that reason, he calls it organic. But as Alan Chesler aptly points out, we must not forget that none of his later plays is "more autobiographical or more personal than The Glass Menagerie" (1980 56). Therefore, qualifying Williams' later themes and dramatic treatments as rehashes and uncontrolled, and his characters as unbelievable, may mean little more than the assumption that in the sixties and seventies, Williams intended to write plays in the vein of The Glass Menagerie or Cat On a Hot Tin Roof. It shows on the part of his detractors a particular preoccupation with Williams' neuroses, his personal problems with drugs and alcohol, and betrays a failure, first, to look at his later plays as products of new artistic contexts that saw the rise of new dramatic practices and
experiences, and, second, to acknowledge any change in Williams' own practices. Significantly, the theme of the artist-figure that runs through his entire work can be studied in such a way as to illuminate not only the shifts in his thematic concerns, his characterization and his dramaturgy in the later plays, but also his evolving sense of reality itself.

To be sure, Williams' later artist-figures have not been neglected by critics. For some, like George Niesen, who has privileged a purely textual approach, and thereby precluded either a subjective or cultural dimension, Williams' portrayal of the artist-figure has followed a purely intellectual evolution. Niesen takes *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) as the shifting point and argues that "In the earlier plays the artist cannot deal with reality, except by escaping, usually through death. In the later plays, the artist endures the impossible bind. He is never reconciled, certainly, but he survives" (1977 465). Of *The Two-Character Play* (1967), which he considers the representative later play about the artist-figure, Niesen says that it is "Williams' most intellectually realistic statement concerning the artist's untenable and isolated position in a modern culture" (488). Through the artist's survival in the later plays, he maintains, Williams dramatized "a cri de coeur, a plea for survival and for a place to be somebody...in a hostile environment" (465).

While Niesen's study makes an interesting point, it remains problematic. First, he gets entangled with *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969), in which the artist dies before the lights go out. His explanation that this is an exception, an "aberration," is obviously unsatisfactory. Second, in stressing the survival motif as the locus of the meaning of Williams' later artist-figure, it seems that he remains insensitive to the deep irony behind such survivals, which in any case does not apply to all the later artists. While indeed
some artists in the later plays—as well as in the earlier ones—survive, it seems to me that
the plight of the later ones is better described by notions of endurance and a Sisyphean
existence. Third, when Niesen barely acknowledges any link between Clare and Felice
in *The Two-Character Play* and Williams himself, one is left wondering how distinct
Williams' own life in the '60s and '70s could have been from the "modern culture" that he
supposedly was castigating through these characters.

For Felicia H. Londré, too, there is no doubt that in *The Two-Character Play* Williams "makes a personal statement about the artist in society" (185). However, by this
she asserts what appears as a basic tenet of the more subjective and psychological
approach to Williams' artist-figures in his later plays. For the scholars of this group, the
artist-figures are, to quote Forster Hirsch, just "thinly disguised self-portraits." Signi
Falk—one of Williams' harshest critics—says that Williams simply used the artist-figure
to indulge in boring rehashes of archetypal figures and themes, and in "unabashed
confessions" (128). Describing Mrs. Goforth in *The Milk Train* (1963) as created in the
tradition of *Princess in Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), Falk asserts that Williams used her
as an opportunity to explore his "obsession with sexuality," and to "vent his antagonism
towards females" (127). About the strain of "undisguised self-revelation" (129) that she
sees running from *The Slapstick Tragedy* (1966) to *Vieux Carré* (1977) she contends that
Williams wrote those plays only to "make money" (128), while at the same time
revealing, through the artists, "his tortured state of mind and a dogged determination to
continue in the face of despair" (128). Thus for her, Mark the painter in *In the Bar*
embodies Williams' "own deep suffering," his "case" (137). In Clare and Felice in *The
Two-Character Play*, who for her represent "two halves of...hermaphrodite characters,"
she sees Williams "talking to himself" (144).
Ruby Cohn⁸ and Albert Kalson⁹ offer two significant variations of the psychological approach, centering on the author as inventor. In her overall perception of Williams' later plays, Cohn stands at the opposite extreme from Falk. For her, Williams offered a new focus on the artist-figure by investigating his relation to his art, by probing "the cost of creation" (343). In *The Two-Character Play*, for instance, she believes that Williams reveals "a new self-consciousness about his art" by emphasizing the artist's "existential loneliness" in "a fragmented world" (339). In *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980), she contends that through the relationship between Zelda and Scott, Williams stated the "price of artistic creation as a human betrayal" (343).

Kalson shares much with Cohn and Falk. Focusing on *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, he points out that the portrayal of Mark as a "dying artist" evinces "a continuing preoccupation with the relationship and interdependence of life and art" (61) which he traces as far back as *I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix* (1941). Yet he perceives a significant shift in the sense that the artist's relation to his art becomes a deadly one. Kalson sees this as expressing "Williams' disillusionment with the artist as life-force" (65) and more problematically explains that Williams became "introspective and too personal" (66).

Similarly arguing from the point of view of change, Christopher Bigsby,¹⁰ like Kalson, underlines the importance of the relationship between life and art in Williams' later plays. Bigsby too focuses on the extent to which Williams' neuroses and "his self-inflicted wounds" shaped his vision of life and affected "the quality of his work" (149). However, he also reaches for a perspective larger than Williams' neuroses. Bigsby's concern supposedly takes into account "the culture in which [Williams] lived" (149), yet he does so only thinly, referring here and there to phenomena or events like the Vietnam
War (which he claims was largely unnoticed by Williams), or even more vaguely to the larger American society.

Undoubtedly each of these interpretive points of view, some of which I completely sympathize with, illuminates aspects of the artist-figure in Williams' later plays. Williams indeed continued to write about his old concerns; he remained personal in the 1960s and 1970s, and as Bigsby puts it, "the plight of the writer and the question of the nature of reality moved to the forefront" of his work (1984 131). Yet one remains unsatisfied, because by remaining abstract, by treating the figure of Williams as if he were a living monad, or again, by obsessively focusing on Williams' neuroses, these analyses miss much of the insight that we might gain by looking at Williams' practices and at his portrayals of the artist-figure as historically and culturally determined.

The artist-figure in Williams' later plays appears as a victim: a dying, powerless and fallen artist. I want to argue that this image of the artist-figure was more than the product of Williams' paranoid and neurotic fantasies of the 1960s. It assumed a referential meaning as a self-portrayal of the author in the new and complex theatrical world. In other words, while the artist-figure is a self-portrait revealing Williams' mental state, it also tells much more about the author's position, dispositions, and struggles within the 1960s and 1970s dramatic world, where he found himself in a position of relative subordination and marginality. Also, if aspects of the dramaturgy in the later plays sound old echoes—which in itself is not without significance—others reveal how the experimental theater in the 1960s, and the theater of images and minority theater in the 1970s, informed his writing. Elucidating his portrait of the artist-figure, we must therefore go beyond Williams' own mediated--paranoid and neurotic--perceptions,
however unavoidable, and encompass more historical and tangible facts in the theatrical context of his practice.

The present study seeks, not comparatively but contextually, to establish and investigate the sense of objective condition that oriented Williams' practice. For this reason, Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) sense of the artistic context of practice as a field proves useful. Writing takes place within a complex interaction between the author as "agent" and the cultural/historical context whose expectations s/he meets or frustrates. Taking this description further, Bourdieu defines the artistic context of literary work and practice as a field of competition and strategies. It is an arena of struggle between the forces (writers, producers, critics, etc.) that make it up: struggle to control the field and to determine the legitimate mode of perception and appreciation of the artistic. "The struggle for forms...is the life and movement of the artistic field" (1993 266). The artistic object evinces the characteristics--aesthetic and otherwise--of the peculiar field of which it is the product, and of the interests, position, and dispositions of the agents who materially generate it. Fundamentally, then, this study is concerned with the interaction between Williams' actual situation in the theatrical field and his portrayal of the artist-figure, in a kind of homological dynamic.

In chapter 1, settings and spaces will be key notions, and I will elaborate on them in the appropriate place. Focusing on the importance of artistic setting within the plays, I will argue that Williams' dramatic treatment of space reveals the artist-figures' social settings as artistic spaces, and present the extent to which these spaces shape their sense of reality. The central theme is that of entrapment and destruction. Referentially, this theme indicates the author's own experience of the sixties and seventies theatrical world. The relation between space in the plays and the author's own figural position is crucial.
In chapter two, I will probe the artist-figure's antagonistic relations with other occupants of the artistic setting (producers, actors, directors, audience and critics). Basically, the artist's relation to these agents is as a victim. By asserting their own reasons for existence, their own perception and appreciation of their power and agendas, each of the agents participates in the destruction of the artist-figure. How does Williams dramatically capture the artist's antagonism with other agents? What are the motivations of each of these agents? And how can Williams' own struggle with similar agents in his actual experience contribute to our understanding of the artist-figure's? These are the central questions that I will try to answer in chapter 2.

Chapter three focuses on the artist-figures' individual relation with their art—that is, the way practice involves the artist and his/her art in a reciprocal relation. The central argument is that the artist's relationship with art becomes self-destructive essentially because the context of practice (the subject of chapters one and two), destabilizes or alters the meaning of art and practice. On the other hand, art itself has its inherent destructive potential, and the artist-figures themselves are not without blame in their predicament. To get at the dramatization of these specific destructive relations, I will investigate aspects of the artists' practice, and especially, the different ways in which they attempt to use art functionally as forms of self-protection.

Overall, the treatment of the artist-figure evolves over the two decades that concern us, offering variations on the themes of victimization and artistic experience. I will argue that in this too, there is clear parallel with the changes in Williams' trajectory and position in the theatrical world as he entered the 1970s, getting closer to his death in 1983. We must take Williams seriously when he writes in his memoirs (1975) that "I am quite through with the kind of play that established my early and popular reputation."12
but we should also recognize the limits of the shift. Williams did not change his view of life. He still perceived the world as a place of cruelty and doom. What changed was that his referent narrowed, his mood became grimmer, and at the same time his dramatic technique evolved. He engaged a new and different subject matter that he explored, as Esther Jackson has shown, through old and new dramatic devices. The truth of Williams' later plays lies at the junction of his life caught between the reality of his personal and artistic situation and his stylistic quests, all in the midst of a changing theatrical world.
CHAPTER I

THE ARTISTIC CONTEXT OF THE ARTIST-Figure: IMAGES OF ENTRAPMENT AND DESTRUCTION

Yes, we—all live in a house on fire,
no fire department to call, no way out,
just upstairs window to look out while
the fire burns the house with us trapped,
locked in it...
(The Milk Train Does Not Stop Here Anymore 107)
Setting in Williams' plays is always a central dramaturgical device with both a dramatic and a cultural/historical significance. There is a distinction between setting and space, and both of them will concern me. Setting has a geographical and social dimension, always involving a place, people, and action. It "covers," as Richard Gill explains apropos of the novel, "the places in which characters are presented; the social context of characters, such as their families, friends and class; the customs, beliefs and rules of behavior of their society; the scenes that are the background or the situation for the events of the novel; and the total atmosphere, mood or feel that is created by these." Overall, setting connotes a sense of physicality, whereas space is a "wider poetic notion," both including and transcending the geographical. Insofar as it subsumes setting and has a larger scope, space or spatiality is a key concept for us here. And as I will use it, it involves the following senses: the literal theatrical space (the stage set considered technically), the space or setting within the plots of the plays, and Williams' figural space at the time he wrote his plays.

Studying two of Williams' plays that, to many are his classics, Glenn Loney insists on "their value as poetic records of America in the Age of the Great Depression--Menagerie--and in the aftermath of World War II--Streetcar." Indeed, in The Glass Menagerie (1945), the family house functions poetically as an objective correlative to the social and emotional states of the family, and as a window into the southern cultural and social reality of the 1940s. In A Streetcar (1947), the music that seeps in from off-stage indicates an ongoing social life (Bigsby 1992:48), and the train that takes Blanche to New Orleans and which later acts as an accomplice to Stanley Kowalski, allowing him to enter the house unheard and, at the same time, announcing his rape of Blanche, is a very powerful setting element, symbolic of the industrial North. But whether or not Williams' protagonists evolve in recognizable social milieus, their objective contexts are a
determining force and exert a destructive power on them. For Williams, this is a way of stating the cruelty of life.

In his plays of the sixties and seventies, the social spaces or settings of the protagonists remain central, but they acquire a peculiar contextual referent. Literally or metaphorically, the later protagonist's social space evokes an artistic world, an image of the author's own figural artistic world of the time. Typically, the protagonist's artistic world is a world of confinement, destruction and death. We see this, as in *The Two-Character Play*, in the form of the "environment function[ing] as the primary antagonist in the play." With varying degrees of emphasis, most of the plays that concern us verify this observation. Handling the settings with the idea of destructive antagonism in his mind, Williams often uses a dramatic mode that characteristically transcends simple realism and even his 'traditional poetic realism. In the manner of the postmodernists' use of the epic and other techniques to enhance their representation of the real, he employed gothic, expressionistic, absurd, surrealist, environmental, and other such theatrical devices to heighten the dramatization of the artist's social (artistic) setting.

Investigating Williams' portrayal of the artist-figure's existential space, my larger argument is that the objective reality or structure that forms the social context of the artist-figure's life has a bearing on his/her perception and practice. Beyond this, my concern is with the genesis of Williams' own practice. Linking the notion of space to the theater, Marranca stresses the fact that it "influences theater, not only in writing but in design" (1984 71). I want to argue that the sense of space that oriented Williams' artistic imagination and influenced his practice in his later plays has to do with his experience in the theatrical world. Therefore, we need to understand the theatrical context of the sixties and seventies.
1. 1. The Theatrical Context of Williams' Later Career.

As cultural products, Williams' plays establish a substantial part of their meaning in the theatrical context of their creation. What is more, by the theatrical nature of his art, his plays display a sensitivity to the changes inherent in or that impinged on the objective condition of their existence. His southern background and the conservatism of post-war America of the 1940s and 1950s (Bigsby 1992 38-39) contributed much--thematically, aesthetically, and critically--to the meaning of his earlier plays. His concern with social misfits and outcasts, portrayed with psychological realism and strokes of grotesqueness, made much sense to audiences living in a world seared by violence and intolerance of all sorts (for instance, McCarthyism). During his later career, with the onset of cultural and social upheavals, a new horde of contextual imperatives arose, shaping his sense of reality, and therefore his practice.

I want to lay out the general configuration of the new reality that particularly informed his later plays, some of its relevant characteristics, and Williams' position in it. With this I hope to approach the field in Bourdieu's sense:

This field is neither a vague social background nor even a *milieu artistique* like a universe of personal relations between artists and writers (perspective adopted by those who study 'influences'). It is a veritable universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted. This universe is the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe, who is a real writer and who is not (163-164).

The field is defined relationally. Its autonomy is relative because it is not outside external influences, for instance, the field economy (Bourdieu 1993 164). Within it, the artist's position is constantly evolving. The specific position that he or she holds at any given time depends on the degree of his or her legitimacy or power, and this in turn affects the way he or she perceives himself- or herself and his or her relation to others. Artistic practice itself is thereby shaped relationally. As I will show later in chapter 2, a practitioner's strategies for maintaining or acquiring recognition and power are of
paramount importance. The field of Williams' artistic practice in the sixties and seventies was the theatrical world in the peculiar way that he experienced it.

Introducing the last chapter of his historical survey of American theater, G. B. Wilson writes that "The twenty years from 1960 to 1980 are immensely difficult to understand."8 There is much truth in this. Closely following or reacting to the upheavals in the general culture, American theater and drama witnessed unparalleled changes. Theater activity spread from Broadway to Off-Broadway, and then to Off-Off-Broadway, and Beyond Broadway. At the various levels of performance, venues, and dramaturgy, tremendous changes occurred. There arose new theater groups, organizations,9 and practitioners outside Broadway and New York, that challenged the status of mainstream theater and fostered enduring new forms of dramaturgy.

The specific backgrounds to the new alternative theater are various. European traditions of Absurdism, existentialism, etc., fed the rebirth, in the late fifties, of Off-Broadway. Political activism launched Blacks, Chicanos, students, feminists, etc., into the practice of guerrilla theater; the plastic arts, music and various forms of art-theater inspired such practitioners of Happenings as John Cage and Michael Kirby; non-Western rituals and religions (native American, Oriental, African) largely inspired groups like the Living Theater.10 With different emphases, theater historians and analysts agree that by the mid-1970s the American theatrical field had evolved yet again.11 Though groups such as La Mama or the Performance Group survived, a significant number of the sixties experimental groups disappeared with the waning of the anti-war and the civil rights movements. On the other hand, new ones came to the center stage. Groups such as the Circle Repertory Company, the Manhattan Theater Club or the Playwright Horizon, and playwrights like Lanford Wilson, Terry Megan and Lee Breuer contributed much to the
dynamism and peculiarity of the seventies theatrical world. Various minority theaters—women, gays, blacks and Chicanos—also flourished in the seventies. Supplementing resident companies in the regions and the experimental groups, figures like Luis Valdez, Ed Bullin, Marsha Norman, David Wang, etc., contributed to the decentralization of American theater from New York. This led to remarkable transformations of the notion of theater in America, particularly with respect to the status of Broadway.

In the midst of this boisterous crowd of new playwrights, the established ones, the "big old dads," as Zoltan Szilassy calls the generation of Williams, Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman, and Thornton Wilder, were (and some still are) active. But for the most part, whether or not they tried to tune up, their voices were no longer the clarions of the day.

The fact is that, as Szilassy puts it, a "kaleidoscope dramaturgy" (1986 46) characterized the sixties and seventies theater world. In the face of this, it may be difficult, as Ruby Cohn contends, to "pigeonhole certain playwrights as typically Broadway, others as Off-Broadway, and still others as Off-Off-Broadway." Yet, there is a basic construct that, to most analysts and playwrights, stood for a governing objective structure. Always clearly noticeable to those like Albee, Schechner, Mamet, Shepard, and especially Williams, who experienced the complex theatrical world, were two large opposing theatrical or aesthetic sub-fields: to use current terminologies, profit theater (Broadway or commercial theater) and not-for-profit theater (the alternative theaters). To the extent that these two poles framed Williams' experience of the theatrical world, I will elaborate on them emphasizing their peculiar characteristics most relevant to his practice.

Despite their individual emphases, the alternative theaters of the sixties had common denominators centering on a rejection of orthodox dramaturgy and ideology. By
new theater practitioners, I do not simply mean Off-Off-Broadway groups, but also the kind of theater practiced Off-Broadway, to which Williams was most sensitive. By and large, orthodox theater means here Broadway theater, realistic and commercial drama. On the whole, theirs was a new kind of theater that, to paraphrase Richard Schechner, sought to destroy the assumptions of commercial theater. "The term 'orthodox'," Schechner further argues, "suggests a rigidity, stubbornness, inertia, and stupidity which I find in the commercial theater that takes all art as 'property'...[in the] regional theaters that see their jobs as pleasing the drugged consciousness of the middle-classes; [in] those university theatres that build monster centers so burdened with equipment that their students lose all touch of the art of making" (1975 35). No matter the group they belonged to (if they belong to any), the new writers sought to redefine theatrical and dramatic practice.

Led by Edward Albee, Off-Broadway of the early sixties comprised artists committed to artistic freedom--freedom from the psychologizing of the previous decades--and artistic innovation drawing on Europeans like Harold Pinter and Bertolt Brecht, the Absurdist practitioners (Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, etc.), and the existentialists (Sartre and Camus). In the seventies, Mamet and Shepard, among others, would continue this trend.

As its practitioners experimented with the idea of audience participation and immediate experience, alternative theater shattered traditional notions of space, dramatic language and structure. As they took the theatrical event to the street, or at least out of the proscenium stage, and relied more on improvisation and action than on the written text, acting, space, verbal language acquired a new status. On the other hand, developing new aesthetics that Marranca labels "theater of Images," (1984 78-98) and new politics calling
for ensemble style and more professionalism (Berkowitz 1982 123), the seventies theater
groups expanded the notion of dramaturgy.

Above all, the practitioners of the new theater were against the commercialism
of orthodox theater, together with the implication of commercialism as to the meaning of
production, the dramatic experience or playwriting. Initially, Off-Broadway was therefore
poor. Financial gain appeared as, so to speak, a sin. As Albee once said, "Off-Broadway
is a losing economic proposition. The actors are not in it for money. The producers are
not in it for money. The Off-Broadway theater simply has to be subsidized by the actors,
the producers, the playwrights" (Quoted in Berkowitz 1982 49). Because of its specific
economies, Off-Broadway at first did not and could not attract Broadway producers. The
"first major Broadway producer to venture Off-Broadway, Kermit Bloomgarden,"
explains Berkowitz, "waited until 1961 to do so" (1982 26). Whether they came together
to put on single plays, formed artistic companies, or got support from devoted artistic
minded personalities like Richard Barr for Albee or Ellen Stuart and Joe Cino, for almost
everybody else, their manifesto remained the same. It was a commitment to "release
actors, directors, playwrights and designers from the pressures forced on them by the hit­
or-flop pattern of Broadway [and] to provide for the public a playhouse within the means
of everybody" (Berkowitz 1982 26).

In time, especially by the early 1970s, the entire alternative theater would yield to
commercialism. Production costs would rise noticeably. On that strength, in the early
1980s, Joe Papp, a long-time supporter of experimental theater, lamented with much
irony that "Off-Broadway used to be the alternative theater. Now it's become the adjunct
theater." But for the most part, Off-Broadway was almost always the appropriate stage
for plays requiring small theaters, playwrights with modest budgets, and sophisticated
audiences (Berkowitz 1982 26). From Albee to Mamet, most of the outstanding
playwrights who started or came of age in the time benefited from it, and perhaps, especially from its sophisticated audience.

Up to the late fifties, it was still easy to identify the theatrical audience and critics, since, on the whole, theater then was synonymous with Broadway. With the new alternative theaters, there came new audiences and critics. Given the origins of the experimental theater, we can establish their audience in general terms: negatively, as not just the middle-class whose very cultural assumptions were under heavy attack, and, positively, as comprising all those who rejected traditional theater, believed in the theater as an instrument of social and political change, or were simply eager to discover new theatrical experience and aesthetics in new environments. Thus, besides, for instance, the political activists, the rebellious youth, the Chicano farmers who participated in Valdez's performances, we also had the academic community in colleges and universities. Furthermore, theatrical criticism enlarged its horizons. At first, experimental theater baffled Broadway critics, who therefore tended to condescend to or avoid it. Illuminating is the plight of Edward Albee and Ellen Stuart, founder of Café La Mama. Neglected in their early development by American producers, publishers and critics, they were quickly recognized by European critics (Berkowitz 1982:160). Often, alternative theaters did not seek Broadway criticism because of their rejection of commercialism, or because (as is often the case with the avant-garde) they generated their own critics or found them in academia. (Hence, as some have noted, academic criticism of contemporary theater rose with the development of not-for-profit theater.)

Also, as regional and Off-Off Broadway theaters became hit-providers for Broadway—or, which comes to the same thing, as Broadway began to use these theatrical stages as testing ground for its productions (Berkowitz 1982:171-179)—the mainstream expanded. To paraphrase Megan Terry (interviewed later in 1987) there were as many
theaters as there were Americas. And with this fragmentation, the critics and audience altered. Making it to Broadway was no longer the only proof of success, and different playwrights or theater groups had their respective (individual or collective) agendas and their specific audience. So, the "live or die" effect of critical judgment from New York no longer held true for everybody. The value of plays could now lie within relatively autonomous fields. Of course, Broadway critics and audience remained central to the theatrical culture.

Characteristically contrasting Broadway and Off-Broadway Williams, like many others, believed that serious theater was dead on Broadway, dominated as it was by commercialism, musicals and the comic plays of genre writers such as Neil Simon. The commercialism of Broadway was not new in the sixties or seventies, but the fact remains that it held much relevance too. During these two decades, it witnessed new developments. Andrew Harris writes that Broadway production costs inflated between 1960 and 1970. For Kenneth Tynan, writing in 1960, commercial theater had fallen into the hands of "salesmen, businessmen and gamblers," and Williams himself was participating in the game. Interviewed in 1966, Audrey Wood had this to say: "It would cost $125,000 to $130,000 to mount The Glass Menagerie today, compared with a little more than $40,000 twenty years ago." By the end of the 70s, the 60's figures had more than doubled. In 1971 Britneva alleged that production costs had risen too high for even the richest dramatists like Williams.

In reality, though plagued by commercialism, Broadway never lost its prominence or its magnetism, for many, including Williams. Also, despite the fact that serious theater was primarily to be found Off-Broadway and in regional theaters, it was never altogether absent on Broadway. By the early 1970s, Broadway had co-opted the alternative theaters
In the previous two decades, Williams' plays were popular (Berkowitz 1982 145-147). Not so in the sixties or seventies. Some of the reasons will concern me later on; here, I want to stress that having lost box-office appeal in the 1960s and 1970s, Williams particularly felt the devastating effect of Broadway. He summed up the plight of the artist in 1975 by arguing that it was "much more difficult to write for the theater now than 20 years ago." Central to the difficulty was, as he saw it, the commercialism that kept producers from "taking risks" and made them "insist on all sorts of safeguards" (Ibid.).

Overall, he felt that he had become a relatively powerless agent, and therefore a relatively easy victim of the production forces. In 1963, describing the first debacle of The Milk Train on Broadway, he averred: "I was rushed into staging it by the schedules of other people"--people who, it appears, could have been any of his antagonists: theater-owners, producers or directors. The passive voice in the quotation indicates his subordinate position in the power hierarchy. His sense of powerlessness grew over the years. Interviewed by Lee Keith in 1970, he took a historical perspective on his plight:

Everytime--almost everytime, at least in ten years--I had a play on Broadway, I seemed to never write a Broadway play again. There, you can be so damned vulnerable. But as you start to write again, when you've written something that has potential, there are pressures (Conversation 158).

Williams is a little disingenuous here for, despite his denials, he always saw Broadway productions as the measure of success. However, this rather moving confession spells the truth of his predicament. In 1975, he remembered with some pride a victory over producer Roger Stevens who wanted Tallulah Bankhead not Hermione Baddeley in the role of Mrs. Goforth: "I stood my ground against the mighty Stevens and insisted that Hermione Baddeley remain in the starring role. You see, I still had some clout in those days..." (Memoirs 196). Again, the choice of word and the active voice indicate Williams' disposition. Though we should not always take his statements at face value (he was prone to paranoia and often used self-pity strategically), what he is
expressing here in terms of the effect of commercialism on the playwright had larger resonance.

The effect of commercialism on playwriting and other theatrical matters has been widely noticed. In 1960, Kenneth Tynan (1961 370) lamented Broadway's effect on dramatic tastes. For his part, Arvid Sponberg recently wrote that "as the costs of production have risen, Broadway's ability to respond to artistic innovations and changing audience [taste?] has diminished." In his most recent study of Broadway, Andrew Harris endorses the conclusions reached by critic Richard Norvick who traced the career pattern of writers such as David Mamet and Sam Shepard: "Young writers who started their career off-Broadway or in the regions changed their style as they approached working on Broadway" (1994 109). In other words, Broadway taste commands a specific dramaturgy that at this level we can simply identify as realistic, comedic. This would explain Neil Simon's unparalleled rate of success in the history of American theater (Harris 112). Swayed by the criticism of his single-minded commitment to what some call "gag-infested" comedy, Simon attempted a new and more "serious" genre in the 1980s with his Brighton Beach Trilogy (Brighton Beach Memoirs, Biloxi Blues, and Broadway Bound). But then, he safely remained in the range of Broadway critical taste (Harris 116). In any case, these were not his biggest hits. Raymond Williams reminds us that though the market of commercial art is "sensitive to innovations, and must in part of its production promote them, the great bulk of market productions is solidly based on known forms and minor variants of known forms." In other words, the commercial market is conservative.

More than anybody else, Williams learned this throughout his later career. As Broadway influenced playwriting, so too did it influence critical practice. For Williams, much of what he heard from critics was that his plays were not for Broadway. I will
return to this and investigate the grounds on which Broadway approvers continually rejected his later plays. For now, I will say that they simply meant that they could not accept his plays aesthetically. If this testifies to changes in Williams' dramaturgy, it may indicate as well something problematic with Broadway critics' commercialism, with the reconfiguration of the critical world.

Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of its development, Broadway never ceased to dominate American culture (Harris 137-138). For most theatrical agents (producers, critics and playwrights) it remained the place of ultimate consecration, the pedestal favorable to acquiring nationwide attention (Berkowitz 1982 180-181). But the Broadway audience had changed. The general belief until the 1960s is that the "Broadway audience has always been almost exclusively white, middle-class and middle aged" (Berkowitz 1982 168). This was mainstream America. Though the middle-class is, by its very position in the social hierarchy, an ambiguous class characterized by a profound sense of mobility, its cultural assumptions and taste remained identifiable. Writing in 1986, a reviewer of Williams' Slapstick Tragedy (1965) perceptively argued that the problem of American artists with the Broadway audience has largely been a question of identity:

To playwrights of previous generations, the customer was always a known quantity, but few dramatists today have a clear idea about what this middle-aged behemoth is or how to feed it, and this uncertainty issues in a loss of confidence, an erosion of identity, an exaggeration of manner.35

In the sixties, this middle-class audience of Broadway began to shrink (Berkowitz 1982 168), and as Broadway leaders began, especially in the 1970s, to look for ways to attract new audiences--the other portions of the population--the identity of its audience became even more compounded, fluid. Andrew Harris touches on a pertinent aspect of the complexity when he distinguishes between "those who came to the theater ready to
understand every inside joke and catch every innuendo and those who were more or less uninitiated" (92). Supposedly, the initiated are the critics and the new audience, and the less initiated would encompass the bulk of middle-aged Americans who go to Broadway seeking entertainment or simply as a way of assuming their subjective identity as members of that class.

If Broadway remained for Williams where he thought he could find "the success, the rave notices, the pleasing of big masses of people" (Conversation 1961 96), the crucial problem remained that taking his new plays there, he had to cope with an audience that, to quote Harris analyzing Albee's difficulties, had been "brought up with a penchant to pigeonhole not only works of art but also the most intimate experiences of their daily lives" (87). Our discussion of Williams' difficulties with his audience must encompass the more essential cultural question of taste. By the 1970s, to most analysts and playwrights including Williams himself, the technological and popular culture had made it even more difficult to cater for audience taste. Popular taste had become more complex, even though perhaps less sophisticated. Williams expressed this bluntly by saying that "TV has made more and more an assault on people's sensibilities." For all these reasons, combined with the intrinsic relative conservatism of the commercial market and despite the Broadway audience's apparent complexity, its taste remained representative of the popular audience at any given time. Throughout the sixties and seventies, the plays by Williams that delighted it were his earlier ones, so these were the ones that producers frequently revived. Moreover, revivals were something of a fashion in their own right. Assessing the state of the theater in the late sixties, Spoto writes that in the season of 1966, "more than one third of the sixty-nine new productions on Broadway were revivals, and [played] to a considerable critical acclaim" (296). Revivals reflected the craving of
Broadway audiences for certain predictable types of plays and producers' readiness to cash on that.

Like the audience, Broadway critics changed in some respects in the sixties and seventies. They had become particularly powerful. The critic's power is a double-edged weapon which on both the positive and negative sides can manifest itself at the various levels of their relations to the playwright, the audience, and the larger theatrical culture (Palmer 1-17; Booth 19-45). By contrast to academic critics, or reviewers involved in the non-profit theater, critics in the commercial theater wield a far more determining power. On one level, their tie with the popular, large circulation press justifies their power. Appearing in the popular media alongside their reviews, and with the same power, are other popular press materials such as gossip columns, full page ads, interviews, and to quote McCann, "vapid and simplistic criticism" (xxx). Together with reviews, they constitute the weapons of popular critics in their own struggle for authority. By the mid-60s, as a result of bankruptcies or mergers, many dailies disappeared, but the big ones (especially The New York Times and Time) survived and continued to enjoy much authority (Berkowitz 1982 168). "Whoever reviewed Broadway for The New York Times could single handedly make or break a show" (Ibid.). On another level, though audience and critics tend to function reciprocally, in the commercial theater, the "audience is far more frequently guided by the critic, and not infrequently dominated by him, than is true for other performing arts" (Booth 19).

Commercialism accounts for a large part of the popular critics' power in the sixties and seventies. Harold Clurman speaks of a pervasive "manner of thinking about art--especially the theater--in terms of cash receipts, publicity, prizes, awards, interviews, which are all equated with excellence." If the 1960s saw the rise in importance of the media as a cultural authority, much of this authority has to do with economics: "The
underlying message of the media in late twentieth-century American practice seems to me to come down to the one inescapable motive of the marketplace ideology: everything can be made into a commodity and sold for profit. Bonnie Marranca interprets the relation between experimental theater in the seventies and the media in the same vein: "the economies of producing theater (much of it highly technological and expensive) have made contemporary theater court public praise which builds audience, and grant possibilities (foundations are highly influenced by the press) which help to finance new works" (1984 130-131). The heightening of commercialism significantly increased the power of newspapers. To a large extent, Williams felt himself to be a victim of this marketplace ideology. He came to perceive the critic as the most ferocious beast of the theater jungle (Memoirs 85). When he said in 1981 that critics were "literally killing writers" (Conversations 356), he meant the way critics contributed to alienate him from popular recognition through their reviews, interviews, gossip, etc.

It is convenient now to take a larger view of Williams' position and attitude in the theatrical world of the sixties. In December 1961, Williams vented his anger against Time Magazine about a statement that he had made earlier to a certain Mr. Kupcinet. He said Time Magazine deliberately misinterpreted his "desire to rest for a while and to work Off-Broadway until I have recovered my energies after this present work" [The Night of the Iguana] as meaning that he wanted to quit Broadway (Conversations 93). Only a few months after the denial, he had this to say: "I intend to work Off-Broadway from now on...I've gone through too many of these Broadway stage plays" (Conversations 1962 101). This time it was in earnest, or so it appears. In 1969, asked about the new direction of his writing, he answered: "I believe that a new form, if I continue to work in the theater, will come out of it. I shall certainly never work in a long play form for Broadway
again. I want to do something quite different. I'm interested in the presentational form of theater, where everything is very free and different, where you have total license." Typically, he kept wavering between Broadway--commercial theater, the outlet to popularity--and Off-Broadway--experimental theater, the guarantee of artistic freedom. This expressed a deeper uncertainty within himself about his place in the new theatrical world, or simply a feeling of loss in it.

Despite his admiration for Off-Broadway, he had never agreed to presenting his plays there in the sixties, but in the seventies, he developed stronger sympathy for the alternative stage, at least to a certain point, agreeing to produce his plays Off-Off-Broadway and even writing plays with it specifically in mind. Also he developed a particular sympathy for regional theater, for its intimacy and other qualities also. In 1979 he said: "A regional theater usually isn't too large. They have excellent equipment. And the people involved are more enthusiastic, and the critics not as jaded" (Conversations 318-319). On the other hand, as Glenn Loney rightly puts it, Williams' relation with Broadway was a "bittersweet association" (1983 86) throughout his later career. Refusing to co-opt its aesthetics, he nevertheless kept trying to produce on its stage. He dreaded the pain involved in Broadway productions, but found Broadway irresistible. In 1975, he wrote: "I shall not flay myself nor permit myself to be flayed by the anxieties, the tension, of participating in a transmutation of a written play to a Broadway stage. Do I really mean that? I must always wait and see nowadays" (Memoirs 247).

By the late 70s, Williams had come to feel that there was really no hope for him anywhere in the theater world. On or Off-Off-Broadway, he met with failure. Regional theater was not very auspicious either. For instance, he returned to Chicago—the city that launched him in 1944 into commercial theater with The Glass Menagerie—to prepare Clothes for Broadway. He also sought the service of Gary Tucker who had, a few months
earlier, successfully produced two of his one-acters in Atlanta. The results were not so good, but not bad enough to dissuade him from trying a Broadway production in 1980. We know the outcome. In his final years, he reiterated what, by then, had become a leitmotif, or better, some kind of a joke: "I think, I’ve been expelled from America, and I’m no longer in the mood to take it. I want to get together a repertory company with one or two American actresses to go down to Australia with me--it’s sort of like Custer's last stand."46

Always lucid about the spatial dimension of his plight, he wrote in his memoirs:

"Most of you belong to something that offers a stabilizing influence: a family unit, a defined social position, employment in an organization, a more secure habit of existence. I live like a gypsy. I'm a fugitive. No place seems tenable to me for long anymore, not even my own skin" (1975 247). He never managed to find a stabilizing grip. This, rather than, say, his homosexuality that the sixties liberality allowed him to feel comfortable with, generated his sense of outsidersness and spacelessness. This feeling marked the entire last two decades of his life, but, as we will see, in each decade he experienced it in a peculiar way.

The sense of space in Williams' later plays has a clear apocalyptic overtone, but this was in no way singular to him in that era. Synecdocheically, he echoes the cultures of those two decades. Behind the obvious apocalyptic strain in the plays of E. Albee, David Rabe, Sam Shepard or Marsha Norman, we find an expression, on the one hand, of the claustrophobia and decay characteristic of the war-torn, violent and rebellious sixties, and on the other, of the spiritual aridity or moral bankruptcy that marked the fragmented and "me" generation of the seventies.48 The peculiarity of Williams' case lies in the cause. For him, it is the theater world itself that stood as the determining reality, because he felt a victim of it.
The theatrical world of the 1960s and 1970s with its peculiar configuration (distinguishing between experimental and commercial theater spaces), and Williams' position in it, shaped his artistic practice. On one level, the treatment of space in his later plays usually relies much on opposition as the dominant structuring mode; more generally, this functions on the distinction between exterior and interior spaces. However, this basic opposition occurs differently over the two decades. While in his sixties plays the spatial dynamic moves from exterior to interior spaces leading to a closure, in his seventies plays the reverse obtains. The evolution of the artist-figure's circumstances follows Williams' own self-positioning in the theatrical world and his correlative perception of it. Notwithstanding this historical distinction, destruction remains the underlying spatial reality. Hence, the artist-protagonist is always space-conscious. I will consider each decade separately, and focus on individual plays.

I. 1. Setting in the Plays of the Sixties: Toward Closure

Williams lived the 1960s theatrical world as if it were a spatial entity that stood opposed to the non-theater world. His struggle against being an outsider was a refusal to quit the theater world as most wanted him to do; it meant a desire to remain active in the theater world, though he was never sure which specific field held a better prospect for him. From this follows the sense that, in his plays of the sixties, exterior spaces exist only as potential danger, pointing to interior spaces as the artist's "ideal" existential space, a space unfortunately also filled with the possibility of destruction and death.

*Dragon Country,* the collective name of eight of Williams' sixties plays, offers a general and symbolic sense of his perception and experience of the artistic world during that decade. "Two," one of the two characters in *I Can't Imagine Tomorrow* describes Dragon Country as the "uninhabitable country which is inhabited. [the country] of
endured but unendurable pain [where] each one is so absorbed, deadened, blinded by his own journey across it, he sees, he looks for, no one else crawling across it with him" (138). This is a country where "there's no choice anymore"; it is a country worse than the Terra Incognita of Camino Real (1953). The violets that break through the rocks in Terra Incognita would have no chance in Dragon Country. Flight is a characteristic mark of the protagonist in Williams' earlier plays. For the artist-protagonists in the sixties plays, it ceases to be an option. Evolving in their closed existential spaces, the artist-figures in the sixties plays project a Sisyphean image, waging a lost battle with absurd endurance.

The settings, within the plots and meant to be seen on the stage, convey the artist-figures' sense of entrapment and the consequence of this. How Williams handles this, and how his critics perceived it, will be of concern to me. In each of the plays under consideration, Williams developed a specific sense of spatial existence, insisting on different facets of his own specific experience and perception of the moment. Dramatically, he continually experimented with various devices, drawing from his own aesthetic well and borrowing much from both past and contemporaneous practices. Theoretically, he kept going his plays on Broadway. For a better appreciation of the variety of his experiences and changes, I will consider each play individually, taking a panoptic view over the decade.

The Milk Train Does Not Stop Here Anymore (1963) is the first play in which he put his new ideas into practice. I will call it the transition play. It has a long and noteworthy history. Based on a short story called "Man Bring This Up Road" written in 1953 (published in 1959), the play first reached the stage in Italy in 1962. The following year Williams brought it to Broadway. It failed, and then his troubles with Broadway began.50 He took the play several times, following numerous rewritings, to the stage:
Abingdon (Virginia) in 1963, Broadway in 1964, San Francisco in 1965, London in 1968. It failed everywhere it went. During its protracted history, with almost each revision, Williams' brought in his new concerns and explored new theatrical techniques. To most critics, the death mood of the play—a result of the passing away of his lover Frank Merlo and other friends and relatives—darkened the play. On the other hand, Williams added the kabuki stagehands of Japanese theater after the 1962 production to achieve, he believed, scenic fluidity. The play constituted Williams' first exploration of his predicament in the new theatrical world, where he now appeared anachronistic, passé.

The protagonist Mrs. Goforth is an ex-star in the last days of her life. She is not simply one of Williams' "southern wenches," but also an artist who has passed her prime and refuses to "go forth." Perceived in the new context of Williams' relation with the theatrical world, Mrs. Goforth's relation to the space of her villa and the ways she uses it are thought-provoking. Williams has always sought to make space or "spacelessness" and character inseparable. It would seem that he achieved this unity in The Milk Train. The visual and symbolic richness of the setting establishes an objective correlative to Mrs. Goforth's problem, and serves her strategically.

After her "fall," she retires to her multichromatic cluster of villas on the Italian Coast, isolating herself. Soon, self-isolation becomes self-confinement, leading to death. Exterior forces and spaces serve to reinforce the sense of isolation and contribute to drive the development of the action toward the interior of her villa. We have a string of interiors as opposed to exteriors. Geographically, the villas are isolated on the mountain top, surrounded by the sea, accessible only by a small path, and guarded by a thug and wild dogs. Scenically, we have different interiors and exteriors: the verandah versus the library, the library versus the bedroom of the blue villa. Philosophically or intellectually, Chris's book, Meanings Known and Unknown, establishes the knowable and the
unknowable as spatially meaningful entities. Mrs. Goforth's emphasis on the distinction between her public self and her private self reinforces this structural organization throughout the action. Her physical appearance which she constantly praises contrasts with the cancer within her that she refuses to face. The multiplicity that characterizes her attitude and personality reinforces the spatial dichotomy suggested in her geographical space. The dramatic setting, Williams suggests, must reflect this. To some extent the directors and stage designers managed to convey this on the stage. One reviewer of the Broadway production appreciated the achievement of what we feel in the text: "under Machiz's direction the present production is visually rich. Jo Mielziemer's poetic setting unifies and makes continuous a story told in a series of variously located arias and duets." Setting contributes to this characterization of Mrs. Goforth and the unfolding of the dramatic action. Plot and character, as Henry James has it, are indeed inseparable.

Spatially, the dramatic action unfolds along two lines; both stress the fact of Mrs. Goforth's confinement: first, Chris' progression from "out there"--Capri--through to the last recess of the blue villa, Mrs. Goforth's bedroom; second, Mrs. Goforth's resistance against his penetration to the bedroom. The beginning of the action finds her in the library, the first of the two interiors of the villa. From there she will recede to the bedroom when Chris reaches the library. But before then, Chris' presence on the verandah provokes the scene where, "looking through her binoculars," she exclaims, "I've been besieged" (19). Mrs. Goforth's efforts to "conquer" Chris dramatize her perception of exterior spaces (forces) as a threat she must tame. But this, we understand, is her biggest delusion. As an embodiment of the exterior world, Chris has nothing to do with her death. If anything, he simply opens her eyes to the reality of her interior space--herself (cf. infra chapter 2). Mrs. Goforth dies from her cancer, not from Chris or any other external force.
But the cancer is symbolic, with an accent of interiority; it represents the idea that interior worlds are dangerous for her. Scenically, that her death happens in her bedroom is not without importance: "He lifts her onto the bed, and draws a cover over her" (116-118). She dies accepting Chris's philosophy about the metaphysical unknown—which points to her own psychological limitation—as a natural part of reality: lighting reveals the symbolic mobile fixed to her ceiling.

When at last she decides to listen to Chris, their conversation quickly turns to a debate about interior and exterior forces, leading to a metaphoric statement of the central theme:

Mrs. Goforth: [Entering the library] All that work, the pressure, was burning me up, it was literally burning me up like a house on fire.
Chris: Yes, we—all live in a house on fire, no fire department to call; no way out, just the upstairs window to look out of while the fire burns the house down with us trapped, locked in it. (107)

Placed in the context of his philosophy as a statement about the process of life, Chris' words here capture the ultimate truth about spatial meaning in the play. The conversation takes place inside the villa, in the library, the last space before the bedroom. It is her entrapment, not the external pressure of work, that is the problem. With this remark, Chris pronounces what constitutes the essential reality of all protagonists in the sixties plays, and describes Williams' own problem in the sixties: "A new consciousness about his art" that he displayed by emphasizing the artist's "existential loneliness [in] a fragmented world" (Ruby Cohn 1984 339). Cohn says this about The Two-Character Play, but the remark is more than apt as applied to Mrs. Goforth, the other 1960s' artist-protagonists, and Williams himself.

Williams had always perceived the theater world as his "congenial home" (Five O'Clock Angel 1971 263) Suddenly, with his decline, his perception changed: the theater world itself became generator of death. The "jungle" is the image that he often used
beginning in the 1960s. Mrs. Goforth's ultimate death on the stage of her theater was Williams' statement about the theater as a "death-in-the-soul" reality. Her death may relate to the deaths of Williams' friends and relatives but, the death mood that characterized his life in the sixties also gives evidence of the newness of Williams' preoccupation. He had entered a new world where life meant "to live beyond despair and still live" (Conversations 1962 104), and existence in the theater world became a temptation to death. If only because he had suddenly become one of the older generation, metaphorically, Williams was "dead." But more, he could hear several voices asking him to abandon the theater world. The artists in the sixties plays are caught within "burning houses," as Chris aptly puts it. In The Gnädiges Fräulein, the fire seems to have caught the body of the protagonist, as she literally loses parts of it, yet like Williams, she will not leave the "house."

Donald Spoto describes the setting of The Gnädiges Fräulein (1965) as a "fantastically rearranged Key West" and says that "the cottage porch setting is his [Williams'] own house on Duncun Street."55 This choice by Williams is not meaningless, as we will see at the end of the section, but the allegorical dimension of the play calls to mind another referential level, that of the theater world--the field of Williams' own battle. This play stayed only four nights on Broadway. Initially scheduled for early 1965, its production was postponed for lack of funds (Spoto 292). The failure and production difficulties only reinforced Williams' sense of estrangement from Broadway. It was rewritten like most of Williams' plays, re-titled and produced in 1974 Off-Broadway, but with similar lack of success.

Evolving in the indeterminate territory between the two poles of commercial and non-commercial theater fields, Williams' theatrical and dramatic activities were part of
his search for a legitimate and determinate territory. For instance, initially jealous of the new Off-Broadway writers, he eventually came to admire them, both for their rejection of Broadway and their style (Spoto 321-322). In this, he revealed his territorial bind. In his allegorical play *The Gnädiges Fräulein*, he unambiguously dramatized it through the plight of ex-star Fräulein: she has nowhere to call her legitimate space. Staying in the big dormitory threatens her existence, yet she will not leave it either.

Following her fall into disgrace within the high space of European courts—an image of the Great White Way (Broadway)—Williams’ former legitimate "artistic home"—Fräulein finds herself confined in the small space of the Cocoloony Keys, where she engages in an existential battle that preludes any expression of her artistic self. The setting of the dormitory and its related spaces dramatize her spatial predicament. Her situation in the dormitory is utterly precarious; she has to meet the daily condition of bringing in a certain quantity of fish from the dock. Her interaction with the triple spaces that constitute the setting of the action—the interior of the dormitory, the terrace, and the fish dock (off-stage)—reveals that her predicament results from her being "territoryless."

When we first meet her, she is confined in the dormitory asking for permission to come out (228) on the terrace. The interior of the dormitory, we later learn, is the space of her potential death. The "Dark Angel" pays nightly visits to its occupants; and in there she cooks the fish she risks her life for, yet is not allowed to feed on it. In there, too, she is refused sexual favors, the reason for her interest in Indian Joe. On the other hand, the terrace is the space of her self-exposition, if not her humiliation. The first scene of the action reveals Molly mopping blood that she shed there during the night fighting her antagonists. The stage-like function of the terrace is re-asserted all through the action; for this is where the nature and state of everybody are made visible. This said, the Fräulein gains her right of residence through what she is able to accomplish off-stage, fighting the
coca
coloony birds for discarded fish in the dock. Each venture brings her closer to physical
destruction by the birds. As Gilbert Debusscher aptly put it, the handling of the off-stage
space echoed Williams' perception of the outside world--outside the theater world, that is--
"as a gray confused mass of menacing shadows emerging from anonymity."56

We get further insight into the Fräulein's lack of space by comparing her to
Indian Joe. Unlike her, Indian Joe reveals his power in the way he uses and dominates the
three spaces. He is the common object of desire for Fräulein, Molly, and Polly. The
interior space of the dormitory is where he enjoys the benefits of his popularity: he feeds
freely on the fish that the Fräulein must get at the cost of her life, and enjoys sexual
relations with those he chooses. On the verandah, he exhibits his physical charms and his
power over the birds that are destroying the Fräulein physically. He goes off-stage and
returns unharmed. Indian Joe's territorial domination underscores Fräulein's
powerlessness. And, as I will later argue, through him, Williams expressed his
predicament by comparing himself with writers like Edward Albee who were successful
both on and Off-Broadway.

If spatially the Fräulein is nowhere secure, the root of her problem lies in the
interior space, where existential conditions oblige her to humiliate herself, and require
her to venture into unsafe territories.57 The final scene clearly asserts this meaning of the
dormitory in conjunction with the docks. She stands literally blind, as a result of her
ventures outside, but as the boat whistles, "she assumes the starting position of a
competitive runner.... [A]s the third whistle sounds--the Gnädiges Fräulein starts a wild,
blind dash for the fish-dock" (262). The crucial question from this point is whether or not
she will return. This creates suspense; and eventually, to the amazement of the spectators-
-Molly and Polly--she returns. The big dormitory bears much of the significance of her
spatial reality.
In this allegory of the fate of the artist, Williams' point is clear enough: the artist will never quit the stage. Gilbert Debusscher quotes Williams saying in 1965 to the theater people that he had "no more blood to give" (Op. Cit., 71) in the fight to remain in the theater world. Yet, he would not stop the fight. Concretely, this means that he would not quit the theater world.

Williams' intention was to capture through his characteristic mode of exaggeration, the Fräulein's absurd existence in the space of the dormitory. And it seems that this was successfully carried out in the different productions of the play. Critical notices praised Ming Cho Lee for supplying "the necessary breakaway vaudeville set" for the play,\textsuperscript{58} and creating a "beautifully ramshackle setting of a Florida Key boarding house."\textsuperscript{59} Similarly, Peter Fulbright got praises for the 1974 production.\textsuperscript{60} By their effectiveness, the different settings allegedly aesthetically sustained the Fräulein's predicament, and helped characterize her world. Williams must have been satisfied, at least with that. But, most reviews of the 1966 production agreed that it was a mistake to take the play to Broadway. Harold Clurman argued that the play would perhaps have fared better Off-Broadway.\textsuperscript{61} Against all odds, and doggedly like the Fräulein, Williams took it to Broadway, knowing that stylistically it would shock audiences (Clurman Op. Cit.). But stylistically, the play's predicament only underlined Williams' own estrangement from Broadway. Conflated with his refusal to produce Off-Broadway where the play might have had better chances, this refusal highlights Williams' lack of "territorial" anchorage.

Perhaps, it is in The Two-Character Play that Williams dramatized his spatial predicament most patently and in all its complexity. Patently because the theater world appears in it undisguised; complexly because various spatial levels occur, realistically and
metaphorically. His pre-Broadway opening note for the 1973 production was entitled: "Let Me Hang It All Out." and so, it would appear, he did. Dramaturgically, using the play-within-a-play technique, The Two-Character Play relies much on setting to bring this structure out. The Pirandellian technique was the new note in Williams' experiment in The Two-Character Play, but it was not unique to him in the 1960s. The 1960s was truly an experimental age; a play such as Sam Shepard's Melodrama Play (1967) features the play-within-a-play device. And, through the 1970s, Terrence McNeally, David Mamet, Adrienne Kennedy, etc., constantly made use of it. In The Two-Character Play it convincingly fulfills Williams' desire to portray the theater world and his plight in it.

If in The Gnadeiges Fräulein the handling of space presents the artist's predicament in terms of lack of territory, here it focuses on the artist's sense of spatial loss and confusion. Clare and Felice experience the reality of Dragon Country almost exactly as "Two" describes it: abandoned by everybody, no one hears their outcry. On another level of analogy, unlike Chris' house, theirs has no window; it is all darkness, and what will kill them is the condition of the interior space. The outer setting is a theater building; the interior one (which remains incomplete through the action, allegedly because of the early arrival of the audience and the desertion from the company of the actors) is the family house of the characters in the interior play. The two characters of the outer play are the same, only older, as the two in the interior play. In the same way, the two settings complement each other.

Ultimately, the Pirandellian technique provided Williams with an effective tool to explore the notion of the real. This, Devlin rightly argues, led him "into a deeper appreciation of the artistic theme" that runs through his work. The accent here in The Two-Character Play is, as Bigsby has shown ("Valedictory" 1984), on the nature of reality itself, which is fragmented, multiple and unstable. What constitutes the real is
never clear in the eyes of Felice and Clare. As they move in and out of the interior setting, they cross boundaries of realities in principle different, but in essence similar. Therefore, the double setting adequately, in the sense of objective correlative, establishes the schizophrenic nature of the two characters, being, as they are, forever divided between sanity and insanity, fantasy and reality. The setting dramatizes the essential condition of the two characters, their entrapment:

The idea and sense of confinement are a central cause of terror and panic in the play. Both the house in New Bethesda, in the play within the play, and the theater itself of the framing play...are conceived of as 'cages' and 'prison'. The idea of entrapment is either the cause or consequence of the neurotic behavior in the two characters....

It is all a game of mirrors in which the different levels of reality, from characters to settings, homologically reflect each other, reinforce the sense of multiplicity, and enhance the feeling of confinement.

In the interior play (which is about their childhood), the family house becomes a prison for Felice and Clare, following the death (by homicide and suicide) of their parents. They become insane. Whether this is the cause of their confinement or a consequence of it is, as Kahn has suggested, difficult to say and unimportant in any case. Existential state and not causality seems to have been Williams' point. In the frame play, the same existential condition prevails. While on tour with their company in an unknown country, they suddenly find themselves abandoned, allegedly for the same reason of insanity. But again, the focus is more on their existential situation. How they face this will concern us in another section. Abandoned, they refuse to quit the theater, now appearing to them as home. Home here is a euphemism for prison; and it establishes an analogy with the family house in the interior play. At the end of the play, the two characters reveal their dooms and entrapment in the interior play through their continued dramatization of it. The interior play is a death play not simply because it centers on the
double murder of their parents, but also because—and this is the worse for them—it has the murder weapon, the revolver, as a central prop. At the end of the play, neither Felice nor Clare can use the revolver against the other because they need each other, but it remains with them, with its potential for death. That Felice keeps hiding it from Clare reflects an awareness of this potential.

Above all, at the end of the action, Felice and Clare remain prisoners of the theater building, with its chilling cold, its darkness, and its final closure as the only certainties:

Clare: So it's a prison, this last theater of ours?
Felice: It would seem to be one.
Clare: I've always suspected that theaters are prisons for players.
Felice: Finally yes, and for writers of plays... (364)

This, as Bigsby argued (1993 65), seems too explicit a statement—a characteristic that he believes marred Williams later plays; but it perfectly describes the reality of Williams' lived experience.

Kahn has judiciously shown that symbolically, the theater image itself occurs on three levels and metatheatrically explores "the theater as an enervating and entrapping profession, and ultimately a 'casket,' a 'vault,' a 'mausoleum' for those within the theater, and a psychological and cosmic metaphor" (1989 52-53). At all levels of their relation to the theater, Felice and Clare experience the same condition of confinement. Williams saw their predicament as symbolic. For instance, the exterior setting which he considers "the more important of the two...must not only suggest the disordered images of a mind approaching collapse but also, correspondingly, the phantasmagoria of the nightmarish world that all of us live in at present, not just the subjective but the true world with all its dismaying shapes and shadows..." (309). The setting suggests the state of the reality which we must all confront; for Williams in the 1960s, this meant the theater world.
We may establish the link between confinement in *The Two-Character Play* and William's own position in the sixties theatrical world by seeing the relation between the interior and exterior settings as historically and dramaturgically meaningful. The inner setting is reminiscent of Williams' settings in his earlier plays. It has all the ingredients constitutive of the southern settings in plays such *The Glass Menagerie*, and Williams meant this to be evident. It encompasses, he says, "flat pieces of scenery which contain the incomplete interior of a living room in Southern summer" (308) in New Bethesda. By positing the interior set as a small southern town, Williams leads us to see the outer setting not simply reductively as the North, or too generally as "society" at large, or as "a modern culture," but primarily as the new American theater, which in the 1960s had become his ultimate reality. The general or remote setting of the exterior play, Clare tells us, is "a state unknown," and the immediate setting "a state theater" (313). Through his double anonymity, Williams suggests that his portrait of the theater applies to the American theater as a whole.

Thus, while the inner setting could be seen as typical early Williams (late 1940s and 1950s), the outer is characteristically 1960s. By analogy with his historical development, the latter set is a fulfillment of the former. They speak to each other metatheatrically. In other words, Williams dramatized in the setting of the exterior play what he had suspected about the theater when, at the age of Felice and Clare in the inner play, he observed the commercial theater. In his childhood, in St. Louis, opposite to the Mummers Theater which gave him "really good times," stood the "usual Little Theater Group" reminiscent in many ways of Broadway theater. They (Little Theater Groups) were "devoted mainly to the presentation of Broadway hits a season or two after Broadway. Their stage was narrow and notices usually mentioned how well they had overcome their spatial limitations, but it never seemed to me that they produced anything
in a manner that needed to overcome limitations of space." Emotional dryness and spatial limitations characterized the commercial theater as he perceived it in his youth. This qualification of commercial theater clearly evokes images of closure, confinement, danger, destruction. If the interior setting predicates the outer setting as a portrait of the theater in the 1960s, the incompleteness that characterizes it must take on an analogous symbolic meaning. The stair leading into a void evokes an unknown territory. The missing setting, or the unknown territory thereby suggested, are to be found in the exterior setting. We must indeed perceive the two settings in their interactions, in the same way as the actions of the two plays interpenetrate and speak to each other.

The uncertain spatial position of Williams in the 1960s and beyond is a characteristic situation of liminality. Neither on the Broadway stage (the ultimate reality), nor on the experimental stage (the alternative), nor out of the theater world nor legitimately in it, living in a present haunted by his past identity—what Devlin calls the "acute effects of [the] mythologizing process" of his earlier career (1989-1990 7)—Williams, in the 1960s, was living in no specific world. If, as some critics have averred, *The Two-Character Play* is Williams' most autobiographical play, much of it has to do with the fact that it portrays the theatrical world—his new home-cum-prison, his own literal spatial predicament. Felice answers Clare that they have no home to go to, and as Julius Novak has perceived them, they perfectly represent the schizophrenic sides of Williams: Clare standing for the impulse to stay on stage and Felice representing the impulse to leave the theater. The horror show in which Clare and Felice engage was Williams' show too. In his *Memoirs*, he described his sixties' experience as "a continual performance of horror shows, inside and outside my skull" (280).

Williams burned more energy with this play than any other of his later productions. It opened in London in 1967 and was repeatedly produced through the '70s
up to the early eighties on Broadway, experimental and regional stages. Critical reaction always included the setting, so central is it to the play's construction and meaning. Most reviewers of the first production, it seems, failed to see that, as scenic designer Paul Stauffacher argues, "[b]ecause of Williams' heavy reliance on scenery as a mode of exposition...the setting must contribute to the production in a manner that differs substantially from its traditional role in the American theatre." To Peter Lewis of the London Daily Mail, one of the those who were baffled by the play, "it seems to be technique without content--or at least content obscured and muddled by sheer technique." For Brenda Gill, Jo Mielziner's "ghostly setting" did not improve the production. On the other hand, most reviewers of the 1973 production admired Mielziner's set. Clive Barnes, for instance, wrote that it provided "the necessary claustrophobic quality." The reviewer of Variety put it in another way: "Jo Mielziner has designed an exquisitely impressionistic, sparse setting and unreal lighting to suggest a feeling of sadness and inevitable tragedy." This was the reality Williams purported to show off of himself. In Out Cry (the Chicago version) Williams makes Clare and Felice welcome the dimness of the stage as death. This is unnecessary, as he realized, so he edited it out of subsequent versions of the play.

Pursuing the tragic pattern of the preceding plays, Williams concluded the sixties with another bleak statement of the artist's spatial predicament in In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel (1969). In the Bar premiered on Broadway in 1969 and played only 22 days (11 May-1 June). Ten years later, after the usual rewritings, it opened Off-Off Broadway with a fate similar to that of the preceding production. It is about a dying artist, Mark, who, having alienated his relations with his wife Miriam to pursue his art, is now desperately in need of proximity with her. Denied this, he dies. This was Williams' last play of the
sixties, and in an important regard, it seems that it speaks to The Two-Character Play. As if to clear the confusion—for instance, Sy Kahn (1989) sees a final peaceful resolution—around what becomes of Clare and Felice, Williams restated the point he had already made in The Milk Train that death is the fate of the artist in Dragon Country. Williams posed Mark’s concern with experimental painting as an image of his own interest in new conventions, and as the expression of existential suffering.

Here, Dragon Country takes the form of a Tokyo Hotel, at least on a primary level. The now familiar opposition between interior and exterior obtains here too. Both interior and exterior find several realizations, metaphorically and realistically. Scenically, the opposition between the bar (exterior) and Mark’s hotel room (interior) establishes the central spatial units. Metaphorically, the imagery of the circle of light and the correlative interior or exterior positions that it demands, find several applications. The contrast between “here” and “out there” also plays out significantly.

In the Bar has rightly been criticized for its patent discursiveness. (Williams experimented with Pinterian technique, adapting it to his own concern.) The sense of being in Dragon Country is more present—perhaps exaggeratedly so—in the linguistic space, on the metaphorical level. Images, description, and the idea of being in or out of the circle of light attest that the spatial situation of Mark is the source of his plight. His obsessive artistic quest has led him into a dangerous territory. "I feel," he says, "as if I were crossing the frontier of a country I have no permission to enter, but I enter, this, this. I tell you, it terrifies me" (19). Using spatial metaphors, Miriam is eloquent about Mark’s plight. "You know," she explains to Leonard, "it’s dangerous not to stay in it [the circle of light]. There is no reason to take a voluntary step outside of the. [sic] This well-defined circle of light is our defense against. Outside of it there’s dimness that increases to darkness. Never my territory" (51). The images of danger and dimness aptly describe
Mark's situation. For his part, stressing Mark's psychological state, Leonard says: he "lives in a private jungle" (41). All these highlight Mark's predicament in terms of existential space as well as they describe Williams' own objective and aesthetic situation in the 1960s. His estrangement from Broadway--Miriam's traditional circle of light or "normal" space--had led him into a "dangerous" territory, where to exist is to endure rejection, solitude.

The physical setting contains some degree of intricacy, though compared to the metaphorical level, it seems that it poorly fulfills its function. The geographical remoteness of Tokyo is insisted on, and it establishes Tokyo as another territory, an "out there" that stands against the "here" of the United States. The art dealer, for instance, arrives too late to be able to save Mark, whom, it is alleged, no air line company would accept to repatriate. In this "out there" land of Tokyo, Mark suffers. But it is less the intrinsic nature of the hotel than Miriam's attitude that deals the tragic blow to the artist. Understood spatially, Miriam's attitude represents the very condition of Mark's straying out of the circle of light. This particular aspect of Mark's predicament belongs in a subsequent section. More relevant here is that scenically, Mark's terror is dramatized by his fear of entering his hotel room, now filled by his paintings. The painting-filled room is a symbolization of the circle of light that he has created, or tried to create, for himself, as Miriam notes. Clurman draws our attention to the relation between Mark's circle of light and Off-Broadway, arguing that when Leonard says that Mark's present paintings are only worth a "minor gallery" he (Clurman) thinks of Off-Broadway.75 Was this not also an expression of Williams' own lucidity, or at least a dramatization of what he could hear people saying about his later plays? For most critics, The Gnädiges Fräulein, and later, Kirche, for instance, belonged in Off-Off-Broadway.
Dramatically, Williams' later plays were "the most difficult that [he] has ever written."\(^7\) Throughout the '60s, Williams' artistic ambitions directed his sympathy towards the experimental stage and writers. This did not mean a pure co-optation of the experimental stage but a use of its resources to "make his own mark"\(^7\). There were risks in the search; and as he did in 1953 with *Camino Real*, Williams took them in the sixties, hoping to establish a new legitimacy. This only alienated him from critics and his audience. His burlesque, black humor, pastiche of absurdity, etc., as critics variously described his style, became the "badge" of his failure. Did Williams make an artistic error? This is a more than relevant question whose answer will be my concern in the very last section of my work. Here, I want to note the reactions of two critics because they stress my present concern. Henry Hewes, an admirer, answered: "His quest for the creation of his own circle of light may be painful, but we will rejoice in his determination to follow it."\(^7\) Echoing many other critics, Harold Clurman (*Op. Cit.*) feared Williams' experiments had led him into a private world where most people could not follow him. His sixties plays had no chance of success on Broadway. This is an aspect of his plight, experimenting with "new" conventions. And the destructiveness of Mark's private circle of light embodies it well.

The Broadway production of 1969 stressed "the exotic quality of the setting," and according to Clive Barnes, the director managed to bring out the necessary atmospheric quality.\(^7\) For the Off-Off-Broadway production ten years later, the set designer opted for a "nearly bare stage," resulting in the emphasis shifting onto the language, the dialogue.\(^6\) Perhaps, this was a judicious choice, for as I have said, even spatially, it is the linguistic level that bears much of the onus of the play.
From the blue villa (The Milk Train) through the big dormitory (The Gnädiges Fräulein), from the state theater (The Two-Character Play) to the hotel (In the Bar), Williams offered variations on closed worlds—the basic existential space of the artist-figure. While confinement and doom are a common predicament, the various artists develop divergent senses of spatial significance within their closed worlds. Only Williams' peculiar experience in the sixties could orient his imagination toward such a portrayal of the artist's social circumstances. With a portrayal of the artist-figure's relation to space as described above, Williams achieved something similar to what Bourdieu saw in Plasset's Sentimental Education: "a quasi-objective representation of the social space of which he was himself a product" (Bourdieu 1993 173). Refusing to abandon the theater world (thereby implying that the space outside it was a threat to his status as a playwright) when his "public decline eroded his confidence in this world" (Bigsby 1984 146), Williams soon found himself in an existential space where pain would become the substance of his life. In the forms of failures and frustrations of various kinds, the two poles of the theater world occupied by commercial and non commercial theaters exerted destructive influence on him. Consequently, he felt lost and claustrophobic. "I have nowhere to go," he told Joanne Stang in 1965 (Conversations 110-111).

At the end of the 1960s, he could find justification for his 1953 statement that, "without planning to do so, I have followed the developing tension and anger and violence of the world and time that I live in through my own steadily increasing tension as a writer and person" (Where I Live 89). Much of the substance of his experience in the sixties, however, followed almost exclusively what happened in the theater world. As he explained to Rex Reed early 1971, his own personal problems with death, drugs, and asylum scarred his mind (191). This unquestionably exacerbated, as most critics have shown, his melancholia, and informed his artistic practice. But what happened to him in
the theatrical world remained a crucial factor. If he were in tune with the sixties, it is by way of his intense experimentation and his essentially absurdist and apocalyptic vision. In the early 1970s, he told his long-time friend Gore Vidal that he "slept through the sixties." In response, Vidal, who had understood that Williams was only alluding to his achievement in the theater world, said: "If you missed the sixties, Bird, God knows what you are going to do with the seventies." As it turned out, Williams did indeed attempt much in the seventies. What he achieved by way of the artist-figure's existential space is the subject of the next section.


While the sixties plays present the artist-figure trapped in circumstances that become his/her death-bed, the seventies plays reveal him/her either aspiring to or simply evolving in open spaces, exterior or worlds "out there." Also, while in the sixties plays exterior spaces reinforce and justify the closed nature of the interior spaces, it is just the reverse in the 70s plays. But again, this does not mean that interior spaces are happy ones for the artist. Whatever the reason for which he leaves the interior space, whether it is in an adventurous spirit as with the Writer in Vieux Carré and the Man in Kirche, a bid to recapture the source of creativity as with Scott in Clothes for a Summer Hotel, or to avoid certain pressure as with August in Something Cloudy, Something Clear, exterior spaces have in store for the artist the same destructive potential as interior ones.

The artist-figure's simple presence "out there" or the movement toward out there suggests a new spirit—a Promethean spirit as Richard Hornak says about Williams himself concerning his creation of Kirche. This means that he ceases to project the static and absurdist image that obtains with the artist in the '60s plays. The irony is that, despite his Promethean attitude, the seventies artist-figure does not achieve much more
than his predecessor. He only lives on, but perhaps this was exactly Williams' point: life must go on, after all; it must go "en avant," as he liked to say. The layout of setting in the '70s plays and the dynamism that characterizes it through the vertical thrust of the action correspond, in fact, to the changes in Williams' circumstances and dispositions as he entered the 1970s.

In the theatrical reconfiguration in the seventies, Williams could hope to assert his own legitimacy without necessarily feeling bound to determine himself in relation to any other prevailing aesthetic field. He did indeed experience some changes that he spelled out in Memoirs in revolutionary terms:

> Actually my own theater is also in a state of revolution: I am quite through with the kind of play that established my early and popular reputation. I am doing a different thing which is altogether my own, not influenced at all by other playwrights at home or abroad or by other schools of theater. My thing is what it always was: to express my world and my experience of it in whatever form seems suitable to the material (Memoirs xvii).

This revolution, Williams rightly maintained, began with his sixties plays, but in the early 1970s it took yet another turn.

Except for Kirche and Travelling Companion, all of his seventies plays with artists as protagonists are set in the past--his own past as well as that of other artists. Though aspects of the meaning of the past will come up here, this will find particular treatment in chapter 3. Like the co-optation of unconventional aesthetics, a return to past aesthetic form is always, for the artist seeking legitimacy of one kind or another, part of the strategy for achieving his goal (Bourdieu 83-84, passim). Surely this was the case with Williams; for instance, to his last days, he sought to write the "big play" that would galvanize and perpetuate his reputation. Williams meant, despite his many denials--the denials themselves were perhaps not gratuitous, but a subtle manifestation of his strategies--to return triumphantly to Broadway. To find the new and more personal dramatic mode, he turned to his own past and produced a series of memory and historical
plays. We may, as Williams himself and a number of critics have done, ascribe the return to the effect of age, nudging him toward nostalgia. Looking back at his past he could see but "segments" of life that "are separate and do not connect" (Conversations 1981 332). This meditative mood and stocktaking attitude inhabited him all through the seventies to his death. His plays of that period seem to capture each of the fragments of his life, from the thirties to the seventies.

The past experiences Williams summoned in these plays are ones that emphasize artistic lives or contexts. While each play stresses specific facets of the artist-figure's artistic experience, spatial organization in them evokes the structural division of the author's objective theater world: exterior spaces convey images of commercial theater and interior spaces the alternative stage. It would seem that, in contrast with his work in the sixties, when he opposed the theater world as a whole to the outside world, through the 1970s, Williams rather stressed his experience in both fields.

Insofar as the seventies plays are memory plays, like The Glass Menagerie, they share with the latter a characteristic stylistic approach to theme and setting. They are atmospheric plays; structurally, they are episodic. In them, Williams takes, as he argues about Clothes, much license with the handling of time, space and theatricality, with the purpose of getting deeper into the essence of facts. These plays are founded on the example of his Memoirs (1975) which in many respects illustrates Williams' new attitude and his stylistic mode: confession, explicitness, lucidity, elegiac mood, absence of chronology, etc., characterize it. Among his dramas, Vieux Carré sets the pattern and mode of the seventies, with reflection of the past as a central device.

Vieux Carré (1977) was Williams' first new play of the '70s. Its various productions continued the trend of failure, which was interrupted briefly in 1972 by Small
Craij Warning's success—a play written in the sixties. Set in a New Orleans rooming house, the action of Vieux Carré takes place in the late 1930s and tells the story of a young writer called the Writer. Its setting and protagonist recall The Glass Menagerie. Walter Kerr's assessment is accurate: "A boyish narrator, standing for Williams himself, picks up where the lad of Menagerie left off: he has finally fled the exasperations of life at home in St. Louis and, in his New Orleans attic room, is in the process of becoming both a writer and homosexual." At the end of the action, he leaves the rooming house and New Orleans for the West Coast world of Hollywood. Having accepted these facts, several questions may arise. For instance, why did Williams choose to focus on his experience in the late 1930s? What does the setting tell about the Writer's artistic condition? How does Williams handle this relation? And ultimately, how does it relate to Williams' own experience in the 1970s?

William Prosser captures the crux of the play's historical and personal significance for Williams when he says: "we must see the play's events as 'chosen' moments which represent the growth of the writer's consciousness, which is really the subject of Vieux Carré, its plot and theme; the education of an artist, an older writer remembering his younger self at a critical period in his artistic life." The late 1930s had marked Williams real beginning in the commercial theater world: "I put myself through two more years of college and got a B. A. degree at the University of Iowa in 1938. Before then and for a couple of years afterwards I did a good deal of travelling around and I held a great number of part-time jobs of great diversity. ...My first real recognition came in 1940 when I received a Rockefeller fellowship and wrote Battle of Angels which was produced by the Theater Guild..." (Where I Live 61).

Williams literally lifted this story out of his own experience in the 1930s because he saw a parallel with his experience entering the 1970s from the 1960s. Actually, he
addressed both his experiences of the '60s and '70s, the way the former decade prepared him for the latter, the way he entered the theater world of the seventies as if a novice with new hopes and new fears. A reviewer of *Vieux Carré* argues that the set of the play symbolizes the south and beyond that the world. In a more specific way and on another level of symbolism, the setting speaks to Williams' experience of the sixties theatrical world. Through handling of setting and space, Williams dramatized the two worlds of the sixties and seventies. The rooming house conveys his experience of the theater world of the sixties—the opening stage direction tells us that 722 Toulouse Street is now an art gallery, thereby drawing our attention to its symbolic relation with the artistic world—while the unknown West evokes the commercial theater of the '70s by the detour of Hollywood.

It is important to elaborate on the portrayal of the rooming house because it is used to establish the significance of the unknown West Coast outside, and by analogy, to convey Williams' perception in the '70s of the commercial theater world. With memory plays, atmosphere is the main and characteristic element of setting (Walter Kerr *Op. Cit.*, 30). In *Vieux Carré*, the general mood is that of disintegration and loneliness. The physical environment, the "historical building" with its three stories, its multiple rooms, its alcoves and dark passageways, etc., should, Williams writes, "be a poetic evocation of all cheap rooming houses of the world" (4). As the episodic scenes shift from one room to another, from the hallways to off-stage or the basement through evocation by sound or light, we confront images of claustrophobia, destruction, and death. The first words of Writer as narrator warn us: "in my recollection it [the house] still is [occupied], but by shadowy occupants like ghosts" (5). The action indeed serves us up to metaphorical as well as realistic ghosts. There is a bat-laden banana tree in the historic garden. The bats "hang upside down from it...from dark till day break," and
"when they all scream at once and fly up," it sounds in Nursie's ears. "like a—explosion of--damned souls out of a graveyard" (5). The grave image, an apt image for the '60s world of Williams, recurs several times: from her grave, the Writer's grandmother visits him twice during the action. Mrs. Wire has constant hallucinations about her dead son Timi. Death legitimates the play's morbid preoccupations. Jane is dying of leukemia, and at the end of the play, an ambulance rushes in to haul Nightingale away to his death bed.

Images of darkness, imprisonment, and mental disintegration reinforce the ghostly mood. By choice or for real lack of bulbs, the house is literally plunged in darkness (6). Confining in the damp and dark of the house (13), the occupants experience it as a prison. Nursie, the chorus-like figure in the play, intones: "Lawd, that woman [Mrs. Wire], she got the idea that 722 Toulouse Street is the address of a jailhouse. And she's the keeper..." (10-11). But with or without Mrs. Wire sleeping in the entrance, the sense of confinement remains:

Mrs. Wire: What do you all do in that locked room so much?
Miss Maude: We keep ourselves occupied.
Miss Carrie: We ought to go out more regularly, but our light bulbs have burned out, so we can't distinguish night from day anymore. Only shadows come in. (27)

The real reason for the seclusion is an estrangement from life. With nowhere to go and nothing to do because they have been fired, as is the case with Nightingale, or because they are not willing to do anything, these people live in boredom. Loneliness is their lot as they are severed from reality. At the beginning of scene 2, as the Writer enters his cubicle, he experiences "a sound of d' dry and desperate sobbing which sounds as though nothing in the world could ever appease the wound from which it comes: loneliness, inborn and bred to the bone" (16).

Deprivation is rampant among the occupants of the house, and has multiple facets. It is lack of human company as the quotation above shows. It is lack of traditional
morality as the orgiastic scene in the basement reveals. It is also lack of artistic success and material satisfaction. The Writer's manuscripts are constantly rejected. In need of means of subsistence, he must share his time between working for Mrs. Wire's restaurant and trying to write.

This is an environment that psychologically and emotionally seeps into the Writer and shapes his experience. By the end of the action, Nightingale observes that he has "turned rock-hard as the world" (92). Before he leaves the house, he shows compassion for Nightingale, returning, for the first time, his visits. Artistically, Jane's predicament as Tye abandons her when she discloses her terminal illness, inspires him and, again for the first time, "I wrote the longest I'd ever worked in my life, nearly all that Sunday. I wrote about Jane and Tye. I could hear them across the narrow hall" (95). Despite this inspirational surge, 722 Toulouse Street remains an inauspicious environment for the Writer. His grandmother's good-bye at her second appearance becomes a warning that he must leave (107-108). Soon Sky's clarinet sounds off-stage, an invitation to go West—to the world of Hollywood. But what does Hollywood hold in store for him? Spatial metaphors and attitudes conflate to play out the meaning. "I was about to make a panicky departure to nowhere I could imagine. The West? With Sky?" the Writer asks. The West appears as remote and vast as the "sky," unknown and foreboding. The final scene clearly dramatizes this:

Mrs. Wire: Can you see the door?
Writer: Yes—but to open it is a desperate undertaking.

[As he first draws the door open, he is forced back a few steps by a cacophony of sound: the wailing story of his future—mechanical rocking cries of pain and pleasure, snatches of song. It fades out. Again there is the urgent call of the clarinet. He crosses to the open door.](116)

Uncertainty is the rule. The West has potential for destruction. Sounds of death chime as loudly as does the murmur of loneliness in the house he is about to leave. Exterior and interior spaces echo each other, yet the Writer must venture, the surge of art
spurs him, and it is, as Ruby Cohn suggests (1984:341), elsewhere that art must come to life. Williams conceived *The Glass Menagerie*, the play that launched him in the world of commercial theater while he was working for MGM, on the West Coast. Perhaps, then, the Writer can hope.

The reality Williams sought to capture by revisiting the 1930s in the early seventies had a particularly significant spatio-temporal dimension. As he moved from the '60s to the '70s, Williams was aware that he entered a new temporal and metaphorical space that could be artistically crucial. He was ready to continue his career with new resolution. His 1972 play *Small Craft Warnings* was unanimously acclaimed: "Fighting obscurity for nearly a decade, the man some people have called America's greatest living playwright has returned to prominence with a new play and new outlook," wrote Jim Gaines in 1972.\(^8\) That people remarked his new outlook or that his plays raised new interest confirmed Williams' new sense of artistic being. Yet Williams had some qualms. Robert Berkvist compared him, then, to "a mariner who can't quite believe that the storm is over."\(^9\)

In dramatizing the harsh reality that makes up the Writer's present social condition, and in suggesting a transcendence of this condition in his venture westward, Williams had his own present condition as a model. Homologically, the space of "*Vieux Carré*--722 Toulouse Street, that is--is a representation of the mood that characterized the theatrical environment of the 1960s. Yet, it is not without relevance to Williams' mood of the 1970s. For, ultimately, the determining relationship that the rooming house entertains with the West Coast parallels Williams' own spatio-temporal trajectory from the sixties to the seventies.

Reviews, both negative and positive, of *Vieux Carré* placed great emphasis on the set and the designer's success or failure in bringing out the right mood. Unanimously.
reviewers lamented James Tilton's set for the 1977 production. "What was potentially strongest in this chamber-music play of time, place and memory has been botched by inept direction, wretched lighting and dissonance of mood," wrote T. E. Kalem, who ended his review hoping that "in some future production the sense of Chekhovian stasis...will be captured." This hope was, according to reviewers, fulfilled in Nottingham (1978) and at the WPA Theater in New York (1983). Reviewing the latter production, Mel Gussow argued, looking back to the 1977 one, that "a large proscenium stage as was the case with the original Vieux Carré" did "an injustice" to the play.89 Sally Aicre, reporting on the Nottingham production, wrote: "Voytek's set solves the changes between the many short scenes brilliantly. Set on the revolve, it is divided into three basic facades, joined by a practical staircase, and shows us the crumbling latch and plaster of the exterior as well as the interiors, as it turned, draped in the ruin of ages and former glory...." Though commercially they did not make box-office hits of the play, such reviews point to crucial artistic elements that in other contexts could have satisfied the playwright. Mood, indeed, was the issue with setting, and it was that which characterized Williams' sense of being in the theatrical world of the 1970s, and which he wished to see represented on stage.

From the standpoint of spatial sequence, Clothes follows from Vieux Carré. At the end of Vieux Carré the Writer sets out for the West Coast, the world of Hollywood. On the other hand, Clothes opens with Scott Fitzgerald arriving from Hollywood to visit his wife Zelda who is staying in an asylum in North Carolina. As it soon appears, the asylum and the North Carolina hilltop setting, beside being imposed as biographical facts from the Fitzgeralds' story, function as dramatic elements in relation with Scott's psychological state and his existential condition in the artistic world of Hollywood. As
Michael Prosser has suggested in his study of *Vieux Carré*,91 it is essential and relevant to ask why Williams took interest in Scott Fitzgerald's story. Given Williams' relation to the theater world, the answer to the question must lead us to a symbolic consideration of Scott's relation to space. In other words, Scott's experience of Hollywood and the extent to which his present position in the space of the asylum addresses that experience must direct our mind to Williams' own relation to commercial theater.

The history of the play's production is typical. After touring Washington where it premiered (January 29, 1980) and Chicago (February 26, 1980) where it played with relative success, *Clothes* opened on Broadway on March 26, 1980. It closed after 15 performances on April 6. As it turned out, *Clothes* would be Williams' last play on Broadway. Its closing left him and his artistic director Jose Quintero bitter as several analysts have variously reported.92

That setting is primarily a vehicle for portraying Scott as described by the title of the play--"Clothes for a Summer Hotel." Suggesting what Scott did wrong, the title conveys his ironical relation with the space of the asylum. The inadequacy of the dress for the setting figures Scott's difficulties in spatial terms. Setting dramatizes his predicament, subjectively as an expression of his confused mind, and objectively as an image of his difficulties out there in Hollywood. As Scott appears on stage after curtain rise, he evokes Williams entering the theater world of the 70s--the uncertainty, the haziness. Jose Quintero, William Raidy reported, filled the stage with smoke to suggest the ghost-like atmosphere of the asylum.93 Scott enters after dissipation of the smoke, but already we know that haziness will characterize his experience of this place in which he sets foot with high hopes. He arrives at the asylum following the "news" that his wife's condition has improved. His hope is to reconnect with the inspirational fountain that she
has always been for him. Her estrangement from him has had significant impact on his performance in the film world of Hollywood—"out there."

As he stands before the gate waiting for Zelda to come out, we perceive the setting as it passes through his eyes or impresses his mind, guided by the comments of the nuns. As in an Ionescoan world, the gothic-like door with its dark red color—as if "scorched by fire" (205)—intimates his confused, somber and scorched mind. Our attention is also drawn to the scenic division between interior and exterior. Pursuing the color issue, Scott humorously observes to the nuns: "If the objective is to create a cheerful impression, I would begin by removing the two of you from besides the gates." To which Sister one responds: "Oh, no, we must guard them until they are locked for the evening" (206). The gothic looking gate and the nuns contribute to establish the duality of the scenic space, which, metaphorically or realistically, plays out the theme of the play, and the predicament of Scott. It is Scott himself who, as he experiences the exterior reality of the asylum or expresses his view of Zelda's interior space, directs our own perception. The exterior space is dangerous, deadly, but this does not imply that Zelda's interior space is inherently positive. It appears so only to Scott; it remains potentially similar to the exterior space and reinforces the nature of the latter.

At their first meeting, Scott's and Zelda's discussion quickly characterizes their two worlds:

Scott: Work on the west coast, film work is very exacting, Zelda. Inhumanly exacting. People pretend to feel but don't feel at all.
Zelda: Don't they call it the world of make-believe? Isn't it a sort of madhouse, too? You occupy one there, and I occupy one here (214).

The worlds of film and insanity correspond significantly in the way they are respectively experienced by Scott and Zelda. This should not be surprising, for, Williams has always seen a parallel between madness and artistic creation, basing it on the
divergent courses that his life and his sister Rose's life took. He always thought, at least before the sixties, that he was luckier than his sister, as she was drawn to the world that becomes Blanche's at the end of *A Streetcar*, or that is Zelda's in *Clothes*, and he into that which is Scott's. But with his portrayal of Scott's plight he presents a gloomy view of the theater world that is little different from Zelda's.

By the end of *Clothes*, Scott surpasses Zelda's observation of correspondence between their two worlds. At the sound of the bells marking the end of visits, Zelda tells him: "The visitors' bell has rung and we can withdraw to our separate worlds now" (277). Rejected as both a husband and an "author" of Zelda's life, Scott says to the Intern who is closing the gate: "Hold on a moment. Maybe you can explain to her the advantage she's had in being psychic" (278-279). With this, Scott establishes a spatial dichotomy, implicitly making positive Zelda's interior world and, most of all, giving expression to his perception of the exterior space that is his, now, on the stage and, by extension, that has been his, both out there on the West Coast and throughout his life.

A few examples will prove my point. In the flash back scenes, we discover that Scott and Zelda have always perceived their conflict in spatial terms. Scott loved privacy and control, and he tried to put Zelda in confining roles. He wanted her to be a Lady. Being a Lady meant being conventional; Zelda found the role too confining and rebelled. The rebellion took several forms. Sexually, she took a lover who significantly enough was a pilot, that is, someone related to the most open space of all—the sky. Refusing to be secretive about their affair—secrecy evokes confinement—she thereby eventually alienated the pilot's love for her. Artistically, she took to dancing, a public art more suitable to her sense of being. One sequence of the flashback shows her entering Scott's studio against his order. Going public became for Zelda a self assertion, even the substance of life. On the other hand, for both her lover and Scott, there is danger in going public and being
unconventional. Exterior or public space becomes a leitmotif of threat, humiliation, and suffering in Scott's life. For instance, at the party scene he experiences several humiliations, first by being knocked down by the black singer on the performance stage and second by the "outrageous" and "insensitive" reaction of his company to his announcement of Conrad's death. Most of all, the public knowledge of Zelda's infidelity is a gruesome experience. Undoubtedly, these cases contribute to establishing a pattern that runs through Scott's life. In the present of his life, the setting of the asylum--the exterior part of it--echoes or dramatizes Scott's experience of the "out there" of Hollywood, and its meaning for him.

The effects of the wind, the cold, the humiliation that he faces by exposing the confusion of his mind, the rejection by Zelda, everything that makes up his experience as he arrives at the gate recall what he says about Hollywood to Zelda earlier in the action; it is a "world without morality": it is "humanly exacting." The play ends leaving him outside the gate, prey to the elements--a last vision, for us, of what constitutes his experience in Hollywood (out there), and to which he returns.

The irony that underlies Scott's hopeful arrival and the reality he eventually experiences also dramatizes the ironic course of his real life: the reality opposed to the myth. This might have been one crucial reason for Williams' interest in the Fitzgerald story, as Robert Dana suggests. Williams, he argued, perceived an identity between his and the Fitzgeralds stories. "He felt they were doomed from the start, and he himself was doomed. ...Like Scott, his early works were a tremendous success and then he fell out of favor" (23). For Julius Novick more than ever before Scott Fitzgerald reminded "Mr. Williams so strongly of himself." Williams indeed not only knew of his public decline, but had to deal with it at every turn in his theatrical and dramatic experience.
In *Clothes*, therefore, as Dana further notes, Williams "plays off the legend the Fitzgeralds have become against the often pathetic and brittle confusion of their actual lives" (23). The action here, unlike in *The Glass Menagerie* or *Vieux Carré*, where it takes place in the memory of the protagonists, occurs in the minds of his fellow Americans—who know and live by the myth (Dana 24). Focusing on what the actual lives of the Fitzgeralds "were," Williams meant to draw attention to his own actual experience, that which his own myth, he thought, prevented people from seeing. Consequently, Scott's experience of the exterior condition of the asylum, his endurance and his final plight bring to mind Williams' own experience both with *Clothes* and with his various endeavors to stay "active" on the stage. Everybody, from producer Eliott Martin who "went on stage to ask the audience to send their friends" (Kakutani 1980 1) to Williams himself who put up $20,000 to extend the play's run for a week (Kakutani *Ibid.* D 7), did what they could to salvage the play, but in vain. Williams would say after its closing: "Every play represents to me my life.... But I had greater emotional investment in this one, you know. I'm 69 years old and I thought this was my last chance to do a play on Broadway. But it didn't work, it just didn't work" (*Ibid.* D 7). Williams could well have said similar things about his experience with a play such as *Small Craft Warnings* or with *The Two-Character Play*. To these, I will return in a later chapter.

On the whole, Williams' own experience reveals an analogy with Scott's. Just as Scott needed his wife to keep himself artistically active in the West Coast, Williams felt he had to produce his plays for the same reasons. Yet, what an excruciating task! Scott's world is nightmarish; it is a world that Williams insisted on calling ghost-like and which undoubtedly was in the image of his own perception of the theater world. That world stood in his eyes as a "jungle," a place where humiliating other people is not only current but occurs naturally. Reviewers of the Broadway production differed on the
effectiveness of the scene design. William A. Raidy wrote: "so many of the effects, fog swirling across Oliver Smith's windswept setting, nuns enveloping the play's characters in their almost bat-like skirts and buzzers piercing the air only add further confusion to the play." On the other hand, John Simon, who did not like the play, found Smith's "scenery nicely evocative." So did Walter Kerr of the New York Times and Douglas Watt of The Daily News. Whatever the case, the crucial fact remains, as Hilton Allison put it, that "the asylum serves as an appropriate setting for the mixture of realistic and expressionistic scenes which comprise the play." With this mixture, Williams sought to capture the mood of his experience, through the Fitzgerald story, of his own experience in the commercial theater world.

Commercial theater is also the context in Something Cloudy, Something Clear, Williams' last, and as yet unpublished, play to open in New York (1981).--Off-Off-Broadway. It too is a memory play, and biographically, the time span it covers follows straight from that of Vieux Carré. The action takes place in the summer of 1940, an important period in the development of Williams' career. August, the protagonist, relives his arrival (from the West Coast?) forty years earlier on the New England Coast, hiding from theater producers, to revise his first Broadway play. As most critics have perceived, this is a representation by Williams of his own experience in the summer of 1940, revising Battle of Angels. Chronologically, the play traces his experience after his employment by MGM, as he was working on Battle of Angels in Provincetown. August's experience is a sequel to the Writer's in Vieux Carré; the setting is therefore naturally an exterior space. Williams chose to remember this portion of his past because it highlights an aspect of his present life in the 1970s.
The setting is the beach of the New England seacoast. It is single yet composite: a turbulent sea, "a stretch of golden summer dunes...the fair sky above it...one remaining room of a beach cottage, and the remaining floor of some other room blown or washed away which provides a platform for the two characters who are dance-like students, Kip and Clare." Temporally, it is no less complex. "The remnants of the beach cottage are like the remnants of the time 'Not Now'; and now and then slight changes must suggest the 'faint intrusions of Now.'" The setting has a certain ghostliness, an intimation of the dream-like quality inherent in memories and the nature of the characters, "all being ghosts even though some of them are still living" (13). Dramatically, Williams intended this single but complex setting to be, as in, say, The Two-Character Play, doubly evocative or multivalent. Symbolically, it suggests past and present times, layers of reality. Meeting with August for the first time, Clare comments that "he is not as destitute as the shack looks" (22) drawing our attention to the significance of the setting element that his shack is. Reality here is multiple; so, whatever relation we can establish between August (we have two Augusts) and his physical environment must lead us in several directions.

For young August the dilapidated state of the setting, its foreboding nature, etc., intimates the harsh reality of confronting Broadway. Clare says: "he's going through a terrible crisis in his life, I mean his first Broadway play production" (7). The dangers he faces on the beach dramatize those inherent in the commercial theater world which he seeks to enter. Physically dilapidated, the shack offers August no adequate protection against the rain which, when it comes, constitutes here, as it does in Vieux Carre, a menace to his manuscripts, nor against pernicious human actions. One of August's main concerns is that someone might steal his typewriter, robbing him of his reason for existence in the theater world. In reality Williams did experience situations where his
manuscripts were stolen, especially in his Key West house. And for Williams this had a symbolical meaning; it expressed the desire of the theater people, relentlessly pursuing him, to expel him from the field.

For the August who revisits or who is invaded by these images of his anterior plight (later Williams, that is), they evoke those of his present condition. The time 'Not Now' corresponds in mood and reality to the time 'Now' that it eclipses: the mirror game initiated in The Two-Character Play continues. In other words, as Michael Prosser says of Williams' relation to Vieux Carré, older August or later Williams "chose" to remember those particular events because of their similarity with those of their present lives. We get this through several processes of symbolization. The spatio-temporal reality of the past symbolizes the present, subverting the sense of reality only to assert certain salient facts. The author writes that "the time that is now in the play never actually occurs in the play except as a mood" (13). On the same page, when Clare presents the fake identity card to Kip, his reaction is: "It looks like a good copy." Fiction or appearance may stand for reality. For old August as well, fiction or else the past appears more true, clearer than reality itself, the present. The visionary symbolism in the title of the play is simply a translation of older August's perception of his present reality (cloudy) and his past (clearer). In chapter 3, I will show that there are dangers involved in living in the past, and for that matter, in letting it invade the present. Here, I want to stress that Kip and August highlight their present difficulties, which they experience in spatial terms. As Kip cannot find a proper physical space to perform his private art, so too, August's predicament is that he wants to mount his plays on a Broadway stage.

August's relation to the temporal sequences of the past and present has a ring of irony but perfectly captures a crucial aspect of Williams' situation in the later part of his career. His past achievements, as I will show in a future section, on Broadway became the
measure for assessing his present endeavors. His past artistic identity became more real than the present one. Williams knew that when people referred to him as the greatest living American dramatist, they were referring only to his earlier achievements. Whether Williams eventually came to believe in his being anachronistic or he was simply lucid about it, is difficult to say. In any case, we cannot discount the effect of his unconscious, asit also necessarily shapes our social or artistic practices. Williams' complaint after the failure of Clothes had deeper echoes than the immediate frustration. When August says that "at this moment I [exist] only to remember," it is Williams himself summarizing his plight in the theater world of the '70s. Both the mood of resignation, despondency, and his feeling of estrangement come out in August's poetic assessment of his predicament in spatial terms: "It's enough," he says, "to reconcile you (sic) to exile, at last to the dark side of the moon or to the unfathomable dark hole in space" (23). For most theater people, Williams' artistic identity was somewhere other than in the present; it was locked up in the temporal reality of the '40s and '50s. Williams' own renewed interest in his past would seem to confirm this.106

Just as in The Gnädiges Fräulein, moral dryness characterizes the commercial theater world of young August. Clare reminds him that it is naive of him to expect people to understand him, or to be honest with him.107 On the whole, setting in Something Cloudy is both physically and morally filled with images of threat, destruction and death. These describe Williams' position in the commercial theater of the '70s and early '80s, and reflect his perception of his fate in it. To close the play, Williams finds it necessary to recapitulate these images of destruction and death in a sort of tableau. Kip tosses the gull's skeleton onto August. (This has larger resonances that I will take up in exploring the destructive power of art.) The Victrola, a symbol of August's link to the past, runs down, and the surf booms. To link all these, August "picks up the gull's
skeleton and turns it slowly, studiously before him as the surf drowns the music and the stage dims slowly out" (12).

Most reviewers tended to agree with Frank Rich when, comparing it to *Vieux Carré* and *Clothes*, he said that the play offered "far more promise." The setting element seemed to have passed unnoticed; mostly reviewers insisted, instead, on the way past and present merged in the theatrics of "fade out and fade in" as Walter Kerr put it. Yet in many regards, the setting here is, as in Williams' other memory or non-memory plays such as *Kirche*, an essential element, and it is a product of the new condition of his later career. *Something Cloudy* premiered Off-Off-Broadway, at the Bowerie Lane Theater (24 Aug. 1981-13 March 1982); this itself is an indication of Williams' new position in the theatrical world of the '70s and early '80s.

He wrote *Kirche, Kuchen und Kinder* with Off-Off-Broadway particularly in mind, as we will see. Alternative theater, except in its Off-Broadway form, is essentially a 1960s and later period phenomenon; Williams could therefore not have had an experience with it before then. Perhaps because of that, the creation of *Kirche* stopped the line of memory plays. In its stead, Williams resorted to parody and farce, two devices with which he was already familiar as, for instance *The Gnädiges Fräulein* shows, and with which he purported to pursue his investigation of the essential reality of the theater world. The choice of this mode also reveals a facet of Williams' new attitude toward reality. Realizing that he had to accept being in "exile in the hole," as he has August say in *Something Cloudy*, he became amused, laughing at himself. In his memoirs, he observed that "Laughter has always been my substitute for lamentation and I laugh as loudly as I would lament if I hadn't discovered a useful substitute for weeping" (1975 xvii). In *Kirche*, behind the veneer of farce and humor, we can perceive his laments. At this point, Williams revealed a breach in his admiration for alternative theater, at least in theory.
their common rejection of commercial theater, members and sympathizers of the avant-garde may temporarily unite (Bourdieu 1993 66). Here, we may say that Williams temporarily united with commercial critics, but ironically so. For, he took their perspective simply to laugh at them. Critic Richard W. Hornak saw this well, characterizing Williams' motives as "a private joke for the public and critical vultures who have feasted in one form or another for years on other more 'serious' endeavors."110 This said, we must not forget that Williams never accepted the alternative stage wholeheartedly. Thus, in Kirche, we also have glimpses of his actual laments about Off-Off-Broadway.

Kirche has had one production Off-Off-Broadway at the Jean Cocteau Theater in September 1979. Sequentially, it comes before the preceding play, but for the present purpose, it belongs in the order presented here. Those who felt in 1965 that it had been a misjudgment on Williams' part to produce The Gnädiges Fräulein on Broadway, most certainly found satisfaction in the choice of venue for Kirche which it resembles in so many ways: they share German overtones as is evident in their respective titles. Fräulein reappears in Kirche aged 99; and in the two plays Williams used parodic and farcical devices. We have indications that Williams conceived Kirche as an Off-Off-Broadway play, as when he says, in describing Miss Rose: "since she may appear later (Off-Off-Broadway economics must be considered) she should be heavily veiled" (2). Boxill accounts for the stylistic choices here solely as an expression of "Williams's 'plastic' or cinematic stagcraft" (1987 163). This discounts the significance of the 1970s dramatic context. Off-Off-Broadway is inscribed in the play stylistically, thematically, as well as spatially.

On the surface, this "unpublished black comedy," as Drewey Gunn has it, is "about a New York bustler and his family" (1991 68). But there is more to this play than
that. The Man, the protagonist, is, besides being a hustler, an ex-writer for the theater, another of Williams' self-portraits in the later part of his career. The Man boasts some critical awards, and some failed production in Boston--perhaps *Battle of Angels* or *The Red Devil Battery*. At the beginning of the action, we see him in his family house in SoHo, lower Manhattan, living out his "voluntary retirement." At the end of the action, he prepares to go back uptown to his former profession as hustler or a writer. The two spaces, the family house in SoHo (lower Manhattan) and Uptown Manhattan, recall the two artistic worlds of experimental and commercial theaters. As in the preceding plays, Williams establishes these two spaces by a process of contrast: "in here" and "out there"; "on" and "off-stage." Scenically, contrast also determines several other oppositional spaces: the kirche (for church) versus the küchen (misspelled kutchén in the text, Spoto [375] reminds us, for kitchen); and on the other hand, the kirche versus the Lutheran church. The reality of the Lutheran church, the father's church, comes out through both verbal evocation and the persons of the Wife and her father.

Heightened by farce and burlesque, spatial handling and metaphors reveal numerous facets of the frustrations that, through experience and observation, Williams endured on the alternative stage. Williams collapsed the interval between his disillusionment with the alternative theater and his ultimate rejection of it; this resulted in the action moving, as in *Vieux Carré*, from interior space (Off-Off-Broadway stage) to an exterior one unambiguously identified as Broadway. But by now we know what Broadway represents for the artist-figure; consequently we can predict the result of the venture—which he does allow us to see, directly at least--into that world. I will point out a few examples of the Man's spatial predicament. More will appear topically in subsequent sections.
When the Man retires and decides to establish himself in the SoHo section of Manhattan his move is solely strategic. He insists that his retirement was voluntary, and he refuses to be called an Ex-(dramatist). Similarly, when Williams felt rejected as a Broadway writer, he voluntarily decided to stop writing for Broadway and strategically began to look toward the experimental stage: "I find that my great happiness now is not on Broadway but Off- and Off-Off-Broadway." There is no doubt that Williams intended to maintain his sympathy for the experimental stage till, as the Man puts it, "he's evicted by--the expiration of his lease on personal--existence..." In March 1977, asked by High School students what his advice to new playwrights was, he answered: "take your play to Joe Papp." However, like the Man, experience soon revealed that the alternative theatrical world was not a happy home for him.

The specific ways in which the Man uses his "talent" as an artist--a scene designer, an actor, or a playwright--fall under a later thematic concern in my work. Here I want to stress that religious stereotyping helped Williams to further debunk the alternative stage, at least his experience in it. The Man meant his kirche to be a place of intellection and meditation on beauty and life. The idealism with which he associates the kirche (an image of Williams' early idealization of Off-Broadway) finds justification, historically, in his ancestry--Irish Kings--and metaphysically in his native religion--Catholicism. The physical structure of the kirche, the intended use of it and his own correlative self-definition (image) embody the Man's initial dreams about SoHo. These dreams are burlesques of Williams' dreams. At the opposite of the Man's idealistic world, the kitchen stands for the world of the mundane, the earthly; it is the pragmatic world of Protestantism, the religion of his wife and father-in-law. Parody sustains the dramatization of the wife's pragmatism too.
The setting fulfills its image as the experimental stage by conflating the church's idealism (aesthetic concerns) and pragmatism (action, material concerns). With these images, Williams creates a world of practices at which he wholeheartedly laughs. Fraud and make-believe, violence, moral squalor, indigence, etc., prevail in this SoHo dwelling place. The Man's world is one of make-believe: "In the interior of kirche the Man was practicing calisthenics. As the red light warns him of the approach of the two ladies, he jumps back into the wheelchair" (18). His wife eventually exposes him as a fraud, but for the Man his make-believe and his "invalidity" are only acts of "protest" against his wife for her earlier humiliation of him: "Don't pretend amnesia. I'll tell you how it happened. You stuffed a couple of pillows under your skirts and ran screaming after me on the street. 'He's knocked me up and is running out on me now!' Inflamed the local hypocrisy against me" (67). For Williams too, the creation of the Man as a fraud is an act of protest against those who kept repeating that he was "played out" and alienated him from the public.

On the other hand, the wife's pragmatism introduces action, the physical, as a dominant mode of expression—an echo of experimental theater which privileged action over words. The reality of her kitchen—standing for the practical need of food—prevails through the repetition of eating and drinking. Perhaps the whole point about indigence is also a parody of the "poverty" of the experimental stage; "poor theater" was, we know, a synonym for experimental theater. Material concern leads her father to kill her mother to collect insurance money, which she insists on sharing or else she will reveal the truth. To the extent that the father's only response to his daughter is to hit her, they also have a similar sense of pragmatic communication. Hitting is the wife's own "mode of communication" with her husband. Each time she enters the kirche, she is carrying a menacing ax. By the end of the play, the Man sheds idealism and becomes practical too:
as he kicks his wife, he draws our attention to the relation between physical action and the experimental theater: "A bit of--theater, Madam--presentational more than literary, but that's the style now, I hear" (12). Perhaps the Man performs his most significant acts when he advises his children to take up prostitution (a field of practical concerns) following their dismissal from kindergarten (intellectual field), and when he himself decides to take up his old profession (prostitution? writing?). The advice turns out to be a disappointment, and concludes the Man's string of failures. One can easily imagine why Williams would sympathize with the Man at this point, as failure was his lot on both the commercial and non-commercial stages.

At the end of the play, the Man must quit his kirche and go out to the "world occupied by the haute bourgeoisie" where he once served and won the Hotlicker's Awards. His departure for Uptown is a mere gesture. "So you're up to it again," his wife says (53). To understand the joke here, one needs only to recall Williams' numerous assertions that he would never return to Broadway, as when in 1972, he said that, "I'm not trying to come back to Broadway; I wouldn't even if they wanted me to." We know what happened between then and his last Broadway production in 1980. The Man, for his part, leaves SoHo for Uptown to "serve [the Hotlicker]...and then, and then...contend once more for the Hotlicker prize" (54). Williams lamented that Broadway and television were destroying serious literature (Conversations 356); however, personally he was "not reconciled to dying before [his] work is finished" (Ibid. 360). Till his death, he hoped to win the acclaim that would keep his reputation high (McCann 1983 xiii). The irony that underlies such hopes characterizes the Man's act. Presumably the Man fails again Uptown, just as his kids did, and just as Williams failed with his last attempt on Broadway.
In *The Travelling Companion* (1981), a short gay play published in *Christopher Street*, we find Vieux, an ex-playwright, unmistakably the Man re-born; just as the Writer in *Vieux Carré* was reborn as August in *Something Cloudy*, and the latter again as the Man in *Kirche*. Vieux has quit his profession, going now from hotel to hotel—a symbol of transience toward the final "exit" in Williams' plays—living on sex, alcohol and drugs. All that remains of his art are some manuscripts that he carries with him, a symbol of what he used to be. The change of focus in *Kirche* hews to a new evolution in Williams' assessment of his position in the theatrical world, saying that he had been expelled. *Kirche* and *The Travelling Companion* dramatize this statement and the joking mood that surrounds it.

*Kirche* got no review at the 1979 performance because it was advertised as a "work in progress." Those who liked to measure Williams' plays by Broadway standards or from the perspective of his earlier plays would certainly have found it utterly unconventional. This was an Off-Off-Broadway play in which Williams deliberately broke with his own convention of memory in the 1970s' cycle plays. He needed to address his predicament in the alternative theater. He did so by playing the experimental stage in its own terms: using burlesque and farce, he achieved what he believed exaggeration does—a penetration to the essence of truth. That was, for him, how the theater world became his terminal battlefield, his dragon country, his death world.

Princess in *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959) once said that "after failure comes flight. Nothing ever comes after failure but flight." Any of Williams' Sixties plays would contradict Princess. Not so with the Seventies ones. As the hotel, a symbol of transience, becomes the setting for the artist-figures, like the Man who has known the pain of SoHo and Uptown, so Williams seems to have returned to a basic morality that kept his
Amandas and Blanches going; the power to find ways to continue to live in the midst of desperation. But maybe this was only a joke. Flight, as Donald Pease argues, suggests a longing, an "unfulfilled desire." And if the theater world, during Williams’ later career, must stand as a microcosm of the larger society that was his world in the earlier plays, then, we must realize that there is no possible escape for the later artist either. We are all trapped in the burning house, Chris said earlier. In 1975 Williams argued in an indicative way addressing his experience both in the sixties and seventies: "Death is the unavoidable eventuality which in most cases we avoid as long as we can" (Memoirs 247). From Mrs. Goforth’s acceptance of death through Felice’s and Clare’s accommodation to August’s and Vieux’s cynicism or resignation, we find echoes of his statement. Perhaps not by choice, but significantly enough, he died in New York, like a gentleman soldier, on the battlefield. The theatrical field of the 1960s and 1970s was a battlefield for Williams, which should not be surprising because this is the condition of any cultural field. Noteworthy is that he waged the battle from the particular position of relative powerlessness that resulted from his critical demise and the rise of new theatrical agents and aesthetics. In the next chapter, I will concern myself with the other artistic agents with whom he antagonistically shared the field, and the extent to which this experience also oriented his portrayal of the artist-figure.
CHAPTER II

FACING THE FORCES OF THE ARTISTIC WORLD

... a theater mostly inhabited by jungle beasts...
(Memoirs 85)
Struggle is a condition of existence in the artistic world. This struggle involves all the constituent agents of the artistic world, each driven by specific agendas and interests aimed at accumulating cultural or economic capital—and power. Because the relationships they develop are fundamentally relations of power, aspects of power or lack of it such as domination, subordination, fear, compromise, etc., are essential facts of the artistic world. From Edward Albee's *Fam and Yam* (1960) through Sam Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* (1974) to David Mamet's *A Life in the Theater* (1977), we find the artist-figure sharing the artistic space with what playwright Yam in Albee's play lists as the "villains" or their likes: "the theater owners...the producers...the backers...the theater parties...the unions...the critics...the directors...the playwrights themselves..." (91-92). We find representations of these same forces in Williams' later plays, and largely, they determine the artist's existential and artistic condition. Restricted to the theatrical context, Yam's list is nearly exhaustive; no wonder his search for a hero leads to the conclusion that there is none. "Everybody is culpable," he comments. The older actor Robert in Mamet's play seems to echo this point by explaining that this is because "everybody wants a piece" of the cake or action (75).

Williams offers a selective but sustained vision of the villains at work. From *The Milk Train* (1963) to *Something Cloudy* (1981), the recurrent figures of the theatrical and show-business world fall into three categories or subfields: those involved in the production process or the link with the marketplace (publishers, producers, directors, exhibitors, actors); those that traditional criticism would label creators—the artists (writers, painters, actors); and those that William Goldman would call the "approvers" and Bourdieu (121-132) the legitimating or consecrating forces (audience, reviewers and critics). To be sure, this categorization serves only practical purposes. At bottom, each of the agents named participates in the shaping of the artist-protagonist's existential
condition, artistic identity, and creative imagination, and determines the value and meaning of his or her artistic product. Williams achieves this by dramatizing the struggle for a piece of control or power through such themes as competition, exploitation, lack of morality, among other things—all of which, to him, perfectly subsume the reality of the commercial artistic world.

In social as well as cultural practice consciousness is not always the sole guide to action. However, as I showed earlier, Williams was very lucid about his own unfavorable position in the theatrical world of the sixties and seventies. Through informed decisions and strategies in the sense of calculated actions, he tried to cope with the reality of the antagonists and to improve his position in the theatrical field. I will primarily consider how these inform his portrayal of the artist-figure. My larger aim in this chapter, however, is to investigate the dynamics between the artist figure and the "villains" of the artistic world, and how Williams dramatically captures these relations. Relying on the principle that works of art contain indications of the author's own real struggle (Bourdieu 118), I will consider the antagonists—and helpers, where there are any—in light of the two basic artistic spaces that, as developed in the previous chapter, were Williams' and his art. This said, if the commercial world (Broadway) and the alternative stages were the two principal delimiting poles of Williams' artistic subjectivity and practice, as we might expect, the antagonists from the commercial pole were for him the most determining forces. Broadway remained where Williams sought legitimation. His dramatization of commercial agents as the predominant antagonists of the artist-figure will shape my investigation.
II. 1. The Artist Against Production Agents

An artistic product, whether it has commercial or simply symbolic value, must exist in concrete form and reach a public. In other words, the artist must compose with the specific agents and forces that make the work available to the consumption market in mind. In the process, conflicts necessarily arise; and ultimately, it is the dominant agents or forces that impose their terms and values. Being a relatively powerless agent, the artist-figure in Williams' later plays owes much of his/her artistic identity and practice to the production forces. The publishers in The Milk Train and Vieux Carré, the "theater" owner and manager in The Gnädiges Fräulein and Vieux Carré, the troop director in The Two-Character Play, the art exhibitor in In the Bar, and the producer and actors in Something Cloudy are the most outstanding. Evolving in their respective fields of expertise, these agents fall into one of two broad categories which are, to paraphrase playwright David Hwang or theater historian Andrew Harris, the purely financial and the artistically inclined. However, the former dominate the latter in number. Theirs is the practice of commercial theater. Through a variety of dramatic approaches, from realistic to parodic and allegorical presentations, Williams offers images of the production agents at work. My objective here is to probe these images, their impact on the artist-figure, and their relevance to Williams' own experience.

II. 1. 1. Managers and Producers: Locale and Financial Imperatives

The commercially minded managers and producers are the most represented figures in the artistic world of Williams' later plays. This should not be surprising considering, on the one hand, Williams' particular bitterness against Broadway, the ultimate market of commercial theater, and on the other hand, the accentuation of the commercial nature of that theater all through the sixties and seventies. When we consider
the plays over the two decades, different types of managerial or producer figures dominate the artistic world, highlighting different facets of the artist figure's plight, but often, as with Molly in *The Gnädiges Fräulein*, it is difficult to make clear distinctions. Overall, however, we can say that the managerial figure who dominates the artist's world in Williams' sixties plays is unquestionably the theater-owner. The producer appears mostly in the seventies plays, and Williams depicts him emphasizing his effect on playwriting. I will provide details in the appropriate section. Describing Williams' portrayal of the managers and producers, I will highlight the repercussions of their actions on the protagonists as artists. Facing these commercial agents, the artist-figure projects the image of a powerless victim who assumes specific roles and holds a recognizable discourse. The artist-figure's attitude evolves, not simply as a consequence of the type of commercial agent that he or she faces, but also as an expression of Williams' new attitude toward life as presented earlier.

Molly, the owner and manager of the dormitory in *The Gnädiges Fräulein*, stands out in the sixties plays. However, she is not alone. Mrs. Golightly in *The Milk Train* also projects the image of a theater owner—and stage manager. But as she is also the main actress in her own theater, the meaning of her relation with the theater, as I suggested in chapter 1, necessarily lies beyond commercial motives and will concern us in a later section. In *Vieux Carré*, as I argued earlier, Williams addresses his predicament in the sixties through the spatial handling of 722 Toulouse Street, New Orleans. Mrs. Wire, the owner of the place, therefore fully assumes the image of the theater owner and manager. Among the other seventies plays, the theater owner gets only slight notice in the other allegorical play *Kirche, kuchen und Kinder*, and differs only slightly from, say, Molly in characterization. The theater-owner appears as the owner of the house or the theatrical space with the power to eject the unwanted artist. Molly in *The Gnädiges Fräulein*, Mrs.
Wire in *Vieux Carré*, as well as the anonymous owner in *Kirche* present spectacles of themselves that perfectly conform to both Yam's description of theater owners as "ignorant, greedy, hit-happy real estate owner" (*Fam and Yam* 93), and to Williams' idea that "A synonym for a manager in the theater is a con-man and all playwrights are shits with their back to the wall." 

Harold Clurman rightly sees Molly in *The Gnädiges Fräulein* when he argues that she represents the managerial powers: producers, editors, publishers and the like. In this allegorical play Molly indeed could assume all these roles. Yet, it seems that the most prominent of her roles and the one she claims the most is the ownership and management of the dormitory. She is one of the artist-protagonist's main antagonists in this respect. Molly evokes Broadway reality through her concern with profit seeking. Describing her own method, she ranks herself high in the large-scale business hierarchy: "I do quantity business. Also a quality business but the emphasis is on quantity in the big dormitory because it is furnished with two- and three-decker bunks. It offers accommodation for always one more" (223). Even when no bed is available, there is always room to stand. For the "permanent transients" on whom she capitalizes, this is better than being arrested for vagrancy. Under the "roof tree or Glod," as she cynically describes the dormitory--which, with all the moral squalor and exploitative schemes that it dramatizes, recalls O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*--there is space for everybody, provided she would add, everybody can pay his or her due. "In business matters," she further proudly acknowledges, "sentiment isn't the cornerstone of my nature" (257). She exemplifies her true nature in her relation with the Fräulein. Molly ruthlessly exploits the Fräulein who suffers this with the spirit of an artist who, even at the cost of her life and despite her loss of cachet and artistic self-awareness, refuses to give up the "artistic world."
As the action begins, the Fräulein has lost all but the privileges to use the lavatory and the kitchen (228-229). To keep the remaining privileges, she must provide three fish a day, fighting against the cocaloony birds, a symbol of other theatrical agents, as I will later show. By the end of the action she completely loses her eyesight and is "transfigured as a saint under torture" (245), yet she must still go out for the third fish. For, as Molly explains, nothing but "Three fish a day keeps eviction away" (257-258). As the Fräulein stoically and silently carries out her duty, her attitude and sense of endurance impress both Polly and Molly as a manifestation of her strength of spirit, but they also clearly stand for her lack of power. Analyzing Pinter's The Dwarfs (1977), Austin Quingly argues that "To control what someone is able to say is to control to a considerable extent what they are able to be." Molly controls the Fräulein just this way. She controls what the Fräulein can and cannot do or say, when she can or cannot come out on the terrace, etc. She is "long past having opinions" of her own, Molly answers when Polly suggests asking her for an interview (229). Her silence stems from her inability to assume her long lost identity. The Fräulein cannot even tell the story of her decline. Molly tells it and in so doing shows that she has appropriated the Fräulein, making of her a commercial asset and a tool of self-promotion. The Fräulein sings "the reveille song" (227-228) to mark the beginning of the day and cheer up the occupants of the dormitory. She also sings to entertain Molly's social guests or business partners (232). Molly sells the Fräulein's story and performance, if we may call her pathetic self-exhibition such, to Polly the reporter in exchange for a good write-up about the dormitory. Her aim is to boost her image as a social leader and, of course, her business:

Let’s have a protocol here. The Gnädiges Fräulein is a personage, yeah, but she’s still a social derelict, and a social leader like me takes precedence over a social derelict like her, so give her a couple of short sentences, then concentrate the rest of the write up on ME (sic) (230).
To be sure, the Fräulein’s past artistic life (Cf. last section of the chapter) fostered her present social and artistic status. But Molly’s contribution to the debasement of her art is undeniable. She sees the Fräulein as second-class and treats her accordingly. Beside the appalling living conditions that she imposes on her, she also has transformed the whole meaning of her songs and singing abilities.

Mrs. Wire in *Vieux Carré* replicates Molly’s practices in a more realistic portrayal. But despite her stamina, she lacks this unlimited power over her tenants. As a board keeper, commercialism underlies her relationship with her bohemian tenants who are all artists of sorts. That eventually she sympathizes with the Writer comes from her own neurosis and delusion, as she takes him for her dead son. In other words, her motto is no different from Molly’s. She charges Sky just for leaving his bag in the premises of the house, insists on evicting Nightingale despite his poor health, and is blunt with the Writer himself when it comes to business: “You’re employed by me, you’re fed and housed here, and you’ll do like I tell you or you’ll go on the street” (56). Mrs. Wire’s acquisitiveness stands in way of the Writer’s art:

_Mrs. Wire: Why aren’t you on the streets with those business cards?_  
_Writer: Because I’m at the last paragraph of a story_  
_Mrs. Wire: Knock it off this minute! Why, the streets are swarming this Sunday with the Azalea Festival trade (71)._  

Mrs. Wire’s conditions, as she requires him to work longer than he has to, threaten to thwart the Writer’s art. The Writer, a typical early seventies Williams artist-figure, leaves 722 Toulouse to avoid this fate.

The Fräulein has no such choice; she is a typical sixties Williams artist-figure. As the play closes, she faces eviction from the dormitory. Despite her fighting spirit, it is obvious that with no eyesight, she is doomed to failure. In any case, she has become a liability rather than an asset to Molly’s business. For instance, we see her knocking down
the fencing in one of her last trips to the docks. The artist still in possession of some degree of lucidity knows well what managers and producers can do to "unproductive" artists. Understandably, fear of "going on the street" hovers above the Man's family in the allegorical play *Kirche*. At one point in the action, there is a knock at the door. Concerned with the practical aspects of the household, his wife panics, thinking it is the rent man. The rent man's visits are dreaded moments; thus he fully assumes the title of "theater" owner.

That Williams focuses on the theater-owner in the 1960s plays or plays about the sixties reflects his principal concern then, which was to exist in the theater world as a distinctive space. Williams' experiences and observations told him about the fate of artists like himself whose plays have lost appeal. In his memoirs, he narrates the plight of Helen Carroll, an actress who had become a burden for the producer of *Small Craft Warnings* and the manager of the theater in which it was playing. They forced her to retire by lying to her that the play was closing. Reflecting on this, Williams writes:

I know that these are the cruel exigencies of life in the theater: there is little or no sentiment to be encountered in its machinations. It is a mirror of nature. The individual is ruthlessly discarded for the old, old consideration of profit (214-215).

The dread of this type of experience haunted Williams from the sixties until his death in 1983. In the sixties, his experiences with, for instance, *The Gnadiges Fräulein* and *In the Bar*, convinced him that he had reasons to worry. About the former play Alan Schneider, its director in 1965, remarks that when the producer finally found money for the production (see the section on the producer), the play went not to the Lyceum but to "a less desirable" theater: the Longacre theater. In *the Bar* closed precipitately to make place for a revue, Williams therefore became particularly sensitive to the venues chosen for his plays in the sixties. For instance, though his sympathy for the alternative stage was growing, he saw an Off-Broadway production of his plays negatively. This,
eventually, became one of his main reproaches to his artistic agent Audrey Wood, and led to their separation: "I think that Audrey Wood thinks I'm dead.... She thinks that The Two Character [Play] should be produced Off-Broadway. I think she wants all (sic) my work produced Off-Broadway."14

Over the years, Williams experienced increasing difficulty finding agreeable locales for his plays—undeniable proof, for him, that the theater people, so to speak, wanted to kick him out. Even his Small Craft Warnings, claimed by most as a sign of artistic rebirth, had to close in 1972 for a bigger box-office hit: "I was told," he wrote to Maria Britneva in 1972 (Five O'Clock Angel 272), "that our lease on the theater had expired and we were going to be replaced by a pair of jerks imitating Gertie Lawrence and Nelly Coward in a nostalgic tribute to their—whatever they did." The "whatever they did," it turns out, was a musical; commercial theater was at Williams' heels. Above all, his experience with Small Craft Warnings was to him, a serious warning. It conveyed a sense of insecurity that evokes, for instance, the situation of the Man and his wife in Kirche, but also tells of his growing difficulties with producers and financial backers. He gives expressions to this particularly in the seventies' plays.

For commercial producers plays are commodities, and an ideal play is a "commodity guaranteed to attract an audience," as Robert Brustein says in his study of Broadway crisis.15 As Williams perceived it, there lay the source of his antagonism with producers, and he dramatized this, insisting that the dominant and characteristic image of the producer is, to paraphrase William Goldman,16 that of a cheater, corrupter, and destroyer of serious theater. He shows the producer pressing the artist-figure toward producing plays that are commercially rewarding, aesthetically bent toward comedy, and with star appeal.
A true transition play, *The Milk Train* conflates Williams' pre- and post- 1960s dramatic devices, and types of protagonists and antagonists. Besides the obvious and manifold social and psychological pressures that most critics have elucidated, Mrs. Goforth also faces the publishers' conditions. The presence of the publisher figure in this sixties play is the result of additions made in the seventies (Spoto 342). This requires further emphasis, but before this we should explore Mrs. Goforth's experience of the pressure. Chris finds her in the midst of what she takes to be her preoccupation: "My memoirs, my memoirs, night and day, to meet the publishers' deadline" (72), she tells him, and then goes on to show him a letter from one of her publishers. In other words, the pressure is not the product of her imagination. Though the production of the book has other meanings, as I have suggested earlier, the urgency with which she has to have it done comes partly from the publishers. And this pressure, she explains, "was burning me up, it was literally burning me up like a house on fire" (107).

The pressure results in personal suffering and has repercussions on the quality of the work and on her entourage. Blackie, the secretary that she has hired to help her in the job has many and legitimate reasons for complaint. "I think," she says, that "those publishers' deadlines are unrealistic, not to say cruel.... I not only have to function as a secretary but as an editor..." (10). Obviously she sympathizes with Mrs. Goforth. However, she exults when Mrs. Goforth fires her. Part of Blackie's sympathy lies in her perception of Mrs. Goforth as a victim and, perhaps, in the sense of endurance that she displays. From Mrs. Goforth's point of view, the acceptance of the deadline clause indicates her dependence on the publishers, her powerlessness vis-à-vis them. In all other matters, at least until death imposes itself upon her, she proves a tough contender who will only function on her own terms. As Mrs. Goforth's personal secretary, Blackie's
reaction when Chris reports her "peaceful" death is indicative enough: "With all that
dierce life in her?" (119).

The idea of the publisher's pressure is one of the insertions that Williams made
while rewriting the play. Clearly, this has to do with the writing of his own memoirs. In
1971 Bill Barnes, Williams' new agent after A. Wood, arranged the contract with the
editor of Doubleday, publisher of his memoirs in 1975. By October 1972 Williams had
finished a 650-page draft. In a letter to Maria Britneva in 1972 he told her that "I enjoy
writing the stuff, I am knocking it out at an average of 16 pages a day" (Five O'Clock
270). (This sentence appears almost verbatim in the play [72]) However, commenting on
the same letter Britneva wrote that "Tennessee Williams later complained that the
publisher had wanted too many cuts and had wanted him to concentrate too much on his
sensational sex life" (270). This pressure recalls Mrs. Goforth's in the commercial motive
apparent behind the attitude of Williams' publisher. In 1973 Williams considered
changing his publisher, but Britneva talked him out of "such disloyalty," as she put it
(Five O'Clock 285). This is to say that, in his portrait of Mrs. Goforth, Williams had
material from his personal experience to rely on. However, other personal needs may well
have spurred Williams, just as Mrs. Goforth has personal reasons to be done with her own
memoirs quickly. I will explore the significance of this in the next chapter.

This said, Mrs. Goforth has no doubt that her memoirs will be published if she
meets the deadline. The letter she shows Chris reveals the publishers' appreciation of her
book, already ranking it above Proust's Remembrance of Things Past. But Chris draws
her attention to what may be one of her many delusions: "it's snow, a snow job" (91). To
which she characteristically answers: "This publisher's not a lover. A lover might snow
me, but this man's a business associate, and they don't snow you, not me, not Sissy
Go forth! (sic)" (91). The action does not allow us to see the outcome. But the doubts raised by Chris unveil a possibility that constitutes the experience of other artists.

Such is the case with the young artist the Writer in Vieux Carré, a play in which, as I argued in Chapter 1, Williams dramatizes his experience as a novice in the artistic world. One of the Writer's frustrations has to do with the painful experience of rejection of his manuscripts. But, "This time," he explains to sympathetic Jane, "instead of a printed slip," the publisher sent a personal signed note that states: "This doesn't quite make it but try us again" (53). For the Writer there is reason for hope, but "meanwhile you've got to survive" (53), as he puts it. He has to overcome the state of indigence that characterizes his present life. To cope with this he takes a job with Mrs. Wire. But the job eventually comes to stand in the way of his artistic creation, as I have already shown. These difficulties, however, are none of the publisher's concern. At the end of the play, the Writer must move West, to an unknown world that may harbor more grueling conditions, but that, it appears, is the price one must pay to "get established in [the] creative field" of writing (53).

In a way, Mrs. Go forth and the Writer belong in the same class, as they are both fiction writers and have no direct contact with the producing agents. The other needy and powerless artists that Williams portrays are involved in performance art and tend to be prey to business-minded producers in more direct ways. Such is the case of August in Something Cloudy. Ultimately, August resolves his antagonism with the producer by compromising. After presenting aspects of August's relations to the producer, I will show that this resolution of his conflict parallels Williams' handling of his own plight in the seventies.

With Something Cloudy, as with The Milk Train, Williams left allegory and portrayed the producer's practice in a more direct and realistic way. The producer, indeed,
appears undisguised and under the evocative name of Mr. Fiddler. Mr. Fiddler perfectly fits Yam's opinion that "producers are opportunistic, out-for-the-back businessmen" (93), and perhaps represents Williams' most severe indictment of the producers' pernicious effect on the creative artist. Williams cried out in 1971 that they were exploiting him (Five O'clock 234).

Like the Writer in *Vieux Carré* who seeks to establish himself in the creative field of writing, young August's ambition is to become a Broadway playwright. He is preparing his first Broadway play, a crucial moment in his project, as Clare observes. Lacking the strength of legitimacy or "clout," to use Williams' word (*Memoirs* 196), August is an easy prey for the producer. Money is one of Fiddler's most efficient tools. Once he exhibits a $100 bill to tease August; another time he gives him $20 in cash, not cheque, for the same purpose. Mr. Fiddler also conveys his cynicism through plain and business-like language. He can "sacrifice tact for honesty anytime" (Goldman 110), as Richard Nash once said of David Merrick, one of Williams' producers. For instance, he explains to August:

> You've got to stop telling me what your agent told you. I don't think you properly appreciate the opportunity, the magnitude of the opportunity that you're being offered, a production by the Artist Theatre of your first play next season, when normally, under ordinary circumstances, you'd have to wait ten years for such a breakthrough (10).  

Fiddler has no other reason to offer August this unusual opportunity but a desire to have, as Molly has with the Fräulein, total control over his creative process. In practice, this means that August must bend his writing habits to meet the producer's time schedule and relinquish authority on aesthetic matters. To ensure these Fiddler also proves resourceful. On one of his several visits to August's shack he tells him: "I don't think it's healthy for you to live here.... It gives a morbid color to your thought and your work" (9). He therefore suggests that he move to Westfront where he would be in better
living conditions and "in close touch" (6) for rewrites. In this way, he will get things "right on track" (9).

August's reluctance compels Fiddler to spell out his commercial motivations and their dramaturgical consequences:

You're building up the secondary characters too much and not developing the leads, dear boy.... You've got to remember our problem as your producer, we've got to sell this manuscript to stars.... She (the female star) said that it was very poetic and all, but she said the part was too common for her (9)

Fiddler's language—for instance, "dear boy"—indicates condescension, and this expresses the power relation that links them. The male star too has his requirements: he wants a "drunk scene." Above all, Fiddler wants August to give the play a brighter tone by devising a happy ending. August resists Fiddler's pressure, at least initially. His presence on the sea-coast, living in a shack, is, as I have said in the previous chapter, an indication of this. Also, one of the visit scenes shows him standing up to Fiddler:

August: No cheque, no scene, Mr. Lengle
Lengle: No scene, no cheque, August (6).

The parallelism of the lines indicates not a balance of power between August and Lengle but August's resistance—his attempt to balance power. Ultimately, however, it is the producer who has the final say. August not only turns in the "scene," but also, though he knows he can never please the producer in that matter, has done the required rewriting.

August ultimately accepts defeat much as Williams' other seventies artist-figures do. Nightingale, the painter, in Vieux Carré, and Beau in Travelling Companion bend to financial necessity and sacrifice their art—or what remains of it. The Writer in Vieux Carré avoids this by fleeing New Orleans. August's reasons are more akin to those of the Writer than Nightingale's or Beau's. He tells Clare—who disapproves of his decision—that he has no choice but to believe in his producer, and goes on to explain that he is a
"romantic" who "turns a cynic" for what he "wants and needs out of life" (7). This, at least, is clear enough for him: "I want to stop being poor and unsuccessful before I stop being young" (7). By co-opting the commercial game, August sells his artistic identity. Worst of all, as Clare warns him, there is no guarantee that the play will work on Broadway. August's compromise remains a sign, if not of resignation, at least of his powerlessness in the hierarchy of theatrical production.

Williams, however, sympathizes with August, and, like William Goldman (111-112), suggests that the blame lies on Broadway, the producer. Some of the blame that Williams attributes to producers may have originated from stereotypes about Broadway (not all Broadway plays in the '60s and '70s conformed to these characteristics). Others may have come from earlier experiences in Williams' career such as in 1947 when he had to make a painful alteration of the third act of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof by adding an elephant story told by Big Daddy to meet Elia Kazan's "suggestions." Williams' personal experience in the '60s and '70s was the most immediate stimulus. It appears, for instance, that in August's ultimate solution, Williams projects both the principle of dignity that characterized his basic sense of life, and his new perception of his career as he entered the seventies. "The moral way," he told Charles Ruas in 1975, is "the way of survival now."21

When, at the end of his life, Williams lamented that "the business folk" were destroying serious theater (Conversations 1981 356), he had, he believed, ample illustrations of this phenomenon from his personal experience. First, we must remember that both Williams and his antagonists acted in a larger context which we need to keep constantly in mind. Williams' difficulties and changing attitude toward the producers informed his portrayal of the artist's plight. His difficulty to find a locale, as explained earlier, was minor compared to that of financing the productions themselves. The Gnädiges Fräulein had to wait one season before backers agreed to "kick in" money, as
he liked to say (Spoto 364). Gordon Rogoff maintains that producers Charles Bowden's and Lester Persky's decision had more to do with the presence of star actress Margaret Leighton than "Williams collateral as dramatist." Financial difficulties also marked the productions of the '70s plays. The Red Devil Battery in 1977 and the Broadway production of Crève Coeur (1979) are some examples. Producer Merrick said after the failure of The Red Devil in Boston: "I will give him any other help--other than raising money." And Craig Anderson, the production director of Crève Coeur explains: "After the unfortunate reception of Vieux Carré in 1977, everybody distrusted his abilities. No one would come across with money for production" (Spoto 368).

For Williams, producers were simply malicious. He saw David Merrick, one of the leading producers in the 1960s and 1970s, as the quintessential commercial producer; and he called him "Mr. Broadway" (Five O'Clock Angel 235). Merrick was notorious. William Goldman calls Merrick the "monster" (110) and Richard Nash describes him as "the only man I know who's made a vice of honesty." The effect of such an individual on the artist-figure can be devastating, artistically and personally. "Mr. Merrick," Williams contended after the Boston production of The Red Devil Battery, "sat on the play for two years," thinking that "I would die before it was produced." He also felt that when producers agreed to mount his plays, they did so more for the worse than the better. He said of David Merrick that "he always allowed me to bring in a play doomed for destruction on Broadway" (Memoirs 183).

Of course, Williams could still find producers for his plays. Sometimes producers came forward on their own. But these were the exceptions that reminded him of his true predicament. Williams often talked about his plight, his enemies, his condition. His loquacity on the subject as an aspect of the constitutive or objective reality which oriented his practice as an artist. We may say that it indicates his feeling of
powerlessness. But more than that, it was an important tool in his struggle. (Now we can understand the verbal dimension of August's resistance noted earlier.) Whether he begged for understanding or lambasted his enemies, Williams ultimately sought to present himself as a victim. His friend Gore Vidal explains this using the image of the bird: "It has always been the Bird's tactic to appear in public flapping what looks to be a pathetically broken wing. By arousing universal pity, he hoped to escape his predators."26

For all the malice that Williams found in producers, he still needed them—August's resolution of his case with Fiddler in Something Cloudy was Williams' own. In the '70s and early '80s particularly, his attitude steadily moved from determination, characteristic of the desperate, to the humble and compromising mind-set of the powerless. Williams mostly revealed his compromising attitude dealing with production agents involved in action on the stage—the performance.27 Noteworthy was his pursuit of stars, as his endeavors over Out Cry clearly illustrate. He said on May 31, 1973, that "trouble arrived in the form of [Out Cry]" (Five O'Clock Angel 295). He kept promoting Out Cry or looking for the means to do so successfully but never managed. Swayed by what William Goldman once castigated as the perniciousness of the myth of superiority of British theater and actors (1969 113-122), Williams doggedly ran after British actors Maggie Leighton and Paul Scofield to star in his play (Five O'Clock Angel 220). The hesitations of the two stars annoyed him tremendously (Ibid.). When finally they agreed, his elation was uncontrollable, but afraid that they might change their minds, he begged Britneva to keep wooing them, as Schneider would put it (Ibid. 222).

Williams had also become very compliant over rewritings. The director of Vieux Carré in 1977 remembers that Williams could accommodate him magnificently—"almost on demand" (Spoto 366). With Clothes, too, Williams willingly agreed to the cuts that the
director demanded. Perhaps the most striking case occurred at the San Francisco performance of *Out Cry*, when he acted like the characters in the same play. Lyle Taylor reports that "to the actors' anguished dismay [like the audience's in *Out Cry*], Williams sat with them in the dressing room and proceeded to cross-out whole speeches." Over their protests, he simply said, "In the theater you have to be able to do that." According to Taylor, Williams was referring to Albee's protest against William Ball's unauthorized alteration of his *Tiny Alice*. Granted, but he was clearly also repeating the very action of the play he was cutting. As Christopher Bigsby would put it, Williams was theatricalizing his life, and, we could add, by impersonating his own characters.

All through his entanglement with production agents, Williams remained clear about his objective: "I'm so obsessed with bringing one more beautiful play to New York I have no fear of death--except that it might intervene before my accomplishment of that." Often he came close to being as cynical as August in *Something Cloudy*. In 1971 he explained his break with Audrey Wood, his longtime artistic agent, by saying that he wanted "his work in younger hands and she is seven years my senior" (Spoto 330). And when Bill Barnes replaced her, he made it clear to him that "I want my name back up in bright lights, Bill!" (Spoto 331). This was the early 1970s, when after recovering from his neurotic crisis, and entering the new decade, he had developed new ambitions. This shaped his attitude toward producers. Williams' biographers recall that Barnes was a dedicated professional who put all his time and energy in helping Williams. But it was not long before he too was dismissed and replaced with Mitch Douglass (Spoto 178). Again in 1981 he dismissed Douglass and took Luis Sanjurgo. All of this recalls Mrs. Goforth's relations with Blackie or the threat of ejection that hovers over most of Williams' artists, and on another level, the dismissal of actress Helen Carroll by the producers of *Small Craft Warnings*. 
Williams' dismissals of his unwanted agents as well as his compliance over rewritings were legitimate choices. His purpose, we should remember, was to be back in the bright lights. But in the same way, though for other reasons, the commercial producers of his plays too had to make choices, choices compelled by the imperatives of commercialism. For as William Goldman put it about the unscrupulous practice of "taking"--cheating--some of the producers did "it because they almost have to if they're to survive as theatrical producers" (Goldman 108). For both Williams and his antagonists, the ultimate determinism resided in the reality of the theatrical world, or what Bourdieu would define as the practice of the game. The game involves another key producing figure--the director--that Williams depicts in a distinctive way.

II. 1. 2 The Directors: Getting a Play to Work on the Stage

Directors appear only occasionally in Williams' later plays. The Two-Character Play offers the clearest portrait of what we may call the director figure. Harold Clurman suggests that Indian Joe in The Gnädiges Fräulein may stand for Williams' directors. I do not see any evidence that could support this interpretation. Commercialism is a central characterizing element in the portrait of the director in The Two-Character Play, and more generally, the portrait calls to mind Yam's definition: "Our directors are slick, sleight-of-hand artists" (93-94). Fam, the older playwright, agrees with this definition of the director: I argue that Williams would also. Williams' experience shows that he was very often at odds with the directors of his plays, and that he frequently blamed them for the fate of his plays on the stage.

In The Two-Character Play, an obvious aspect of Clare's and Felice's difficulties with Director Fox is financial. For instance, Felice explains to Clare that "Fox has done one thing. No, two: he demanded his salary--which I couldn't pay him--and after that,
disappeared" (322). Yet the financial factor is clearly not the principal determining one. The central factor is the act of desertion itself, which provokes drastic consequences for the performance. Abandoned by the director, the stage hands and the other actors, Felice and Clare must improvise in an incomplete stage setting. By necessity, Felice becomes a director-cum-actor who must endure cuts and various other theatrical inadequacies (357) provoked or not by Clare. The result is that they end up alienating the audience. It is true that the presence of Fox and the other cast members could not have prevented their artistic plight, for the telegram, in effect, describes them as insane. The spectacle that they make of themselves reveals their insanity and suggests how difficult working with them may have become. Nonetheless, the desertion of the director remains an objective fact that Clare and Felice must face.

Williams had ample material from his own experience when he conceived the director figure and rewrote *The Two-Character Play*. Indeed, when he had resolved the financial and locale problems, his difficulties were not over. He confronted directors, (and producers and actors, as shown earlier) on other matters such as casting and rewriting. For Craig Anderson, director of *Crève Coeur* in the mid-70s, it had become difficult to work with Williams (Spoto 367). As Robert does in Mamet's play (19), so Williams developed, Anderson further argues, a brittle and paranoid nature as a result of drugs and, as we also know, because of the strain of his failures on the dramatic stage. The insanity of Felice and Clare, it would appear, constitutes a heightened dramatization of Williams' own sense of confusion.

As Felice blames the cast and director, so did Williams when he held directors (and other agents) responsible for the failures of his plays: "I don't know why directors and producers think they have to bullshit a playwright in this way when all they have to say is, 'I like it and want to do it'" (*Memoirs* 198). He had enough evidence to support his
claims. Relating the Broadway production in 1964 of his *The Milk Train*, he explains at length how director Tony Richardson "dominated" the production process including the casting (*Memoirs* 198-199). At the San Francisco production (1965) of the same play he argued that director John Hancock scared both the playwright and the audience by having "skeletal figures of white plaster seated here and there in his theatre." What "a brilliantly bizarre invention," he said (*Memoirs* 201). He also remembered at the time of his memoirs how, prior to *The Milk Train's* opening on Broadway in 1964, the British director Tony Richardson killed the play while it was on tour: "When we arrived in Baltimore we were abruptly deserted by Richardson. He had to fly to London..." (*Memoirs* 199). This incident may have inspired the plot of his *The Two-Character Play*. In the '70s the accusations continued. He lay the responsibility for the failure of *Crève Couir* on director Anderson. For the 1973 Broadway opening of *Out Cry*, yet again, he would indict the director: "My feelings towards the director became very bitter because of his autocratic behavior" (*Memoirs* 233). Anderson confirms their disagreement, explaining that "the failure of the play [which closed after thirty-seven performances] he seemed to blame on me, and that was the end of our relationship" (Spoto 371).

But to attribute this pattern of blaming to Williams' own neurosis would be incorrect. This whining was, as I suggested earlier, part of his habit of exaggerating facts or profusely talking about them as a way of drawing attention to or justifying himself. On the other hand, his complaints were not without ground. Most reviewers of the 1977 production of *Vieux Carré*, for instance, noted "Arthur Seidelman's clumsy directing and vices attendant thereon"31 and his "inert direction."32 Jose Quintero's direction of *Clothes* also appeared to many as too overdone, especially in the use of stage effect to simulate ghostliness. In any case, the crucial fact should remain the way Williams experienced and perceived the activities of his directors, at least some of them.
Notwithstanding their failings, as I suggested earlier, Williams eventually came down to begging directors, just as he did producers and stars. According to director Alan Schneider describing his case with Williams over *The Gnädiges Fräulein* in 1966, Williams "openly wooed" him after he had seen his staging of Edward Albee's *Tiny Alice*. And then,

All during rehearsals he kept telling me I was on the right track. And on opening night, as the curtain fell on less than tumultuous applause, he grabbed me and kissed me with some passion on both cheeks, telling me—with great liquid tears in his eyes—"No one! No one has even subdues mah walk moah faithfully!" (370)

Schneider's sarcasm stems from the fact that after the play had failed in the eyes of critics, Williams turned against him, and later recalled him as the "little grinning man in the red baseball cap" (*Memoirs* 212). In the '70s Williams pleaded with director William Hunt, who had successfully produced *Confessional*, the early version of *Small Craft Warning*, to take over the longer version (Spoto 332-333). What became of this adventure exemplifies the impact on his plays of Williams' confrontation with directors: "personal differences between Williams, [William] Hunt and the cast led to Hunt's resignation from direction" of *Small Craft Warning* (Spoto 333). For several days, Williams himself acted as director (thereby imitating his character Felice in *Out Cry*) until Richard Altman took over.

To be sure, Williams was aware of the damages that his compliant attitude or strained relations with the production forces could have on the quality of his plays. But as August in *Something Cloudy* would put it, Williams had to. He not only hoped to find the way back to the bright lights, he also needed to keep himself busy, as he told Britneva in 1965 (*Five O'Clock Angel* 190), and perhaps most of all, he wanted to convince himself that he still belonged in the theater world. I will return to the therapeutic function of his art in chapter 3. For now, it is enough to say that his attitude was part of his strategy of
artistic survival. He liked to say that "A persistent dream has meaning, and is sometimes fulfilled" (*Memoirs* 232). Dreams and hopes kept him going, and this, it would appear, justified his portrayal of the artistic minded producer, the subject of the next section.

**II. 1. 3. A Hero in the Midst of the Jungle**

The theater owner or producer figure in Williams' later plays is not always a villain. Leonard Frisbie, the art exhibitor and gallery owner in *In the Bar*, is an artistic minded agent. This clearly contradicts the results of Yam's research in *Yam and Fam*, for Leonard is a "hero" of sorts. In him, the artist Mark finds someone he "can speak to," in the humane sense implied by Robert the older actor in Mamet's play (75). Leonard is an exception we need to account for because his presence further highlights Williams' predicament with producers and managers. My point here is that Leonard's portrait is overly sympathetic; he represents some kind of dream producer-figure for Williams.

Leonard is a renowned art exhibitor, owner of the World Galleries in New York, and a longtime partner of Mark's. He has exhibited the masterpieces that have made Mark's reputation. Summoning him to Tokyo to take care of Mark, Miriam writes, unfairly it appears, in the telegram: "Mark is your most lucrative property. Please fly to Tokyo at once to protect it" (11). As it turns out, this commercial characterization of Leonard's relation to Mark is, if not pure fantasy, an indication of jealousy or antagonism. It is Miriam who evokes the image of a commercial producer figure here. For, indeed, it is she, not Leonard, who has been capitalizing on Mark's painting. She has stored away an impressive quantity of his pre-color work for later use (38). When Leonard arrives in Tokyo, both the picture of Mark that he draws, metaphorically speaking, and his own attitude toward Mark contradict much of what Miriam would have us believe.
He justifies Mark as a painter and defends him as a human being. Mark "doesn't work for the purpose of having a price tag in four figures on his paintings," he tells Miriam (35). He sounds like Williams expressing his wish in 1961 when he decided to stop "compromising" with Broadway: "I want to be more free, I want to work for myself really, without thinking anymore about whether it will get rave notices or be a smash hit and all that. Have a big line at the box-office the morning after it opens" (Conversations 1961 96). Mark's chief problem now, continues Leonard, is "a change that he feels or imagines in your attitude to him" (41). In other words, Leonard acknowledges that Mark has entered, to use his own words, "a private jungle" (34), but believes that what he needs now is sympathy and understanding, not abandonment (36-37). Unsurprisingly, Miriam finds Leonard's sympathy for Mark "a little abnormal" (43). To this and Miriam's other attitudes, such as when she says that Mark's death is a release for her, Leonard opposes a moral shock:

"If that's your feeling, it's one that shouldn't be spoken even to me. --How do you know I won't repeat what you said? We live in a gossipy world. I might, accidentally, but.... Let's get out of the bar and sit in the garden. The barman hears and understands the savage things you're saying (51)." He offers her a handkerchief suggesting she pretend to cry, but, unsurprisingly, she refuses.

That Leonard's artistic relation to Mark is devoid of commercial interest is particularly apparent in his liberalism and his depiction of his own artistic taste. "My gallery has exhibited the work of painters that painted with their toes. We even have one that paints with his penis." Therefore, he concludes, "we are used to extremes" (40-41). Mark's knowledge of Leonard's avant-gardism probably explains why it did not take Leonard long to convince him against exhibiting his current work: "the very early exploratory phase of a new technique is not for exhibition, and that's what I told him. He took it well. He agreed" (41). In other words, Leonard prevails against Miriam who
would rather have the work exhibited now for purely commercial reasons. If Leonard will not, she explains, any other gallery "would exhibit it because of [Mark's] name" (38).

To be sure, Leonard's choice not to put the work on the market now definitely reveals his power in the artistic world and over Mark. He participates in the making of art by deciding what is art and what is not. Yet, fundamentally, he remains a supporter of rather than an antagonist toward Mark. This means that Leonard and Mark belong to the same artistic subfield where the value of art is primarily—at least for the present—symbolic, not commercial. But Leonard's choice not to exhibit the work now is also, beyond a recognition of the worth of Mark's painting, calculated. In the field of culture to claim the symbolic value of one's work—by opposition to its commercial value—is part of the strategy of the struggle for legitimacy; it is a decision to forego present benefits for later rewards (Bourdieu 83). Whatever the case, Leonard remains supportive of the weak Mark, and this, it seems, is the fundamental message Williams sought to get across to his contemporaries and to us. Like Mark, he needed support, but there was no one to give him any. (See also the section on competition among artists.)

To fully understand Williams' sympathetic portrayal of Leonard, we must—as apparently Williams himself did—look, on the one hand, into his vision of the experimental stage, and on the other, back into his earlier experience. In the Bar is a 1960s play, that is, of a period when Williams strongly believed in the experimental stage as a valuable alternative for his career. He saw it as a place where he could find aesthetic freedom and satisfaction. His sympathetic portrayal of Leonard manifests his hopeful perception of the non-profit artistic world as a place where artistic concerns and humane feelings still existed. On the other hand, the portrayal amounted to a romanticization of the past, since it led Williams into longing for the '40s and '50s. To Williams as well as
most of the playwrights of his generation, the days of the purely artistic producer were gone.

In other words, in the 1960s, Williams had no model for Leonard in his personal experience of the theatrical world. As early as 1961, he had begun to put "distance between himself and Audrey Wood," his long time artistic agent whom he then saw as "too motherly, domineering" (Spoto 273-274). His relationships with Elia Kazan, the chosen director in his halcyon days, had become precarious following Kazan’s decline to direct Period of Adjustment in 1960 (Spoto 268). While Williams experienced such important losses, Edward Albee, whom he always placed first among the "New Wave writers," was enjoying the kind of relationship with producer Richard Barr that unquestionably made Williams even more jealous of him than he already was. Andrew Harris explains: "Fortunately for Albee, his early partnership with producer Richard Barr protected the playwright's right to experiment and insulated him from many of the pressures of Broadway commercialism" (1994 83). On the whole, for Williams in the sixties, the idea of a creative producer was, as Harris puts it, "a myth" (125).

Later in the '70s and early '80s he sporadically found support and understanding with some producers or directors. I have mentioned cases such as that with producer Elliot Martin during the production of Clothes in 1980. Jose Quintero helped with the same play. But one who deserves emphasis here is Gregory Mosher, the dynamic "romantic and star-struck" artistic director of the Goodman Theater in Chicago. Spoto refers to him as "the patient and supporting Mosher" (389). Bruce Smith in Costly Performances (1990) and Richard Christiansen in an article (see footnote 34) give some indications of Mosher's help to Williams. Mosher often spoke of Williams' need in terms that almost parallel Leonard's. "Never did I doubt that" he still had something to say, Christiansen reports him saying. And then Mosher further commented: "He's so
vulnerable to pain, and yet he overcomes it. He keeps on writing. I find that very touching." (5). However, clearly, Mosher came too late to provide the kind of stabilizing force that Barr had represented for Albee.

In other words, Williams, in the '70s, still had reasons to be nostalgic. Again, he shared this with his contemporaries. Interviewed in 1984 playwright Joseph Stein longed for the past, when "the producers themselves were theater people rather than kind of business people. We had really theater-loving producers" (Sponberg 1991 184). Williams himself, in the '70s, called Kazan "our great white father" (*Memoirs* 174), and his remembrances of A. Wood and E. Kazan are full of nostalgia:

'To me she was like a family member on whom I was particularly dependent. Her reaction to a new piece of my work was always that which first and most concerned me; that is, hers and Kazan's. Perhaps if my feelings for her had been limited to professional ones, I would not have been so disturbed and finally outraged when her concern for me--once so great and sincere, so it seemed--appeared to eb, so that I found myself alone as a child lost or an old dog abandoned... (*Memoirs* 229).

Whatever the real reasons for the break of his relations with Wood and Kazan, it caused serious harm to his career. Throughout his later career, Williams felt abandoned, and he longed for the good days with the Kazans and Woods. In 1980, he pointedly summed up his predicament over the previous two decades: "I fell down a lot in the 1960s, and nobody was there to pick me up." And "Nothing momentous happened in the '70s. Whatever did happen...and what success I had, I had to make myself." The apparent gloss of exaggeration does not negate the underlying truth.

On both personal and artistic levels, Williams' later artist-protagonists were at a disadvantage in their relation with the production forces. Two distinctive attitudes of the artist-figure appear when we consider the two decades separately. In the sixties plays, the artist remains undaunted, showing an endurance that borders on absurdity. This willingness to go on even in the face of death is a characteristic Williams attitude in the
1960s theater world. In the seventies plays, the artist adopts a more accommodating attitude. This evolution paralleled the change in Williams' own experience and attitude. However, more than a sign of weariness in the struggle, the change manifested Williams' fundamental sense of morality, that which also characterizes the vision of life in his earlier work. Stella, Maggie and Brick, Maxine and Shannon chose compromise as a way of accommodating with life, as a survival strategy. Biographically, we must recall that even at the height of his career, Williams compromised, though painfully, with Kazan over the end of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof in order to ensure the success of the play on Broadway. In the 1970s he compromised out of relative powerlessness but with the same goal of success in mind. The irony in this case is that he did not thereby improve his position in the theatrical field. He had to reckon with other types of forces, to which we now turn.

II. 2. Competition Among Artists: New- and Old-Wave Effects

Competition among artists is an essential function of the very condition of the struggle inherent in the nature of all cultural fields. However, in the 1960s and 1970s American theatrical field, other factors (some of them extraneous) enhanced the competitive element: principally, accentuation of Broadway's commercialism and the rise of experimental theater—often seen as a theatrical renaissance—and its correlative spawning of new and dynamic playwrights. As early as 1959, answering a question about the proliferation of playwrights, Williams said: "I think it is much easier [for a playwright] to win recognition now, particularly because of the Off-Broadway movement. And the fact that producers are more adventurous in the type of material that they accept. The concept of theater has become broader..." (Conversations 61). Beyond
the descriptive nature of the statement, Williams was clearly reflecting on his personal condition, on where the danger would come from.

All of a sudden in the early 1960s, younger writers--the New Wave as he calls them (Conversations 1961 95)--surpassed him in the theatrical arena. In the name of "art," some "admirers" found their way close to him only to take advantage of him financially. Over time, as he increasingly despaired of ever coming back into the bright lights or ever being remembered when he died, the younger ones, both on Broadway and the alternative stage, were enjoying the success that he was vainly pursuing. To this, we must add his own past artistic identity--the Old Wave, as I will call it here--which through many and successful revivals, conflicted with his present creations and subjectivity. As I have suggested earlier, some members of the younger generation of writers of the sixties were as sensitive to the plight of the artist as Williams. However, Williams had the most compelling reasons to explore and react to the theme.

Competition among artists in Williams' later plays follows the pattern of the old versus the young. Signi Falk, among others, has seen this paradigm in The Milk Train as an expression of Williams' indulgence in rehashes, a continued expression of his archetypal theme of "mismatched lovers first explored in Battle of Angels" (126). This interpretation clearly is limited. Through most of his later plays, Williams' handling of the theme of the old versus the young artist expresses the larger theme of the existential struggle of the artist--a manifestation of his own peculiar condition in the later years of his career. Themalizing the competitive element or other related forms of conflicting relationships, Williams insists on various forms of victimization. Directly or indirectly, the victim, who is generally the older artist, experiences the victimization as prejudice against his or her art--and artistic identity. Williams captured all these issues in themes ranging from parasitism, physical and psychological pain, through to professional
jealousy. He also dramatized what we may call his dream model of relationships between
the old and young artist. In all these themes, we can hardly avoid seeing an expression of
Williams' own predicament. And through this predicament we must perceive the
workings of the theatrical culture of the 1960s and 1970s.

II. 2. 1. Facing the Parasitism of Younger Artists

Mrs. Goforth in *The Milk Train* and Vielle in *The Travelling Companion*
experience the parasitism of young artists in an interesting and characteristic way. These
two aged and former artists see themselves as being exploited economically or otherwise
by useless youths, ne'er-do-wells, and sometimes impostors. How does Williams portray
this? And how relevant is this to his own experience?

Young artists constitute one significant aspect of the exterior threats to Mrs.
Goforth's self-protective retirement in her hill-top villas. By his appearance and trade
Chris has much in common with the young writers as Mrs. Goforth perceives them. Her
attitude toward him on his arrival and her subsequent conversations with him convey her
perception of younger writers as a class. She justifies her initial reluctance to meet with
him by the fact that "I don't keep with the new personalities in the world of art like I used
to" (82). She alternatively calls them free-loaders, beatniks, and impostors, and explains
why: "Writers that don't write, painters that don't paint. A bunch of free-loaders,
Blackie...they'll never work for a living as long as there is a name on their sucker list"
(19). For those who bravely and successfully find their way to her villas, she has the
"Oubliette" on the beach. It is "a little grass shack" that she uses as the "medieval
institution" of the dungeon, "where people were put for keeps to be forgotten" (81). Chris
does not end up in the "Oubliette," but he experiences other forms of her treatment of
free-loaders. She searches his knapsack, and most significantly, starves him. But as we
know, eventually Chris overcomes her through the power of his philosophy of life. By virtue of this very philosophy, Chris is a young artist of a specific genre. He plays for Mrs. Goforth a function fundamentally different, as we will see, from that of the young parasites.

The "new personalities" visit Mrs. Goforth because she has advertised herself as "a patron of art and artists" (85), and she boasts some wealth as her investments in the stock market and the sumptuousness of her villas testify. This is reminiscent of Williams' own relations with the numerous companions who--through claim or actual practice--were always artists of sorts. In the 1960s, despite his whining, Williams was still one of the richest artists in America (Conversations 1971 194), and by the end of the decade, age and change of his artistic fortune had generated ambitions similar to Mrs. Goforth's: "there were times when he felt he might prefer becoming the unofficial dean of American theater, and the mentor to younger playwrights, or a much sought-after writer in residence at a prestigious university; but that feeling didn't last. He had to feel he could do it again--hit the jackpot."38 For Mrs. Goforth and Williams himself, supporting young writers--in other words, "alliance with" them (Bourdieu 105)--is a strategy clearly aimed at enhancing their own image, status and legitimacy in the artistic world. Though motivated differently than Mrs. Goforth's, the shattering of Williams' ambition clearly parallels Mrs. Goforth's recantation regarding her initial self-assigned role toward the youth. For both, the change is a clear manifestation of failure. But for Williams particularly, it marked a shift of strategy in his struggle for legitimacy.

In *The Travelling Companion*, Vieux experiences the parasitism of the youth in ways that evoke a particular state of Williams' relations with young writers in the 1970s. Vieux is, as we know, a playwright lated by age and loss of artistic legitimacy to roam from hotel to hotel. But he can only do so with travelling companions. However, it has
become difficult for him, as the situation in the play shows, to find any. Beau refuses to yield to him, or so he pretends. When eventually he concedes that he might stay longer, it is under the condition that Vieux replaces his old guitar that, he claims, he sold out of need. Evidence shows that Vieux knows this kind of condition too well. As the play closes, the "distant and cold-hearted moon becomes visible through mist" (40), an expression of what we may call the nature of Beau. Vieux summarizes this nature in the monologue at the beginning of scene 2: "New travelling companions reflect the indifferent times we live in: neglect everything but themselves and their own concerns. Got the give-me's. Give me, give me, give me..." (38). Linking Beau's nature to the trends of the time, Vieux's words point to a historical and cultural generalization. The "give me" leitmotif clearly suggests Williams' view of the selfishness of the "me generation" of the seventies. As in other instances, Vieux's is obviously not a mimetic representation of Williams, but a dramatic expression of his experience as a playwright. He thereby allows a glimpse of his anxieties and frustrations with young "artists" in the theatrical environment of the seventies and well before that.

As I remarked earlier, beside New York, other places such as Rome, New Orleans, and Key West had artistic significance for Williams. After Merlo's death early in the 1960s, he went more often and for longer periods to Key West to write or to rest. He told a reporter in London: "I can't bear to be alone. I've got to have someone near me." But Williams would become very unstable with his traveling companions, keeping them only as long as they were willing to stay or as long as he could put up with them. In March 1964, Frederick Nicklaus, whom he took along on a return to Key West after Merlo's death, fled when Williams plunged into a protracted silence and barricaded himself in his house. In fact we may say that after Merlo's death, Williams never developed a stable relationship with anybody. William Glavin was an "admirer" of his
art, and the longest companion he ever had after Merlo (1964-1970). In 1970, on the charge that Glavin was destroying his work, he dismissed him (Spoto 323). The rest of the 1970s, and on to his death, was worse. Numerous hangers-on, from writer Robert Carroll (1976)—who alone with Rose Williams figures in his last testament (Spoto 336)—to the numerous crowds that kept him company in New York or filled his house in Key West, took turns by his side. The situation of his companions in New York or Key West had, as David Gregory recalls, "the tone of employer-employee. Some of them seemed to me like people who were in it for what they could get out of it."41 Elvin Sharin and Sylvia Sydney share this observation, and respectively call the young companions "phony" admirers (Spoto 326) and "sycophants" (Spoto 362), terms that are synonymous with Mrs. Goforth's and Vieux's.

Certainly Williams was aware of these exploitative and dishonest relations. In 1980 he complained about people's hypocrisy to him about Clothes: "All I heard was how beautiful it was. I had some reservation about it, but in the beginning, neither my agent nor my friends said it had problems. People should tell you what is wrong with a play before they rush it into production."42 Williams, however, felt that he had no choice. Age, he thought, had disfigured him,43 and so bad, he believed, was his reputation in New York especially that he had to surround himself with "a few respectable looking people in order to be accepted for lunch at better places."44 Unlike Mrs. Goforth, Williams could not cut himself off from the free-loaders. Instead, out of need and spurred by his characteristic accommodating attitude of the seventies, he, like Vieux, put up with them. In 1975, he wrote: "Most of my life has been spent with intimate companions of a complex and difficult nature. It is only recently that I have learned to accept the bargain, by which I mean to treasure the lovely aspects of their natures...and to stoically live through their abrasive humors" (Memoirs 242). Like Vieux, he gave them more than he
could ever receive in return. Williams reaches for a grim vision of competition between artists when he dramatizes death as a possible outcome.

II. 2. 2. The Artist as Destructive Agent

It would seem that by the end of the 1960s Williams had accepted the fact of his death--artistic and biological. Early in 1970 he told Tom Buckley, talking about The Two-Character Play: "If I live, it will be my best play, but this does not mean it will run more than three weeks. In any case, it will be my last long play" (Conversations 179). But Williams' life in the sixties was smoldering ash. As I have shown earlier, like the phoenix, to use a Lawrencean image that very much fascinated him, he "rose" in the seventies. In other words, as daunting as practicing his art had become, he went on writing and producing plays. Among other things, he dramatized what he saw as his physical and psychological pain, a result of competing with other artists.

The artistic world in Williams' later plays is a world of pain. As it affects the weaker artist, much of this originates from competing with other artists. The pain is the result of an existential fight for physical and particularly artistic survival--the physical may be directly related to artistic decline (as is the case with performing artists) but simple depletion of energy always has its effect. Though younger artists appear most frequently as a danger to their older colleagues, sometimes, as in Clothes for a Summer Hotel, age difference seems unimportant. Williams' concern is primarily with the forms of destructive relations among artists. And through these, we have significant indications of Williams' own experience with other artists.

As I observed earlier, Mrs. Goforth first takes Chris for a free-loader. In a sense, even ultimately, Chris appears to be similar to the types that Mrs. Goforth hates. For, like the beatniks, he frustrates her need, giving her death instead of sex. That Chris's role is
complex shows in his relation with Mrs. Goforth. For instance, in what he denies or gives her, Chris stands in a symmetrical opposition to Alex—her ex-lover—whom he recalls by the manner of his arrival and the coincidence of this with her remembrance of Alex. Relating the two young artists to Mrs. Goforth's artistic career, we see that their significance respectively symbolizes her position in the artistic world before and after the fall. As Alex stood for the bliss of stardom, Chris stands for the sadness and frustration consequent to her loss of cachet.

Commenting on the character of Chris, Williams says that he "is a purveyor of my philosophy. He brings Mrs. Goforth values that her life was the opposite of, an acceptance of what must happen"—death. This positive perspective on Chris manifests Williams' mind-set and strategic justification of his fate in the sixties. Chris's spiritual offering (an Oriental philosophy about death) to Mrs. Goforth provides her a metaphysical justification of her defeat, which projects her death into a positive light that redeems her in her defeat. Therefore, though Chris finds a place in Williams' long line of vagrant poets, as some critics have pointed out, he envisions him through his then recently acquired Oriental philosophy of acceptance to confer upon him a new dimension and function. This meaning of Chris to Mrs. Goforth evokes Williams' own new relation to life in 1960s.

The Gnädiges Fräulein provides the most complex representation of competition in its particularly destructive form. The trajectory of the Fräulein's career traces the roller-coaster pattern of her artistic life. In Europe, fighting her way up from being a "young" artist to being an established one, she displaced the seal trainer, her artistic companion-cum-competitor (see also the section on the approvers' power). Continuing the open competitive battle initiated by the Fräulein, the seal and its trainer soon dislodged her from her achieved position, bringing her career to ruin (257). In the present of the play,
evolving in the symbolic artistic world of the Cocaloony Keys, her place is at the bottom of the power hierarchy. The other artist figures, Indian Joe and the cocaloony birds, completely dominate her.

Some critics have considered Indian Joe as a caricature of Williams' parasitic companions and the birds as a symbolic portrait of legitimizing figures. These interpretations are at best partial and at worst inaccurate. Indian Joe, the birds, and the Fräulein exist in an artistic and power relationship that corresponds to a triadic representation of the 1960s artistic field: respectively, Off-Broadway (Indian Joe), Off-Off-Broadway (the birds), and the surviving yet not thriving old generation of the Williams and Millers (the Fräulein).

Earlier, I established that new wave writers such as Albee whom Williams particularly admired functioned successfully both on and Off-Broadway. In light of this versatility, we can establish that Williams' portrayal of Indian Joe conflates images of Broadway and Off-Broadway, and that Indian Joe conveys his perception of, say, Albee. For one thing, Indian Joe is the most successful of the three artists. Beside this, images of Broadway appear in his link with Hollywood. He is dressed like a Hollywood Indian, a characteristic that draws upon the myth of the Indian as savage. The use of this cliché is reminiscent of Albee's use of the middle-class American in The Zoo Story (1958) or the archetypal American family in his American Dream (1960). With Indian Joe, it (the cliché) constitutes the justification of his physical power and sexual attraction. (Perhaps this also carries the idea of Broadway's prostitution, but this is beyond my concern here). There is something "wild" about him that confers on him exotic power. On the other hand, the exaggerations of his features rely on dramatic modes akin to Off-Broadway practices of enhancing dramatic effect with surrealist, Brechtian, or other similarly useful devices (Simard 38). Physical action and presence rather than language characterize his
His most memorable fight against the cocaloony bird, described by Polly as the
meeting of the "unmovable object" and the "irresistible force" (240), best dramatizes this
and reveals Indian Joe's power. Like the wife's axe in Kirche, the tomahawk he
dexterously wields represents his primary and most effective language in his dealings
with the birds. Where he uses language, it serves to underscore physical action or body
language. For instance, following his sexual encounter with Polly, he walks out on the
verandah, beating his chest and accompanying his action with the few words he ever
says: "I feel like a bull" (250).

In everything he displays, from his physical power to his attractive style and body,
Indian Joe is the opposite of the Fräulein. He spells out her powerlessness, her
grotesqueness, and her lack of success. While she strives to survive, he simply reigns
over the stage, fed, admired, and desired (in both senses of the term) by the press (Polly),
producers (Molly) and actors (Fräulein)--his audience. He contributes to the Fräulein's
psychological crisis, for she longs for him in vain. When losing her sense of reality she
takes him for the seal trainer--her former colleague, dream-lover, and destroyer--which
only underscores her subordination to him.

Next in the power hierarchy after Indian Joe come the cocaloony birds. As
characters, the birds evoke experimental conventions in obvious ways, and with clear
reference to Off-Off-Broadway, the performance tradition which started in the sixties and
came into full swing in the seventies. The refusal of written text in favor of
improvisation by Off-Off-Broadway avant-gardists, their use of "crude visual images," to
quote Michael Smith (Berkowitz 96), their emphasis on colors, physicality, etc.(Marranca
1984 98), correspond clearly with the birds. Sharing their gray color with most presences
in the cocaloony keys, and by their very animal nature, the birds suggest performance
theater in its endeavors to integrate environmental realities into art (Marranca 69-71) or as
Berkowitz puts it, to collapse the limits between art and life (111). Perhaps too, they recall theatrical practices such as that of Bread and Puppet Theater under Peter Schuman or Jean Claude Van Italie's plays in their use of giant puppets, marionettes, stylized costumes, etc. (Szilassy 74; Berkowitz 102).

The birds have "a powerful odor" (236) that disturbs Polly the media-woman. She makes Molly observe that the birds are "not a status symbol" to have "in front of the big dormitory" (236), least of all within it. By their odor, the birds recall the smelly beatniks that Mrs. Goforth refuses to harbor in her villa. Their odor is a manifestation of their living in the docks. Williams' insistence on it suggests Off-Off-Broadway artists' typical locations in unconventional theatrical houses: barns, cellars, church basements, etc. (Berkowitz 25, 95, 102). Polly's remark about their indecorous presence at or in the dormitory therefore brings to mind the boycott of experimental theater in the early stage of its development. It also implies the condescension of the leaders of commercial theater--and these include theater owners, producers and critics--toward the not-for-profit theater in its initial years (Sponberg xxvii).

The cocaloony birds' exclusive dramatic language is, like Indian Joe's, action and physical presence interspersed with the sporadic cry "Awk, Awk" (236). An image of Off-Off-Broadway's often peculiar and often crude dramatic language, this also evokes, as I have argued, the general distrust of verbal language in avant-garde theater. However, unlike the Fräulein's relation to verbal language (Cf. II. 3), the birds' as well as Indian Joe's does not express an inability to speak; theirs is a characteristic style, a sign of identity. Another remarkable aspect of Off-Off-Broadway evident in the birds and which also ties them to the Fräulein is their economic condition. Molly explains that.

Having passed...the zenith of her career...the Gnädiges Fräulein has turned her attention and transferred her battleground for survival to the fish docks, Polly. She's shamelessly, blamelessly gone into competition with the cocaloones for the throw-away fish...Well, they got a closed shop,
the cocaloonics, they seem to be unionized, Polly... So dimmer and dimmer became the view they took of her, till, finally, today, there was a well-organized resistance movement against her (238).

The allusions to life in the theatrical world are obvious enough. The scarcity of food, here as in Kirche, evokes Off-Off-Broadway's lack of economic viability, or, which comes to the same thing, manifests its repudiation of economic pursuits. The Fräulein's venture, or better, her fall into this world suggests Williams' repeated assertions in the sixties that his future lay outside Broadway. Yet, it would seem that the portrait of the Fräulein's fate stems more from fantasy than reality. Despite his declarations, in the 1960s Williams never accepted production of his plays even Off-Broadway. What fed the fantasy is, as I have shown, his idea that invitations to produce his plays Off-Broadway were indicative of a desire to kill him--artistically speaking.

In their competition with the Fräulein, the cocaloonics overpower her. Having scalped her and gouged her eyes, they are certain to get back whatever fish she manages to grab, as they do in her last venture. The birds also command some authority over Polly and Molly (235). But Molly's and Polly's fear of them is relative and mixed with contempt. This adumbrates the limitation of the birds' power. The limitation shows even more in their defeat by Indian Joe in the fight mentioned earlier.

More than a comment on the experimental practice or conventions, Williams' portrayal of the birds is an exploration of the impact of the experimental offsprings on the older artist that he was, and that the Fräulein is in the play. At bottom, the Fräulein is the weakest of all the artists in this play. A clear sign or strategy of survival, the sense of endurance that she displays ultimately exposes her lack of power. Williams liked to believe, as Maggie tells Brick (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof) or as Stella (A Streetcar) demonstrates, that the weak tend to show more endurance and strength than the supposedly strong (Conversations 1965 119). But at the play's close, the Fräulein faces imminent collapse. She is a typical later Williams protagonist for whom death is the
ultimate reality. Her powerlessness and defeat in relation to Indian Joe and the birds suggest, as Molly would put it, her failure to defend her position against the "parvenu crowd" (256). In theatrical terms, the aged and dilapidated established artist succumbs to the assertive new wave of artists.

This is a pattern of historical significance that impressed several writers besides Williams in the sixties and seventies. In Albee's *Yam and Fam*, Fam, the Famous American playwright, laments the effects of the new Off-Broadway writers, and is himself a victim of Yam, the Young American playwright. Thus, parodying Ibsen's *Mister Builders*, Fam whines: "The new generation's knocking at the door. Gelber, Richardson, Kopit... (Shrugs)... Albee... you... (Mock woe) you youngsters are going to push us out of the way..." (89). In Shepard's *Tooth of Crime*, Hoss, the established pop artist, not only yields his place to Crow, the youngster, but, unable to adapt to the new style, kills himself (111). A thread of professional jealousy links most dramatizations of the tension between artists. This was very familiar to Williams in the later part of his career.

**II. 2.3. Acts of Professional Jealousy**

A strain of jealousy—professional and otherwise—is apparent in the Fräulein's relations with both Indian Joe and the birds. But it is in such plays as *The Two-Character Play* and *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* that Williams perhaps best concerns himself with that theme. Whether we take Felice and Clare as brother and sister or as two sides of the same person, the dynamic between them plays out the characteristic tensions that obtain between artists sharing the same artistic space. Their competition is most reminiscent of Robert and the younger actors in Mamet's *A Life in the Theater*. Infuriated by the unnamed actress whom he deems incompetent, Robert cruelly says: "I want to kill the
... If I could do her in and be assured I'd get away with it, I'd do it with a clear and open heart" (19). In the theater, Robert asks, "What do we have but our fellow workers [to rely on]?" (75). This is a rhetorical question which, under the apparent ironical tone, manifests the competitive tension that is eating at Robert. Interdependence in the artistic world does not preclude competition. It exacerbates it. The experience of Felice and Clare reveals a significant aspect of this.

Interdependence characterizes Clare's and Felice's relations. "If you'd stopped with me, I could have stopped" (316), explains Clare who believes they should have long before quit the theater. The inability of each of them to be alone on or off the stage, or for that matter, to kill each other at the end of the play, is a further indication of their interdependence. It is the main reason that prevents Marnet's Robert from taking action, and compels the two of them to endure each other in an almost absurd way. Yet, characteristically, Clare and Felice compete between themselves.

At the beginning of the performance, Clare asks Felice: "Are you going to throw speeches at me tonight?" (318). Behind these words is a state of conflict or struggle, the ultimate effect of which, Clare suggests, is the destruction of her performance. Her claim is analogous to what Robert believes he is a victim of when John "walks on his scenes" (41-42) or when he plays with the "incompetent actress" (19). Several times during their performance, Clare calls for cuts by striking on the piano. Most of the time, Felice refuses. At the end of the performance, when they fail to entertain the audience, they characteristically blame each other (357). The reasons each advances suggest the perception each has of him- or herself and consequently, of how they rate each other as artists. On the strength of his artistic age and attribution—he is a star actor, playwright, poet, and stage director—Felice condescends to Clare. He tells her what not to do before stepping on the stage or while on it. For instance, she must never look at an audience
before going on stage. At another time, he explains to the audience: "What I have to do now is keep her from getting too panicky to give a good performance" (310). In their present situation, Clare seems the most audience-conscious—in the negative sense—of the two, but she too boasts some strength and areas of superiority over Felice, namely in their relation with the press. She insists on having a pre-opening press conference, which Felice thinks they fortunately do not have to go through this particular night (312).

Furthermore, her account of Felice's "bellicosity" toward her is indicative enough: "You still cannot forgive me for my Cleopatra notices. Ran into columns of extravagance and your Anthony's were condensed as canned milk" (317). Reality or pure fantasy, these beliefs serve Clare in her competitive stance toward Felice.

Competition among artists is not a simple matter of being selfish. To exist in the artistic world is essentially to differ (Bourdieu 58). The act of differing is an expression, or better a primary strategy of survival, of legitimating oneself. In *Clothes*, the strained relationships between Scott and Zelda have to do with this. Scott plays the role of a negative audience and critic to Zelda's artistic undertakings. But most insisted on in the play is the image of Scott as a "destructive force"50 with Zelda as the victim. As I showed earlier, Zelda is a victim of several denials. Ensnared in his search for or adherence to artistic discipline, he destroyed Zelda's dream for a happy marital life, which led her into other activities such as dancing. Also, unwilling to share his subject—which is Zelda herself—with her, he did everything he could to discourage her ambitions to write. Denied escape into "acts of creations," as Zelda explains, she ended up in madness (274). Zelda did however write a book, *Save Me the Waltz*. Evocation of this book in the action unveils the crux of the competitive tension between Scott and Zelda as artists.

This occurs during the visit at the asylum. Faced with Dr. Zeller's praises of Zelda's book, Scott characteristically responds: "My publishers and I edited that book! --
Zelda did however write a book, *Save Me the Waltz*. Evocation of this book in the action unveils the crux of the competitive tension between Scott and Zelda as artists.

This occurs during the visit at the asylum. Faced with Dr. Zeller's praises of Zelda's book, Scott characteristically responds: "My publishers and I edited that book! — Tried to make it coherent" (259). Unable to control the gush of jealousy apparent in his response, Scott "sways and uses the bench for support" (259). The psychological implications behind this recall Mamm's play, especially the scene where Robert visits John and finds him rehearsing. As he watches John declaiming what sounds like a Shakespearean play, he measures up the extent of his own limits. Thus he confesses when John discovers him hiding behind the door: "you make me feel small. You make me feel small (sic), John. I don't feel good" (83). In the same way, Scott feels small and had when Dr. Zeller praises Zelda's book as "an important work" that contains passages "that have a lyrical imagery that moves me, sometimes, more than your own" (259).

Similarly too, Scott and Hemingway try, in the same play, to make each other small by revealing each other's weaknesses as artists and individuals. While Hemingway underscores Scott's androgynous personality (269) and his "professional envy" toward Zelda (269), Scott points out Hemingway's art as essentially a strain of self-portraits (268) and his life as fundamentally solitary (272).

Personally, Williams felt no less small and bad during his changed artistic circumstances in the sixties and well beyond up to his death. The rise of the New Wave writers is a primary cause of this. From Europe, there were Beckett, Pinter, Anouilh, Osborne, and among the home grown, there were Richardson and Gelber, for instance. But always coming first on his list was "Edward Albee, of course," for he is a "brilliant artist, and a very brave man, I think" (*Conversation* 1961 95). In interview after
Capping their success in stylistic explorations was their appeal to audience. Albee's case was especially remarkable to Williams. Alan Schneider reveals that it is when Williams saw his successful production of Albee's Tiny Alice that he began to court him to direct his own Slapstick Tragedy (see section on producers). I have already mentioned the outcome of this collaboration. To insist on Williams' competition with the new wave writers, especially the home grown, does not necessarily imply that he had no idea of his stature beyond Broadway or even the American borders, or for that matter of the literary value of his work. Brecht, D. H. Lawrence, Strindberg, and especially Chekhov, were artists he often compared himself to or admired, as we may infer from his acknowledgment of their influence on him: "It has often been said that Lawrence was my major literary influence. Well, Lawrence was, indeed...but Chekhov takes precedence as an influence" (Memoirs 41). The fact is that, as someone steeped in existential problems, and as a writer for the theater, his more immediate artistic environment remained his principal and necessary concern.

The failure of his plays in the midst of the New Wave writers' success generated in Williams the characteristic effects and stance that he explores in his plays: "It's something that drives me crazy with jealousy. While I'm in the theater, I'm enthralled by it and I say, oh, God, if I could write like that. If only I were twenty five and just starting out, what these boys could have given me" (Conversation 1962 98). His imaginative portrayal of the Fräulein's pain as well as his reinterpretation of the Fitzgeralds' story had an objective ground in his personal experience.

By the end of the 1960s, the rise to prominence of the Shepards and Mamets most certainly increased his pain. This is when he started work on the historical play Clothes, as if to find solace in the fact that his case was not singular, that perhaps after all the fault lay not in him but in something American51 or at least trans-individual. He has
Hemingway say in *Clothes*: "I've always had the feeling that it's a mistake for writers to know each other. The competitive element in the normal male nature is especially prominent in the nature of writers" (267). Whatever Williams' justifications, we must not lose sight of the fact that competition among writers cannot be dissociated from the determinism of the artistic field itself and the historical and cultural contingencies that shape it.

In the '60s and '70s, while his present plays, a product of his new artistic identity, were being rejected, his earlier artistic creations witnessed intense and successful revivals. Robert Berkwist describes an aspect of this in 1975:

In fact, most of his "classics" were revisited, especially in the seventies, and for various reasons. Bigsby observes how revived in 1975 in the midst of the Watergate scandal, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with its denunciation of mendacity, was particularly appropriate; hence its success (Bigsby 1993 58). As I showed earlier, revivals were not peculiar to Williams early plays; they denoted a cultural trend. But for Williams, this interest in his earlier plays simply translated as the Williams of the 1940s and 1950s competing with the Williams of the 1960s and 1970s. He first explained in 1965:

You're always competing with your earlier work. In my particular case they all say, oh that *Glass Menagerie*! until you almost begin to hate it. Because you know you have been working, fiercely all the time since. And it's not quite possible to believe that you haven't created something since then (Conversation 122).

In 1971, he repeated the same complaint almost verbatim (Conversations 192-193). On another level, he strongly believed, perhaps not without reason, that the awards
he received were in recognition of his plays of the 1940s and 1950s. For instance, in June 1980, presenting him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Jimmy Carter said: "Tennessee Williams has shaped the history of American drama. From passionate tragedy to lyrical comedy, his masterpieces dramatize the eternal conflict of body and soul, youth and death, love and despair. Through the unity of reality and poetry Tennessee Williams shows that the truly heroic in life or art is human compassion."53 Any Williams scholar reading this would easily imagine which era of his career inspired the president. Logically, as we will see, Williams eventually came to hate the prize-givers. Williams was very sensitive to this definition of his artistic identity, and this clearly oriented his portrayal of characters such as Clare and Felice in *The Two-Character Play*, as two competing sides of the same artist. Also, if as Donald Pease argues, through Zelda and Scott, "Williams explores the relationship between character as figurative, substantial identity [Zelda?] and character converted into apparitional form [Scott?],"54 we must perceive the conflict between Zelda and Scott as a meditation on Williams' own conflicting artistic identities.

Lastly, in two of his 1970s' memory plays, *Vieux Carré* and *Something Cloudy*, Williams portrays artists who are supportive of each other. In *Vieux Carré*, the Writer defends the old and dying painter against eviction (73-75) and returns his visits (90)--that is, shows understanding and compassion. The Writer himself finds compassion from the fashion designer Jane Parks, as when she learns about the rejection of his manuscript. Perhaps most important, taking him to the West Coast, Sky the vagrant musician--a symbol of freedom whose name inscribed on the bag "shines like a prediction" (8)--saves him from the darkness and dampness of 722 Toulouse Street and the inhibition of creative energy that characterize it. In *Something Cloudy*, August pleads with the doctors to help dancer Kip protect his pride, "All that he's got left" (26). In his turn, Kip saves
August from drowning, and helps "get the ocean out of" him. Water, in fact all aquatic modalities and natural phenomena associated with them, is in this play the central symbol of destruction.

Williams' depiction of supportive relations among artists, like his portrayal of the producer figure in *In the Bar*, has to do with nostalgia—a throwback into the times when he could depend on the kindness of strangers (*Conversations* 1971 192)—and his wishes. By the 1970s, allegedly, he had stopped competing: "It used to be a terrible bit of competition... Now I could even be on the same block as Edward Albee and wish him luck" (*Conversations* 1972 219). This is a clear expression of his changed vision of life, as of the seventies, and its attendant accommodating attitude. But we must not lose sight of the fact that Williams always "was very generous with a number of young artists who needed cash. There was a generous streak in him, and he seemed to want to protect as much as he asked for protection."

For the most part, the "protections" he got from youth in the later years were calculated. In any case, by the mid-1970s, it seems that no protection was supportive enough for Williams, because no help could ever bring him back to the bright lights. The ultimate determining reality of Williams' portrayal of the relations between artists was his own changed relationship with and perception of the younger artists—the new-wave—and his own former artistic self—the "old-wave." The old-wave had a larger impact on Williams' later career, for it affected his practice in other respects. Its impact on critical standards and audience perception of his later plays, and the extent to which this can be said to have shaped the dramatic portraits of the legitimizing forces will concern me in the next section.
II. 3. Audiences and Critics: Approvers as Antagonists of the Artist-figure

As legitimate members of the cultural world, audience and critics play a significant role in both the artist-figure's perception of himself and the artistic or commercial value of his/her work. In other words, they take part in the creative process. 56 Audience and critics are large entities that I have defined elsewhere. I will call them approvers after William Goldman (1969–67), for they are ultimately called upon to sanction the value of the artistic product and legitimize the artist's identity. Basically, Williams' later artist-figure is in search of his or her reputation. And whether the artist experiences the approvers simply in his/her consciousness or as dramatic presences, fear, and images of danger and destruction dominate them. To explore Williams' dramatization of these emotions and images and their bearing on the artist-figures and their work will constitute one aspect of my concern here. As critics appear significantly among Yam's villains so they do among the "beasts" in the jungle of Williams' theater (Memoirs 85).

All through the 1960s and 1970s, Williams never stopped railing against the approvers' rejection of his plays. Essentially he saw his difficulties with the approvers in terms of artistic taste, which he ineluctably and justifiably tied to the effect of commercialism, and, especially where critics were concerned, to what he called their viciousness—their critical attitude. Though it is possible to agree with Williams' assessment of his predicament, this obviously needs qualification. For one thing, the doubts that some critics raised about the inherent quality of some aspects of his later plays are not pointless. 57 And on another level, his case was in no way singular. By the 1960s, so unpredictable had audiences become that no playwright was immune to failure on Broadway (Berkowitz 169-171). Williams knew very well that Edward Albee, his model of success among the New Wave writers, was also at odds with the approvers. Neither were the critical fates of such other "big names" as William Inge and Arthur
Miller a secret to him. Hal Foster has argued that "the extraordinary expansion" of theater conventions in contemporary America has resulted in "provocative contradictions." To Williams the most provocative contradictions lay in the way the approvers continually rejected his work.

We must remember that taste and the critical attitude that Williams perceived as vicious do not stand in a void. As "one of the key signifiers and elements of social identity" (Jenkins 139), taste echoes larger cultural realities. Taken as an aspect of the struggle inherent in artistic fields, the approvers' stance is no less a cultural signifier. In other words, taste and critical attitude here are elements of the larger cultural contingencies of the sixties and seventies. For this and because Williams saw his condition with the approvers mainly from this angle, taste and critical attitude are crucial notions in our investigation. More generally, how Williams' perception and his actual experience shaped his portrayal of the artist-figure's relations with the approvers will concern us.

II. 3. 1. Making or Breaking the Artist: Aspects of the Approvers' Power

In three consecutive plays of the sixties, Williams portrayed actors, or more generically, performing artists: Mrs. Goforth as an ex-Follies' star in The Milk Train, the Fräulein as an ex-chanteuse in The Gnädiges Fräulein, and Clare and Felice as theater actors in The Two-Character Play. Perhaps the performing artist is the most audience-conscious artist. Facing the critics, actors take special risks: they "are alone at the edge of the abyss...[they are] the most dangerously placed artists in the most dangerous art." In the sixties plays especially, this knowledge served Williams to probe the determinism of the approvers in the shaping of the artist's identity and, ultimately, the values of his art. In the seventies' plays, we have a less direct approach to, and more diverse images of, the
audience. This reflects the types of artists in those plays: fiction writers, playwrights, and performing artists. Notwithstanding the diversity, the dominant significance of the audience either remains similar to, or constitutes an elaboration on, what we have in the sixties plays. It is therefore possible to draw thematic lines that subsume the different portraits of the audience over the two decades. The artist's awareness of the approvers' power is an apt theme with which to start.

One of Mrs. Goforth's principal concerns, when Chris arrives in her villa, is to learn as much as she can about who he is. By the end of the play, she confronts him and soon their conversation winds up at the issue of identity:

Mrs. Goforth: How do you know he [the Swami] wasn't just an old faker?
Chris: How do you know I'm not just a young one?
Mrs. Goforth: I don't. You are what they call you!
Chris: [Taking her hand] As much as anyone is what anyone calls him.
Mrs. Goforth: A butcher is called a butcher, and that's what he is. A baker is called a baker, and he's a baker. A-- (116).

The immediate referent of this conversation is Chris' reputation as an Angel of Death. But the underlying truth applies to Mrs. Goforth—in both her past and her present lives—as well as to Williams' other artist-figures, whether they have retired, are in decline, or are seeking to establish their reputation. Reputation, or more generally, identity lies in the eyes of the beholder—that is, for Williams' artists, in the eyes of the approvers. In this lies the power of the audience and critics. It is a power that can make or destroy artists because it determines their artistic value. Awareness of this power mostly animates Mrs. Goforth, the Fräulein, and Felice and Clare.

In their days of stardom, both Mrs. Goforth and the Fräulein experienced the power of the audience in its positive dimension. Both were made by the audience's gaze, by how their respective audiences perceived them. When she entered the show-biz world at age fifteen, Mrs. Goforth made her way up the ladder in record time. She explains why:
I was just billed at the Dixie Doxy, was just supposed to move my anatomy, but was smart enough to keep my tongue moving, too, and the verbal comments I made on my anatomical motions while in motion were a public delight. So I breezed through show-biz like a tornado, rising from one-week ‘gigs’ in the sticks to star billing in the Folies while still in my teens...(67-68).

The Fraulein's ascension to stardom in Europe was even more striking and dramatic. At a "benefit performance before the crowned heads of Europe," explains Molly, she stole the show during one of the most performed tricks of her group. Using her mouth, she caught the fish intended for the trained seal: "This switcheroo took the roof off the old Royal Haymarket" (256). Thereon, the Fraulein became a star overnight because "popular demand [for her switcheroo] was overpowering" (257). Thus she remained until, as I have already shown, the seal and its trainer took their revenge.

Mrs. Goforth and the Fraulein are now fallen heroes. The dramatization of their respective pasts is a statement about the audience's power. The stories of their artistic careers evoke Williams as he stood in the sixties, looking retrospectively at his own artistic trajectory, meditating on the roller coaster pattern of his own fate in the hands of the approvers. Harold Clurman argued in 1966 that The Gnädiges Fräulein is "filled with sardonic mirth at the plight of the artist applauded and glamorized in his triumphs and then repudiated and derided when he fails."60 As Williams himself remembered in 1975 when writing his memoirs, Broadway rescued him in the beginning of his career and the press boosted his popular image (Memoirs 7-8). By the time of The Milk Train and The Gnädiges Fräulein, his plays had stopped appealing to the Broadway audience, and the leitmotif then in the press was that, to quote one headline, "Mistuh Williams, He Dead."61 His death decreed by the approvers, Williams would, however, not stop practicing, as some would have had him do. He developed especially complex relations with the critics that, perhaps better any other artist-figure, Clare and Felice capture in The Two Character Play.
From the point of view of Clare and Felice, the performing artist's relations with the critics are a chain of binary oppositions characterized by partnership-antagonism, love-hate and need-fear. The motives behind the first terms of the pairs are at once the bases for the antagonism, hate, and fear. This apparent paradox denotes the centrality (literally and metaphorically) of the critics, here present as the press.

Conceived of as a "public service" agent (Gottfried 17) or as an interpreter (Palmer 11) the press fulfills its function evolving between, on the one hand, the artist and his art, and on the other, the audience. From this position, it controls the identity of the artist and his art, and the audience's perception. Danger lies in the act of control. For instance, in the interior play of The Two-Character Play, The Press Scimitar's report on the incident in the family house largely shapes the public image of Felice and Clare. Clare insists that the report was "malicious" (337), and that its allusions to them "as the deranged children of a father who was a false mystic" were "sly" (337-338). Wherever the truth lies, the essential point here is that this is the image that sticks in the mind of the public, and thereby alienates Felice and Clare from the public. In the frame play, Clare alleges that she has had a better public image than Felice as a result of the notices of the press on them. The two occasions that come to her mind are their appearance as Anthony and Cleopatra some time earlier (317) and their press conferences. "You're terrible with the press, you go on and on about 'total theatre' and, oh, do they turn off you and onto me..." (312). We gather from this that not only is Felice's artistic penchant well known, but so too is his being a bore about it. On the other hand, Clare sees herself as a darling of the press because she believes she is always "wonderful with the press" (312) and insists on having a pre-opening press conference. Yet as the performance allows us to discover, Clare is not so wonderful. In the course of the performance, discovering the press in its actual role as interpreter, her attitude is self-revelatory:
Clare: [Pointing out toward the audience]: Felice--someone's talking out there with his back to the stage as if he were giving a lecture.
Felice: That's the interpreter.
Clare: Oh, my God, he's telling them what we're saying!?
Felice: Naturally, yes, and explaining our method. That's what he's here for.
Clare: [half-sobbing]: I don't know what to do next--I...
Felice: --I know what to do. (334)

In this scene, Williams articulates the essence of the media's impact on the performing artist. Clare's reaction facing the awesome power of the press is paradigmatic.

Not long ago, recalling the opening night of Andrew Lloyd Webber's Broadway hit *Phantom of the Opera*, actor Michael Crawford relates his panic hearing of the arrival of the press: "I think I had a breakdown on the spot. Frank Rich of *The New York Times* was going to be there."62 Clare's fear is indeed the fear of the performing artist playing out her fate in front of the approvers, facing the abyss: the judgment of the critic. Evolving in the theater world, Williams naturally knew of this reality of the performing artist. But what is more, in the sixties and seventies, he was himself an actor-like figure at the edge of the abyss.63 Desperately seeking to boost his career, he appeared as an actor in his *Small Craft Warnings* in 1972. By this time, he had had so many of his plays lambasted, he has read so many write-ups calling for his surrender or simply asking him to accept the reality of his fall that he summed up his experience of critics and reviewers in the sixties by saying simply that they put him down (*Memoirs* 211-213). Though he could distinguish between the good and bad critics,64 as a community he saw them as "killers" (*Memoirs* 242) like Walter Kerr who "killed *The Slapstick Tragedy* in one line" (*Memoirs* 212) or as sinners of the "unforgivable" type (*Memoirs* 173) who knew nothing but vengeance.

Analysts such as Schmidt Mulhisch (*Conversations* 1975 296) or Glenn Loney tend (with reason) to support Williams' point by stressing that his critics were sometimes unfair and too harsh.65 For instance, writing in 1966, Harold Clurman said of *The Milk
Train that "in a sense it is not so much a bad play as no play."66 Time called In The Bar a play more "deserving of a coroner's report than a review."67 The Village Voice described Vieux Carré as one of his last plays one would hardly "want to see on stage again."68 Of the same play The New Statesman wrote: "it seems to me that no sane spectator would fail to prefer traffic noise to yet more of that (sic)."69 Obviously, these are the type of devastating notices that a playwright, especially a commercial one, dreads. What is more, it is often hard to share the views of the reviewers, as I will later show when investigating the reasons behind these "killings." For the moment, I want to stress the acts of killing themselves as a manifestation of the critics' power as Williams imagined or experienced it. For him, theirs simply exemplifies the destructive practice of labeling which in the intellectual field is a dangerous weapon (Jenkins 160). But even then, we must remember that, at bottom, the critics' attitude is a product of their sense of aesthetics as Broadway agents. Though he found it hard to accept the rules of the game, Williams certainly understood very well the cultural dimension of their taste and attitude. He gives us much insight into the matter in a number of his plays.

II. 3. 2. Commercialism, Taste, Critical Practice, and the Artist's Plight

Central to the theory of the cultural field, the economic metaphors of market, supply and demand (Jenkins 87) are especially relevant to the analysis of the relationships between the artist and the approvers. Underscoring the relatively conservative nature of commercial markets, as we saw earlier, Raymond Williams hints at a major problem for Williams' artists, and tells us that Williams' own difficulties are not necessarily due to the intrinsic quality of his work. In the main, Williams' later artist-figure has difficulty offering satisfactory works to the consumers, the approvers. Through this Williams profoundly indicts the approvers. His dramatization of this indictment is especially
virulent and consistent in rendering the approvers' taste and critical attitude as informed by commercialism. Whether s/he is an active participant or just an icon of commercialism, the characteristic image of the commercial approver in his plays is unflattering. Superficial in his/her understanding of art, s/he has doubtful tastes marked by love of sensation and simplicity.

For both Mrs. Goforth and the Fräulein, popularity, at least in the sense implied earlier, belongs to the past. Yet acting, the sense of being a spectacle to an audience, remains central in their lives. In this, Mrs. Goforth particularly recalls such heroines of Williams' early plays as Blanche or Maggie the cat. Having lost her ability to indulge in pretense, the Fräulein is a new breed, but she recalls Mrs. Goforth through the idea of performance. How the approvers assess the performance of the artist is of interest here.

When Mrs. Goforth retires from Show-hiz and settles in the mountain in her villas, she is not simply hiding from her former audience whose "delight" her aging "anatomy" can no longer elicit. Struck by the same disease of Time that ails Princess in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, she tries to resist critical judgment by cutting herself off from the public gaze. Yet the intrusion of Chris in her reclusive world introduces a theatrical dynamic in which he plays the role of an approver and she takes up her former identity as a star (see chapter 3). Mrs. Goforth's gestures, dancing or showing her bosom, and her entire discourse about her past and public self—which, to her, means her physical appearance—aim to control her own identity, that is, how Chris perceives her. But in the end, it is Chris who, arriving at the villa with a clear knowledge of who she is, imposes himself, as I have shown earlier. In other words, Mrs. Goforth fails to move her "audience"--Chris. The imagery of lack of milk expressed in the title indicates this well. She must accept her inability to feed her audience.
The kind of mind-set with which Chris arrives at Mrs. Goforth's characterizes most portraits of audiences in Williams' later plays. In *Something Cloudy*, behind the various conditions imposed on August in order to have him rewrite his "poetic plays" lurks a fixed artistic taste that needs to be catered to. But perhaps most of all, it is in *The Two-Character Play* that Williams profoundly explored this aspect of the audience. Dramatizing the dangerous nature of the approvers' taste, Williams enhanced its effects on performing artists Clare and Felice. Among other things, the enhancing takes the form of an acute awareness of danger that haunts Clare and Felice throughout the action.

The portrait of the audience largely comes out through Clare. She has the most negative image of the audience, alternatively defining them as "inhuman" (313) and "enemies" (317), or using bestiary epithets to characterize them. They are wolves (358) and "fur-bearing mammals" (359) who could eat up Felice and who keep panicking her. This recalls Williams' perception of the theater people as jungle beasts. At one point Clare suggests that the audience may have killed Fox, the missing director, for food for their dogs (359). The process of animalization here indicts the audience's taste, calling attention to its abnormalcy, its grotesqueness, and its cruelty.

The two levels of *The Two-Character Play* contain similar images of the audience. In the interior play where Felice and Clare are estranged from social life, their neighbors as well as the larger public symbolize the audience. The two characters' fear of public judgment and their eventual inability to go out of the family house parallel their experience and predicament in the theater of the frame play. The early arrival of the audience forces Felice and Clare to begin the performance in the conditions that I have described elsewhere (Director Figure). But the performance itself--like opening nights for Williams--begins in the midst of fears that bespeak the image of the audience as enemies. When it is time finally to open the play, "There are several guttural
exclamations from the house: above them, a hoarse male laugh and the shrill laugh of a woman." Faced with this, "Clare's eyes focus blazingly on the 'house': She suddenly flings her cloak to the floor as if challenging the audience to combat" (324-325).

The outcome of the combat is to her disadvantage, and the significance of this is clear. Her mission was to transform the meaning of the "laugh" from mockery to appreciation; in other words, it was to elicit the delight of the audience. In the course of the combat Clare senses her defeat and explains it with a rhetorical question: "I wonder sometimes if it isn't a little too special, too personal, for most audiences" (Out Cry 62)—which underscores the problem of taste. But could Clare and Felice have overcome the audience anyway? For one thing, their words had to pass through the interpreter, a symbol of the "critics who may misinterpret the play, or in a broader sense the mind-sets, the whole array of personal experiences and concerns we the audience bring to the play."?1 The truth, therefore, is that Clare's failure to surmount her awareness of the audience signals the audience as a crucial handicap to her performance. As Felice tells her, "you must never look at an audience before a performance. It makes you play self-consciously, you don't get lost in the play" (317). Clare ends up doubting her own ability to get her message through to the audience. As a result, she cannot "get lost in the play"—that is, she cannot perform correctly. It is therefore she who notices the audience's departure while they are performing:

Clare: Felice, come out of the play. The audience has left, the house is completely empty.
Felice: --Walked? Out? All?
Clare: [She has picked up their coats from behind the sofa]. You honestly didn't notice them get up and go? (375)

The departure of the audience does not stop Felice and Clare. The performance has other meanings for them as I will show in Chapter 3. Yet it is noteworthy here that the absence of an audience drastically alters the value of their art, and its meaning too:
"the spectator—no less than the actor, designer or director—is a collaborator in the creation of the form, as well as the final judgment of its power, beauty, effectiveness, appropriateness, and significance."  

Fear of losing the audience haunts the incipient playwright August in *Something Cloudy* and compels him to accommodate both producers and actors' artistic "taste." In the allegorical *Kirche*, the Lutheran priest's loss of his congregation strongly evokes a loss of audience in the theater. His consequent plight spells out the fate of an artist without audience. He becomes a different individual, plunging into "unchristian" practices: he kills his wife to collect the insurance money. His fall into silence is important, but this points to another field of interest that I will take up later.

Unlike the preceding artists in this section, the Fräulein keeps the interest of her audience steady—or almost. Contrary to Clurman's assessment, she is not repudiated in her present life. She is still "applauded" but for the "wrong reasons." As we have seen, Molly controls her life and artistic identity, offering her as a spectacle to the "audience"—her social guests and business partners. (The details of Polly's interest in the Fräulein, as we will see, also adumbrate the audience's taste.) Through Molly's appreciation of her, Williams parodies the approvers' taste.

The boarders of the dormitory are all "personages" of one sort or another whom Polly and Molly have "fun watching" (227). The Fräulein stands out as a "real personage" (226), and indeed Molly exploits her the most. Molly's idea of a personage indicates her taste and that of her public—those who must sanction the status of her "theater" and social standing. This taste translates as a love for the fantastic, the gothic. It is the Fräulein's demise, her loss of artistic control, her grotesqueries that her audiences—or critics for that matter—applaud. On the whole, with the Fräulein, Williams dramatized a macabre feasting on the artist—which was not without relation to his own experience. In 1965 he
cried out (Dehusscher 1987 71) that he had no more blood to give in the fight against the approvers.

Indeed, to understand the motivation and significance of the audience's taste in Williams' later plays, we must consider the playwright's own plight. There is a historical dimension to Williams' difficulties with audience taste; confronting it was not new for Williams in the sixties and seventies. Taste was the principal reason for the failure of his *Battle of Angels* in Boston (1939) and *Camino Real* (1953). Reacting to the latter play's case, he said:

As for those who departed before the final scene, I offer myself this tentative bit of solace: that these theatergoers may be a little domesticated in their theatrical taste. A cage represents security as well as confinement to a bird that has grown used to being in it; and when a theatrical work kicks over the traces with such apparent insouciance, security seems challenged and, instead of participating in its sense of freedom, one out of a certain number of playgoers rush back out to the more accustomed implausibility of the street he lives on (*Where I Live* 67).

In the sixties and seventies, not one but multitudes "rushed back out" when confronted with Williams' plays. In the face of this, he not only lost his sense of understanding and magnanimity, apparent in the quotation, but also started to fear for his very existence as an artist. For what is a playwright without an audience, especially in commercial theater?

If as D. Pease puts it, his later work was mostly "measured in terms of its relationship with audience" (1980 59), Williams knew why this was a problem. In the mid-70s, Williams wrote: "there is much about them [the audience] that strikes me as obdurately resistant to my kind of theater these days. They seem to be conditioned to a kind of theater which is quite different from the kind I write."74 Taking the desertion of his audience as a sign of lack of quality of his works, as so many critics have, is not acceptable. I have already defined the type of audience he faced in the sixties and seventies on Broadway and their inclination for specific plays, theatrical experiences. For a broader sense of the problem, we need to get at what the approvers object to about
Williams' plays. But first, let us investigate his dramatization of some aspects of commercially motivated practices and legitimizing forces, namely award giving and the journalistic practices of commercial reviewers.

It is essentially in *The Gnädiges Fräulein* that, through the idea of interviewing, Williams offers the most extensive and perhaps most illuminating analysis of the journalistic practice of critics. Portrayed in a symbolic mode, Polly the Gossip Columnist and Editor of the Cocaloony Gazette projects, like most characters in *The Gnädiges Fräulein*, multiple qualities in her role as a representative of the press—at least as Williams saw the press. She is both a competitor and an ally to Molly. She participates in the moral squalor and corruption of the dormitory. She loves the sensations and grotesqueries that it offers. The critic has his or her personal taste but, as the critic is chosen by the editors and publishers, the nature of his or her taste represents the newspaper's (Booth xvi; Harris 109-110). Metonymically, Polly dramatizes the reality of the press. In her continual self-appraisal—a strategy she uses, among other things, against Molly—Polly underscores both the "power of the press" that she has "behind her" (235) and the function of her write-up as a "weapon" (224). She indeed strikes an advantageous deal with Molly on the basis of that strength.

The deal allows Polly to interview the Fräulein. In the interview she not only dramatizes her part in the "killing" of the Fräulein, but also gives expression to her—and thereby her readers'—artistic "competence" and taste. When she has "seen all sides of her costume" (232), Polly's interest shifts to the Fräulein's spectacle, her "art" itself (232). However, for this, she proves incompetent:

[The Fräulein assumes a romantically theatrical pose on the porch and begins to sing.]
Fräulein: Stars are the windows of Heavn-ven
That an-gel peek throooought
[She stops in mid-gesture. frozen.]
Polly--Has she finished the number?
mellowing files and jerk out the copy on the lately no longer so lively” (253). This is, to use Williams' expression, a macabre practice (Memoirs 241).

The portrait of Chris in The Milk Train comes close to duplicating this practice. Chris arrives, some critics have remarked, in the manner of Christ or St. Christopher; but Chris also evokes the critics who by the 1960s had pronounced the artistic death of Williams. Like a media-man arriving for an interview (or an audience for a spectacle), he stealthily walks into Mrs. Gooforth's residence or theater seeking to impose his vision of life on her. His religiously evocative name links him even more to the critics. Endowed with the power to declare the success or failure of a play—the "death" or survival of an artist—New York critics go by the religious title "high priest" of New York (Conversations 1975 296). Centering on acceptance, Chris's adopted Oriental philosophy recalls the obituary quality, in Williams' eyes, of some critical writings (Memoirs 241-242). On another level, Chris somehow compels us to remember In the Bar where, according to Felicia Londré, Miriam's dislike of Mark, "resembles the critic who refused to nurture the once-beloved artist" (1979 160). Ultimately, the impact of Chris and Miriam on the artists has a similar effect—both Mrs. Gooforth and Mark die.

As the main route to this macabre practice, interviews impressed other playwrights of the sixties and seventies. Albee's vignette on the villains in the theater world, Fam and Yam, is particularly noteworthy. Subtitled "An Imaginary Interview," the play follows the shape of an interview, and dramatizes the dangerous spirit that it evokes in the mind of a playwright like Williams. Yam, indeed, displays his villainy by tricking the older playwright into submitting to an interview by telling him he needs advice on an article he is preparing about the villains in the theater world. The punchline is revelatory. On his way back from the meeting Yam phones from downstairs to thank the still elated Fam for the "interview":
Molly: Now, she's lost concentration....
Fräulein: [Returning from the start]

[Sighs]

[She freezes again in mid-gesture, opens and closes her mouth like a goldfish.]
Polly: Now what's she up to?
Molly: She's demonstrating

Polly: What's she demonstrating? (233)

Polly finds the Fräulein's "style" "peculiar" (247) and her language limited (237). Yet she cannot understand the Fräulein's "performance," and ends up basing her article on the interpretation provided by Molly. (She thereby co-opts Molly's taste.) That she should fail to understand this limited language is therefore more indicative of her own limitation. Style or language here clearly stands for everything that, as we will see, constituted the grounds for the critics' rejection of Williams' plays. The allegorical dimension of the play makes this vagueness convincing.

On the other hand, the sensational side of the Fräulein easily provokes Polly's admiration. The "interview" session begins with a description of the Fräulein's costume and appearance, which Polly quickly and enthusiastically disposes of. At the end of the play, when the Fräulein returns from off-stage completely transfigured, Polly more easily penetrates her image--though obviously still imitating Molly--and can sympathize with her:

Polly: Is she making much progress?
Molly: Slow but sure. I admire her
Polly: [Sentimentally] I admire her, too
Molly: I hope you'll give her a sympathetic write-up
Polly: I'm gonna pay tribute to her fighting spirit (258).

This tribute, it turns out, constitutes Polly's coup de grace to the Fräulein as an artist. For, as she explains, it is meant for the morgue: "You must've heard of the newspaper file-case which is known as 'the morgue.' It's where the historical data, the biographical matter on a mortal celebrity is filed away for sudden reference, Molly. I mean the hot-line between the mortuary and the Gazette sounds off, and instantly you leaf through the yellowing,
Fall1: You're welcome.... You're welcome...heh heh heh. (He hangs up.... Strolls) You're welcome.... You're welcome. (Suddenly stops). THE INTERVIEW!!! THE INTERVIEW!!!!!
(His face turns ashen...his mouth drops open...(96).

Together with Williams' insight in *The Gnädiges Fräulein* and *The Milk Train* this exposition of the media's most preferred tool sheds a scorching light on the critical world of the 1960s and beyond--at least as Williams experienced it.

Williams has it that because of his health condition--we may add his growing fear or distrust of the press--all through the sixties his contacts with the press were brief and confined to opening nights (*Conversations* 1970 147). This is not totally true as, for instance, the number of his interviews in the 1960s shows (Cf. Devlin's *Conversations*). Williams' assertion simply indicates his mental disposition toward interviews. Between 1969 and 1970 he had two experiences with the press that are particularly reminiscent of the situation in Albee's vignette. He explains:

"A year ago, one of those big fancy magazines couldn't get an interview; so finally they wrote their own [Donald Newlove, "A Dream of Tennessee," in *Esquire*, November 1969, 172-178, 64-68]. I was terribly ill at the time and wasn't physically able to see them for the libelous story. much less grant an interview. ...Then there was that story by that thing, whatever he is, who calls himself a writer. It was in the Atlantic and you'd think they'd have better sense, at least, the editors. Oh God! What errors and misquotes and, well, you wouldn't believe it [Tom Buckley, "Tennessee Williams Survives," *Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1970: 98, 100-106, 108]. (*Conversations* 147).

From these experiences, Williams learned "to avoid such things [interviews]" (*Ibid.*), but clearly not for long as the number of interviews in the 1970s in Devlin's collection again testifies. What is more, by the mid-70s, though his distrust never subsided, Williams had started to use interviews as therapy and for self-publicity. The latter use of the press perhaps had a most damaging effect on his career, and he knew it. "The greatest danger, professionally, of becoming the subject of so many 'write-ups' and personal appearances on TV and lecture platforms is that the materials of your life, which are, in the case of all organic writings, the materials of your work, are sort of telegraphed in to those who see you and to those who read about you" (*Where I Live* 155). It is a danger he could however
not avoid, and to the approvers, his work indeed eventually appeared as *déjà vu* and *déjà entendu*. A reviewer of *Vieux Carré* once said that Williams could no longer shock his audiences with his plays because they knew so much about his characters that they could predict the resolution of his plots.76

Williams' responsibility does not, however, exonerate the media—people, driven as they were by commercial and sensational motives. Stressing the need of a reassessment of Williams' later works, Simon Trussler explains: "During his life time the line between the critical judgment of a theatrical craftsman and the journalistic treatment of a phenomenon was more than unusually hard to draw" (*Tennessee Williams on File 6*). Throughout the sixties and seventies, the media's practice as regards Williams' plays manifested the "murderous demands of commercial theater."77 We have seen some aspects earlier. Noteworthy here is the case of *Life*’s use of Williams' image to boost its sales in 1969. *Life* paid for a full-page ad in *The New York Times* announcing a forthcoming issue that "predicts the demise of one of America's major playwrights"—Williams.78

In his seventies plays, he offers different and yet compelling images of the commercial legitimating world. In *Vieux Carré*, the tourists who visit 722 Toulouse Street evoke spectators. By becoming a historical place, 722 Toulouse Street became an artistic object—by the time the Writer-narrator remembers it, it had become an art gallery—but it fell into the deprecatory world, for Williams, of commercialism. Perhaps the most thought-provoking aspect of Williams' venture into the critical realm in the seventies appears in his allegorical *Kirche*. With his evocative name, the Hotlicker calls up several legitimizing realities. He is "patron of the humanities and the arts" and dispenser of "the Hotlicker Prize for Excellence in the Art of Rhyme" (57).79 The phrase "art of rhyme" betrays the Hotlicker's artistic taste, which it undercuts. Rhyme brings up images of artistic control and classic taste—the image of "high" aesthetics. However, conflating the
realities of awards and criticism, the prizes yet have more "monetary" than "honorary" value (38). The emphasis on the monetary is a sign of devaluation. This in its turn is indicative of the "taste" of the dispenser of the prizes. The name Hotlicker itself is, as the Man says, "descriptive; three syllahles, two words combined into one" (38). It evinces destruction. Furthermore, subsisting the whole composite reality of the Hotlicker is the depreciating fact of prostitution with which he is associated. At the end of the play, the Man joins the Hotlicker uptown to, as he puts it, "contend once more for the Great Hotlicker Prize..." (57). In fact, only "licking," in the double-entendre that characterizes that word in the play, awaits him.

In this scorching portrait, the object of Williams' parody is obvious enough. "The Hotlicker Award," he has the Man explain, "is not one of those annual affairs of no more than annual significance but it is awarded only on such rare occasions as it is--DESERVED!--even if that should be no more than once in the lifetime of an immortal..." (38). Clearly, Williams was venting his frustration for being denied the Nobel Prize that he always thought he DESERVED, but never got (Five O'Clock Angel 1979 376). But beyond this, he lamented the more fundamental damage of commercialism to American drama and artistic taste. We can now turn to presenting aspects of Williams' later dramaturgy, and investigating relevant aspects of critical attitudes towards his plays.

On the whole, the idea that Williams' later plays are among the most difficult he ever wrote is not without ground; much of this is due to the heavy experimentation in which he indulged. A number of critics have concerned themselves with the details of Williams' innovations in his later plays. Donald Pease insists that Williams tried in his later plays to retrieve "the vision of the early plays from the hold of the public" (1980 59). Coming from a different perspective, Martin Gottfried underscores the fact that he
abandoned the artistic identity he "found years ago," and tried to "catch the beat of the newcomers" (23). That by the 1960s Williams had adopted a new dramatic approach to reality is quite evident and he never missed an occasion to point it out, but the change in itself could certainly not have been a problem. After all, is not artistic identity, like any other, subject to the contingencies of historical and cultural changes? Artistically innovative, Williams was in perfect tune with his time. One certainty is that Williams' dramaturgy, from its plotlessness to its use of grotesqueries, its experiments with language, and themes of destruction--all of which drew the attack of reviewers--was in no way peculiar in the sixties and seventies. Other playwrights were similarly preoccupied. At bottom, it is largely Williams' public image and the expectations of his approvers that constituted the crux of his plight.

A survey of the reviews of Williams' later plays, especially the sixties ones, shows a recurrence of the expression "this is not a Broadway play," by which they mean not a realistic or narrative play. Of The Milk Train, Variety wrote that it is a "dubious project for Broadway, picture or stock." Harold Clurman and Henry Hewes noted that The Gnädiges Fräulein did not conform to Broadway taste. Of Out Cry, the reviewer of the London Daily Mail said that it was "a defiantly non-commercial play." Williams himself went wrong, if he ever did, primarily by targeting the wrong audience--that is by sticking to Broadway audience while his dramaturgy had shifted to a new direction calling for different norms of appreciation. Despite the expansion of the theatrical culture, Broadway remained distinctive in its taste. Taking his plays to Broadway, Williams ineluctably exposed them to commercial critics and newspapers. Critical assessment of his plays largely relied on Broadway aesthetics. While he offered what he called a new type of writing, creating essentially non-realistic plays, the approvers longed for realistic ones--that is, well-made, and "simple naturalistic" plays (Gottfried 33) more attuned to
Broadway taste. A look at the major and recurrent "faults" found by reviewers is revelatory.

Williams' later plays struck many reviewers as structureless, lacking a clear narrative line that builds up to a climax. The reviewer of *Newsweek* typically wrote of *The Milk Train* that it is "a boneless sprawl." Clurman found it "amorphous." John Simon saw *The Two-Character Play* as a "lusterless concatenation of strained dialogues." Of *Vieux Carré*, the reviewer of *Variety* said: it is "a collection of sketches thrown together in a sleazy New Orleans setting." *The Daily News* called *Clothes* a "disjointed narrative." A spontaneous answer to these reviewers could simply be that plays do not have to have narratives to be good; this point has fortunately been made by some more receptive reviewers. The "potential greatness of this work [The Milk Train] lies in its achievement of total human mystery in Chekhovian moments of communion suddenly reached unintentionally by people moving in many directions." Of *Vieux Carré*, Clives Barnes had this to say: "Why do we always expect playwrights to write narrative plays? We don't always expect composers to write symphonies. Here it seems that Mr. Williams is concerned principally with the texture, the fabric of the work."

In the themes, characters and dramatic situations that they develop, Williams' later plays appeared as rehashes to some critics who chastised him for that. Reviewing *Vieux Carré*, Simon writes: "A man who would steal and retheal from himself is the saddest of failures." *Newsweek* on *The Milk Train*, and *The New Yorker* on *The Two-Character Play*, spend much time on the repetition leitmotif. These reviewers would have us believe that repetition in art is inherently negative. But this is so only with commercial art for which fashion is the rule of practice. Some angry readers have indeed seen the negative reception of Williams' plays as an indication that Broadway or American theater was "moribund." Yet the fact remains that not commercial criticism
alone, but even academic criticism tended to reject Williams' later plays on almost the same grounds as the popular press.\textsuperscript{98}

Signi Falk, perhaps the legitimate counterpart in the academic field of the notorious reviewer John Simon, is negative about almost everything Williams produced in the last twenty years of his career. While she acknowledges Williams' talent in his earlier plays,\textsuperscript{99} she sees nothing but rehashes in his later ones. Of "\textit{Vieux Carré} (1977), she writes that it is a restatement of old material in a form reminiscent of \textit{The Glass Menagerie} (167). She concludes her book with the now familiar point that Williams' genius is to be found in his "masterpieces" of the forties and fifties. And when she says that Williams "does not need to wait for the judgment of future generations" (167) to establish his stature, I suspect she simply means that there is nothing to expect from his later plays. The critics, says Leo Colt, "panned the first professional productions [of \textit{The Two-Character Play}], carping--they always do now--that it was not \textit{Cat, Streetcar}, even \textit{Iguana}."\textsuperscript{101} The works of such other academic critics as Robert Heilman or Roger Boxill are also flawed in the same respect. The former judges Williams' later plays inferior because in them, "Williams has not again come close to the tragic structuring of character and experience as he did in \textit{Streetcar}, \textit{Cat on a Hot Tin Roof}, and \textit{Summer and Smoke}."\textsuperscript{101} The latter sees his later plays as a recycling of the archetypes of the faded belle and the wanderer, a boring repetition of film technique and a return to lyric naturalism characteristic of his early autobiographic short plays.\textsuperscript{102}

On the whole, the critical attitude that centers on repetition comes close to what Palmer lists as a chief critical flaw: "Comparing productions that have unlike resources or objectives" (Palmer 150). In Williams' case, the tendency was to systematically use his earlier plays as a standard to measure the success of his later ones. On this, Palmer has this to say: "The practice of measuring one work against another by the same playwright
introduces a particularly subtle bias..." (150). While comparison is not inherently inappropriate, in Williams’ case, as some critics have observed, his earlier success sealed his critical fate. The bias in Williams’ case was not subtle but blatant—and damaging. Assuming that his earlier plays were always better, critics failed to see that "The master has crossed over many frontiers" since The Milk Train (Colt 6). It "was to be expected that his more recent efforts would disappoint [the critics], whatever their merits" (Loney 75). The critics gave no chance to his later plays to stand on their own right.

Also recurrent in the reviews are complaints about the allegorical, "absurd," and fantastic scope of most of his plays. In fact, anything that ranges far afield in the theatricality of his plays, from the kabuki stagehands in The Milk Train, the slapstick and Ionescoan overtones in The Gnädiges Fräulein, the heavy symbolism in The Gnädiges Fräulein, The Two-Character Play, the Pirandellian technique in The Two-Character Play to the persistent dreamlike quality in the seventies memory plays, always negatively impressed the majority of reviewers. Laurie Winer writes retrospectively about The Milk Train that: "audiences in the early 1960s were clearly not lining up to see a play with mystical overtones that asked them to contemplate a woman’s relationship with her own impending death." Critics were annoyed, says Alan Schneider, by what they saw as Williams’ "daring to write something akin to Ionesco or Brecht" (1986 370). For instance, the reviewer of Newsweek could not judge the rewrite of The Milk Train successful because, he says, he did not like the Brechtian style used. Regretting the symbolic quality of The Two-Character Play, Stanley Kaufman wrote that the use of symbolism for effect "is reminiscent of the little theater pieces of the ’20s." Then, he continued, "when realist playwrights die, they become symbolists."

This latter statement shows the crux of the problem: most reviewers wanted realistic plays. In a rather positive review of The Milk Train in 1963, Time stresses the
symbolic and religious allegoric nature of the play and concludes: "it will certainly repel devotees of realism." By realism the reviewers often meant objective realism, as for instance we can gather from the reproach against Clothes. In effect, several reviews insisted on the fact that Williams failed to be "objective in his portrayal of the Fitzgeralds." Howard Kissel claimed to "have learned nothing about the Fitzgeralds." To the reviewer of the WABC TV 7, Williams "destroyed both Zelda and Scott."

The crucial question that these reviews raise points more to the shortcomings of the reviewers themselves than to Williams’ failure. For did Williams intend to be realistic at all—at least in the sense they imply? As I emphasized earlier, Williams used the Fitzgeralds story to meditate on his own situation in the ’60s, not to recreate the Fitzgeralds story. Catherine Hughes once said of Something Cloudy that as a memory play, it expresses Williams struck by "myopia," as a result of his being "enamored of his images, his memories of things past." In fact, the state of myopia applies to reviewers themselves. They were prisoners not just of Broadway standards, but also of the particular image they built about Williams’ earlier plays:

The reviewers were vexed by Williams’ foolery, were disturbed by the frequently outlandish humor he employed, and were nostalgic for his delicate poeticizing. They were anxious for the well-developed and consistent dramatic personality and impatient for the drama that takes imaginative rather than imaginary, fanciful rather than fancied or farcical leaps beyond the boundaries of realism.

The truth is that Williams’ later plays were not inherently and indiscriminately bad or tasteless, just because they employed Beckettian or Pirandellian or other such innovative techniques. Simon Trussler asks rhetorically: "can so many of Williams’ later plays have been so incompetently worse than those of the late forties and early fifties which established his reputation?" Alan Schneider’s critique of the critics about The Gnädiges Fräulein is revelatory too: "The critics...hated Fräulein with a vengeance, not
allowing the performance to soften their response" (1986 370). When F. Gillen writes that during the last twenty years of his career, Williams' "popular success and critical acceptance almost vanished" (Gillen 1986 229), she is expressing suspicions about the critics, and rightly so. Certainly Williams was aware, and so too are we, that it is unrealistic to expect commercial critics to forget the commercial motive. But the fact remains that this motive can be invasive and blinding.

With much patience and tolerance, and with less deference to commercial motives, some reviewers could appreciate the depth of some of Williams' later plays. In 1973 Clive Barnes, significantly wrote of The Two-Character Play that:

"This is an adventure into drama at which many, perhaps the majority will scoff, but more will find stimulating. Minorities, needless to say, are not always wrong... It is not a play that everyone will like, if even its critical reception were to be better than 'mixed,' I would want it lucky. But it is a play with a chance of ultimate survival which--ultimately, of course--is better than a two-year Broadway run."113

In the early 1970s, Small Craft Warnings caught the eyes of some critics with its overt Chekhovian texture, as a sign of Williams' artistic rebirth. With his typical conviction Barnes said of Vieux Carré: "it is, unquestionably, the murmurings of genius, not a major statement. Yet beneath those murmurings, through the meanderings, is an authentic voice of the 20th-century theater. It is slight but not negligible."116 Something Cloudy impressed Frank Rich as a sophisticated exercise using the stream of consciousness.117 Comforting as these reviews sound, they were not, to borrow Williams' own term, "money notices" (Memoirs 233). (Williams' own flaws will concern me in chapter 3).

On another level, the various rediscoveries of his later plays tell a happy story about them. Of the revival of Vieux Carré by Stephen Zuckerman at the WPA Theater in 1983, Mel Gussow writes: "A failure on Broadway in 1977, this is the first of the author's neglected works to be subjected, posthumously, to re-evaluation. More should follow."118
In 1987, Kyle Renick the artistic director of the WPA theater chose to produce *The Milk Train*. He explains why:

As so many of Tennessee's plays were, this one is about maintaining dignity in the most appalling circumstances. We felt in 1987, when every week we lose another friend or colleague to AIDS and death seems to be all around us, it is the right time to take another look at 'Milk Train'.

Studying his most innovative play of all, *The Two-Character Play*, over a two year period (1980-1982), a team of researchers at the University of Wisconsin reached the conclusion that the play's lack of success was essentially due to production problems. By this they meant that previous productions of the play failed to use or find the appropriate dramatic language. The production that capped the research provoked "encouraging...audiences' response." We know that the power of language to "do things," to have effects, is a function of "the appropriateness of audience and context" (Jenkins 155). Thus we should not overlook the special circumstances at the University of Wisconsin that contributed to their production's success, namely the fact that the audience mostly belonged to the university's intellectual community (Kahn 43). However, it is noteworthy that the conclusions reached by the Wisconsin team confirmed the rich potential of the play that Clive Barnes, for instance, noted in the original production.

In 1976, Coli wrote that "In twenty years, I venture to predict, *The Two-Character Play* will be slotted habitually in repertoires" (6). Though this time is still to come, the assumption today about most of Williams' later plays is not whether they have literary merit but how to find the right register of dramatic language to stage them so as to make them accessible to the general public. After stating the difficulty of Williams' later plays and the depth of his experience that they convey, Jerrold Phillips argues that "It is time that we approach this area Williams has carved out for us to examine, and discover the gift of self-revelation he has made to us." The point of the statement—which others have made too—is a change of attitude. Williams' own verdict was that
commercialism, corruption and incompetence marred the critical reception of his plays. It marred it in the sense that it censored the reception of his work—the principal way to his search for cultural authority and theatrical recognition.

True, Williams himself participated in what H. Clurman calls a manner of thinking about the theater in terms of "cash receipts, publicity, prizes, awards, interviews." But Williams was no less sensitive to the acuteness of the problem, and to his being a victim of it. Somewhat nostalgically, he felt that "a world of 'superior things—things of the mind and the spirit' had been replaced by a new and crassly commercial one." For him things had changed and like the tourists in Vieux Carré, "people go [to the theater] for the wrong reasons now—for escape, for entertainment" [Ibid.]. Compelled into evolving in this changed frame of values, Williams became "almost exclusively a public figure, subject of newspaper notoriety, rather than a distinguished practicing dramatist." No longer or at most hardly able to control his artistic identity or the direction to give to his art in the consumption market, Williams found it hard to continue to communicate with his audience when he had any. This indicates a deep alteration of the significance of Williams' art for himself in the sixties and seventies. I will explore this in the next chapter.

My larger point in this one has been that it is Williams' experience and perception of the entire theatrical culture of the sixties and seventies that shaped his dramatic imagination. Facing the cruel realities of the artistic world—the practices of other agents as well as the perverse consequences of his or her own action and decisions—the artist-figure in Williams' later plays, despite his or her endeavor, remains a helpless victim. His or her art becomes the property or at least the doing of others. What remains or becomes
of the artist-figure's art in terms of personal significance will concern me in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

THE ARTIST-FIGURES AND THEIR ART: DESTRUCTIVE RELATIONS

"What in hell are we doing?"
Just going from one goddamn frantic distraction to another,
till finally one too many goddamn frantic distractions leads to
disaster, and blackout! Eclipse of, total of sun?
(Mrs. Goforth The Milk Train 62)
The existential condition of the artist-figure in Williams' later plays is a harrowing one. But this is nothing new in Williams' work as a whole. In his earlier plays, violence is rampant, and death roams the social environment of the protagonist. While the earlier protagonist treads on "a hot tin roof," for the later one, "What is called real [is] a rock! Cold and barren" (*Clothes* 275). As I have tried to show, the "real" that Williams' later artists experience is his representation of the theatrical world of the sixties and seventies. In 1982 as he bid good-bye to Broadway, the most determining environment of his art in his later career, his definition of the real repeats the terms quoted above but includes as well recurrent images from the entire body of his work: "there is a rock there, and it is not one from which water nor violets nor roses spring" (Spoto 400). As perceived and dramatized by Williams, the theatrical world is a life-denying force; this has been the context of the first two chapters. One level of my interest here concerns the artist figure’s attitude when faced with that life-denying reality. I will argue that Williams' own practice of art and his evolving attitude towards it informed his portraits of the "rock."

Early in his childhood he discovered the therapeutic function of writing and the theater. In the '40s and '50s, the popular and commercial success of his plays provided him with much needed psychological and financial security. To stress only the psychological aspect, let us quote Williams himself: "I create imaginary worlds into which I can retreat from the real world because...I've never made any kind of adjustment to the real world" (*Conversations* 1962 106). By the time of *The Milk Train*, with his loss of popularity and commercial success, with his own growing conviction of the failure of his creative powers, the idea of his art as a fortress changed (Bigsby 1984 146). The qualitative distinction between real (life as he experienced it) and the imagined (art as refuge) collapsed. He had, he thought, proof that the rush of time had penetrated the fortress of art and was gnawing its walls away. He began to see the theatre as a mirror of...
life, thus expressing a new pessimistic perception of his art. Williams' objective predicament shaped his subjective self in a profound way. In 1975, writing about Out Cry, he asserted that, "I consider [it] a major work and its misadventure on Broadway has not altered that personal estimate of it..." (Memoirs 233). Yet, Williams' vision of his art remained fundamentally dependent on its place on Broadway. The images Broadway approvers had of his art, their fictions of him were, as Bourdieu would put it (260-261), a normative mirror. When this mirror projected back antipathetic images, Williams felt the failure of his art.

For someone who had dominated Broadway for decades, this was perhaps understandable, but, even in the face of what he saw as the overwhelming testimonies of the changed nature of his art, Williams would not retire. On the one hand, this might show that his complaints about the theater were unfounded, and his disillusionment only superficial. In any case, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, his doubts served some purpose for him. On the other hand, considering his refusal to retire as a stubborn perseverence, we see that the Sisyphean image aptly describes his own attitude too. But this, he would argue, expresses a moral conviction that the artist can never retire. As I will later show, this may have been fatal—or anyway a damaging error. When he died in 1983 he was still writing his plays and producing them. His work remained unfinished; only death stopped him.

The basic attitude of his later protagonists remains an instinctive search for escape, for acts of distraction, as Mrs. Goforth puts it in The Milk Train (62). The search for protection bears a fundamental sense of morality in Williams' work, just as it did in his life: it is an act of dignity (Where I Live 52). However, we have a crucial difference, in terms of the outcome of the search, between his earlier and later plays. In the earlier ones, the acts of escape reached a certain level of efficiency, though only temporarily so,
because, after all, the rush of time--his ultimate symbol of the omnipotence of life--is unstoppable. There "is no way to beat the game of being against non-being," he would say. Thus, art (movies, poems, paintings, acts of theatricality), fantasy (like Laura's glass menagerie), sex, alcohol, etc., offered Tom, Laura, Blanche, Brick, Val Xavier, Lady, Vee Talbot, Princess, to name but a few, a sense of life, a momentary protective haven. Like Orpheus's magic lyre, Val's guitar in Orpheus Descending is "able to charm even Death for a moment." In the later plays, the artist-figure finds no such temporary solace. That which is supposed to provide protection or therapy is, like Chris's art in The Milk Train a recipe for death, or like the theater in The Two-Character Play, simultaneously a prison and a death-trap. In the end, it appears that the artist-figures can never escape the rush of time, and must simply always endure it. Clinging "to each other for salvation," they find that "they are one another's hell" (Bigsby 1984 145). Creating imaginary worlds to which they retreat, what they find there is numbing, not warming. Seeking to create order or to control it, they end up with disorder, pieces, fragments that they cannot put together.

Yet, stubbornly, the later artist-figures hang on to their art as the main possible escape route, thus creating the condition of their death. The archetypal later artist figure evokes images of Sisyphus and an absurdist character. As nothing around or about him or her promises a sense of order, life or hope, continual suffering is his or her lot. Death becomes the only certainty; it is, so to speak, the most definite distraction. Jerrold Phillips' assessment is a judicious one: "In the later plays the protagonists, continuing the search for a means to extinguish their existences, reach the awful conclusion that death is the only effective manner of turning off the world. The subject of the later plays becomes the seductive lure of death." It appears that by the seventies Williams personally saw death in a similar light. This also informed his practice.
In the first two sections I want to explore the artist-figures' personal relation to art. Essentially, artistic practice dramatizes the failure of their search for escape, and the way they experience the destructive power of art. These particular forms of artistic failure relate to Williams' perception of his own art in the last two decades of his career. In the last section, I want to show that Williams insists on the artist-figure's responsibility for the way art becomes a death-trap. This, I will argue, essentially relates to Williams' assessment of his own attitude to his art; it is a dramatization of his own sense of guilt.

III. 1. Art as a Tool: Images of Failure

Art had always stood as the principal source of Williams' "self-torturing yearning for order and meaning" (Bigsby 1984 144). When he began to perceive the theater as a mirror of a more disordered life, describing it even in bestial terms, he portrayed it as containing its "own denial [and as] the primary source of [its] own absurdity." My concern here is not with the artistic forms, which are as varied as the types of artists we have in his later plays, but with the significance of art to the artist-figure; the different ways they attempt to use art as a survival kit. Processes integral to art, such as imagination, action, theatricalization, and communication recur significantly in this respect, but extrinsic aspects of artistic practice also play a part. For instance, the artist-figure is not indifferent to the economic dimension of his or her art. (I showed earlier that economic concern is central in the artistic world represented in Williams' later plays.) In any case, "attempt" is the right word for the artist's endeavor. Frustration, failure, and death are what he or she ultimately faces. As the primary route to the later artist-figure's instinctive search for protection, art contributes to the characteristic apocalyptic mood of the plays through its failure to provide any degree of salvation.
Though thinly developed, there is a clear dramatization of an economic dimension in the artist-figure's use of his or her art. And this is no less significant than the other ways in which he or she uses art functionally. It illustrates the later artist-figure's search for economic security or at least subsistence. Because art invariably fails to provide this security, it appears under a negative light. Investigating the forms of dramatization of this failure, I want to tie it to Williams' own worries about the lack of commercial success of his later plays.

A logic of economic failure underlies the relationship between the Writer and the painter in _Vieux Carré_ and their arts. Selling their artistic instruments (a typewriter for the former) or their artistic abilities (in the painter's case), both nevertheless find themselves destitute—an unprecedented situation that constitutes an important focus of the action. In _Kirche_, the reasons that the Man invokes for his return Uptown, hoping once more to make money competing for the Hotlicker's prize, are indicative of his own failure to make his art lucrative. In SoHo, despite his ingenious use of the artistic experience acquired before retirement, it quickly becomes impossible for him "to fulfill all the responsibilities of parenthood" (70). The specific instruction he gives his kids, leading them to prostitution for money's sake, testifies to his awareness of the economic dimension of his "art." The kids return having given themselves away, "free," for love. His failed attempt to shield himself against the intrusion of the wife also dramatize his dilemma. Associated, in the spatial dichotomy of the setting, with the kitchen, and more generally, with the theme of eating and cooking, the wife represents pressing economic necessity.

On the whole, the presence of the economic dimension in the artist-figure's relation with his or her art expands the idea of its function. It reveals Williams' desire to span the whole spectrum of his disillusionment into the depiction of his own art. And interestingly the dramatization of the economic theme in this particular sense seems to
apply solely to the artist-figures of the seventies plays. The artist-figure's failure to find economic security through his or her art reflects the place of the economic in Williams' own preoccupation in his last years (the seventies) with his failure as a playwright. In his earlier plays this theme is practically absent, or else art is economically successful. In *The Night of Iguana* (1961), the play that many consider as marking the closure of Williams' early career, Hannah Jelkes uses her art rather effectively to sustain herself and her dependent old grandfather, Nonno. This portrayal evinces Williams' own economic situation at that time. For, after his encounter with success in 1944 with *The Glass Menagerie*, money was never again a matter of concern throughout his earlier career.

From the sixties on, though he was still among the richest American artists, he began to be concerned. Production costs were now extremely high. Coupled with difficulties in raising money, this situation strained or at least threatened to strain his finances. More crucially, as his artistic representative Mitch Douglas explains, his new plays were not selling well: "By this time [the seventies] he was out of vogue and he knew it. His plays had lost money and he was hard to sell. There was no new market for him, and naturally this upset him" (In Spoto 388). In the sixties and seventies, his principal financial resources were practically reduced to the production of his plays outside the United States, and to the film productions of his earlier plays (Spoto 291). Of his later plays, only *The Milk Train* saw a film version.

Understandably, his financial situation regularly came up as a subject in his interviews. Often he would claim to be wealthy; at other times he would complain, stressing his need of money. In 1975 he even said that he wrote his memoirs for "mercenary reasons." "It is actually," he explained, "the first piece of work, in the line of writing, that I have undertaken for material profit" (*Memoirs* xvii). Williams was either joking or indulging in his penchant for hyperbolic statements. Whatever the case,
however, that the subject of money suddenly became important to him illuminates his deeper worries. Exacerbated, his awareness of the economic dimension of his plays logically seeped into his writing as a testimony of the changed nature of his art. Unlike Hannah, the later artist-figures are left either with the simple realization that they cannot depend on their art for livelihood, or with a painful remembrance of their failure to use it in this particular respect. By insisting on art's failure to satisfy the artist-figure's basic needs, Williams gives an indication that his own new plays could no longer assure his basic satisfaction. What about his more profound, and perhaps intangible, needs?

The most thought-provoking attempt to use art as a survival kit begins with its dramatization as an instrumental therapy. It is the most preponderant and classic theme in Williams' work as a whole. This undoubtedly derives from the fact that, as mentioned earlier, the author first literally encountered writing and live theater as powerful forms of therapy. From the inception of his career, he shared in the romantic vision of art as an instrument for transcending the harsh reality of life (Esther Jackson 1965 27; R. B. Parker 1985 526). Bigsby aptly summarizes the power of the imagination as held by Williams: "[T]he imagination, operating through its powers of self-invention or through its sympathetic understanding of the solitariness of the other, is able to create a morality which is no less real for existing outside of time" (1984 144). He also had the sensibility of a modernist like Samuel Beckett for whom role-playing is an adequate survival instrument in a fragmented world (Ruby Cohn 1984 339; Bigsby 1984 141). He believed in the Aristotelian doctrine of catharsis, both for himself as an author and for the audience. Thus, writes Jack Wallace, for Williams, "theater is essentially popular and cathartic; its aim is to entertain--literally hold the audience together by stimulating and purging hostility, and by healing, for a few hours at least, the wound of isolation" (328).
In the end, we could say that two ideas capture Williams' sense of the power of art. First, the idea of a timeless world or a dreamworld; he wrote in 1950 that, "a character in a play [is] immured against the corrupting rush of time" (*Where I Live* 52). And, second, the idea of being engaged in a creative process: in 1961, spelling out what he called his theory about the dreamworld of a play, he said, "an artist will never die or go mad while he is engaged in a piece of work that is very important to him" (*Where I Live* 141). His later plays, however, contradict art's power to protect, revealing that processes and "fictions also have their coercions" (Bigsby 1984 141). Fundamentally, the artist-figures become aware that they can only reach only a dreamworld through their art, and that practice is only a stop-gap or prevarication. Williams begins to insist on the distinction between the value of the artistic world and of its product.

For most of Williams' artist-figures, artistic power and practice mean creating or finding access to a fictional, an imaginary world. The fictional world may be in a physical structure, an artistic work, or simply an imaginary or fantasy world in its own right. Here we must include insanity, which for Williams has a clear relation with art in its power to generate an imaginary world. In their individual ways, the later artist-protagonists reach, just as their predecessors do, for some kind of protection. But, as I have mentioned earlier, what they ultimately encounter in their own individual ways is neither an enchanted world of happiness nor a sense of security. We may say instead that, to paraphrase Jerrold Phillips, art lures the artist toward self-destruction, death.

The worlds of refuge are sometimes physical structures to which the artist-figure relates literally or metaphorically. Dealing with space and setting in chapter one, I anticipated this specific pattern. The way performing artists in Williams' later plays like Mrs. Goforth, Clare/Felice and the Man use their "theater" houses are exemplary. They construct or structure their physical environment as a protective haven—or so they
believe. The strategic location of Mrs. Goforth's villa on an isolated island indicates her need for protection. Yet despite her ingenuity, it remains accessible to outsiders. Chris's arrival is a clear testimony of this. In the same way, though not of their own making, the theater house, setting for the outer play, is of import to Clare and Felice in The Two-Character Play. When they elect or are forced to use theater houses wherever they can find any as their home, such attributes as comfort and protection inherent in the very notion of home stand out as objects of their primary interest. But as we know, it was not long before they realize that the theater has actually become their prison. And as in Mrs. Goforth's case, at the end of the play, it is obvious that the theater is their death-bed—their vault. to use a word from the text itself. The chaotic state of the literal setting, the atmosphere of loneliness, and the chilling cold that characterize it aptly reinforce the image of death. In Kirche, the Man uses his "church" in ways that echo the functions of Mrs. Goforth's house or Felice's theater. Because of the farcical nature of this play, the dramatization of the theme is perhaps too explicit. "It so happened," he explains to his wife, that "I had tired of the streets. Desired not you but a period of seclusion and stability" (70). So he acquired his Soffio house, and designed it accordingly. It is for him, like the house of the chambered-nautilus—an recurrent image in the play—constructed "for security from the hazards outside, the world external surrounding him near and far" (3). At the end of the play, as a typical seventies protagonist, he flees the kirche. For, not only has his voluntary retirement become too confining, but also the walls of the Kirche never protected him against the encroaching outside world—for instance, his wife's beatings.

Overall, the endeavors of Mrs. Goforth, Felice/Clare, and the Man particularly point to a need for physical protection. Using the theater as a metalanguage, Williams explores the nature of reality, here the physical dimension of his idea that the theater world was no longer a "congenial home." The protagonists' physical insecurity is very
much a translation of Williams' imagined or actual fear for his physical safety in his later years. Whether in Key West, where some anti-homosexual zealots mugged him? or in New York, where in 1968 out of paranoia he hid himself for several days on the belief that some people wanted to kill him (Spoto 303), Williams always saw the hands of the theater people lurking. Just before the incident referred to above, he wrote the following note to his brother:

If anything of a violent nature happens to me, ending my life abruptly, it will not be a case of suicide, as it would be made to appear. I am not happy, it is true, in a net of con men, but I am hard at work, which is my love, you know (Spoto 303)

Rightly or wrongly, Williams feared for his physical safety. But as I have shown in chapters one and two, he saw a threat of the "con men" as more than physical. As a consequence, each and every artist that he portrayed in his later plays searches for protection, therapy at the deeper psychological and mental levels. The past is a recurrent therupetic source, and via the theme of the past, we witness various experiences of imaginary refuges.

The past, in Williams' plays, is the paragon of dreamworlds. For this and other reasons, it is perhaps one of the most compelling themes in his work. His concern with the past is not surprising, considering his southern origin. Indeed, for most southern writers, the past--basically the South before the civil war--is a recurrent aesthetic element; it is mythologized in their works. It is never out of the minds of their protagonists because as William Faulkner would put it, the past is never dead. It is for Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor or Williams charged with ambiguity. Williams claimed that he writes out of regret for the South before the war, its way of life and culture, but at the same time he was very critical of it. As Digsby puts it, he "accepts the equivocal nature of that past, stained as it is by cruelty and corruption" (1992 33). Irresistibly, his protagonists are typically drawn to the past. Charles Colton the old drummer in *The Last Solid Gold*
Watches, Mrs. Lucretia Collins the Spinster who takes herself to be a Lady in Portrait of a Madonna. Tom and Amanda in The Glass Menagerie, and Blanche in A Streetcar are a few perfect illustrations from his earlier work. His later protagonists are no exception. But what the past tells them or about them is not always pleasant. Glenn Loney is right. Williams' concern with "the past...is not at all a pleasurable nostalgia for lovely, wonderful things now gone" (1983 80). Or even worse, as Jerrold Phillips asserts, "The past is closed, an enormous failure that does not even offer memories of pleasant, fruitful times" (1980 54). Invariably, in his later plays, revisiting the past is a dangerous trip leading to a possible encounter with death.

Mrs. Goforth's writing of her memoirs is the artistic expression of her desire to capture, at a fictional level, what she deems to be the brightest side of her past life: her romance with Alex, the only one of her former six husbands whom she married out of love (14, 47), and her "career as a great international beauty" (30). The lack of aesthetic interest in her present endeavor indicates the purely personal and functional dimension of her creation. The conceit is to recreate her former identity, thereby somehow transcending or negating what Williams defines as the rush or effect of time. What she yearns for are indeed all the things that her present status as an ex-star—a hateful expression to most of Williams' later artists as a whole and to Williams himself—and her physical state as an old and unattractive woman. deny her. Mrs. Goforth's obsession with Alex does not preclude but rather accentuates an encounter with the darkest spots of her past life. The ghost of Mr. Goforth whom she married not for love but for money faces her. That she still bears his name despite the fact that he was not the latest indicates, in a Faulknerian way, that we cannot leave the past behind, especially the unpleasant aspects of it. In her case, the ghosts are the ones she would rather forget. On another level, that she tries to elicit Chris's love dramatizes her illusions that her past beauty is still valid.
But perhaps most illustrative of the danger involved in her quest for a glorious past is the fact that while hallucinating about it, she sleepwalks, heading toward the cliffs (59). Obviously she would have fallen to her death had Blackie not been vigilant.

In *The Two-Character Play*, Felice’s and Clare’s descent into the past—when they used to blow bubbles—by the process of their performance of the inner play looks very much like an act of suicide. For, as I have shown elsewhere, the interior play is essentially a death play. It is hardly less dangerous than the exterior play house. For, it is a story of solitude, insanity, murder/suicide; above all it contains the murder weapon, the revolver. Speaking in the interior play, Clare is clear enough: “I can’t sleep at night in a house where a revolver is hidden.... Felice, there’s death in the house and you know where it’s waiting” (345). No wonder then, Clare is the most reluctant to “get lost in the [interior] play” (317). For its world is not a happy place to be in, least of all, one in which to be lost. Clare’s is a justified refusal to seek refuge in the past via the interior play. Like her, Miriam voices—and so too does Zelda as we will see—a rejection or a distrust of the past or of the fictional world as such. “Reollections are insufficient, I like present actions” (10), she claims when contrasting her former success with men to her present need of them.

In a way, in the seventies memory or historical plays where, as I have argued earlier, the protagonists return to their individual pasts searching for the clue to understanding or explaining their present lives, they reach conclusions that justify Clare’s or Miriam’s fear. Supposedly, the past is “clearer” than the present for August in *Something Clear*, and for Zelda it illuminates the present, as the Intern suggests when he says, “Shadows of lives...sometimes illuminate” (231). But the fact is that if the past is enlightening at all it is so by way of its analogy to the present. It brings images of pain. Whining over his plight in the closing line of the play, Scott says: “the past...still always
present" (280). Zelda appears to him as she always was: rebellious, uncontrollable. To the Writer or August, too, the past is primarily the proof of a painful experience or existential condition. For the writer it is an encounter with "shadowy occupants like ghosts" (5). It paralyzes August in the present, making him lose contact with present reality: "You've got to come down out of the sky, the clouds" (20), Clare urges him. August's own realization of the futility of his attitude to the past leads him to the following acknowledgment: "[P]oets have a great talent of fooling themselves about themselves. And so too do poetic playwrights. Any kind of romantic..." (7). Whatever the process whereby the artist-figure relives the past, it is a torturous experience. Zelda's case perhaps better dramatizes the tragedy of living in the fictional world of the past, and needs special mention.

The past for Zelda is in essence the expression of insanity; a manifestation of the fact that "fantasy runs riot" and "hallucinations bring back times lost," (275) when present reality makes existence impossible. On one level, the confusion or complexity that characterizes the dramatic action of Clothes is an effort to capture Zelda's experience of the past, her hallucinations, or, which comes to the same thing, her insanity. The bulk of the action takes place in the form of a flashback: Zelda's past life dramatized. This is, as Adler expresses it, "the concept of time as a perpetual re-experiencing (perhaps analogous to abreacting in the psychoanalytical process)" (1987 11). The dramatic action asserts that to live in the past or in hallucination is synonymous with a state of insanity--a mind imprisoned in a state of disorder. With her lover's gift of a souvenir, she takes up Miriam's perspective in In the Bar, contrasting fiction with reality, and thus describes what it feels like to live in fiction, the past, hallucination, or insanity: "All photographs are a poor likeness and so are paintings; they don't have the warmth of the living flesh so loved" (248). This is an apt response to Felice's illusion that he will find warmth in The
Two-Character Play. All in all, if resorting to the past is a form of distraction from present reality, it is, as Mrs. Golightly has it, a "goddamn distraction," because it leads to disaster. This is not far from Williams' own discovery in his later years.

If Williams' thematic concern with the past was not new in his later career, it "acquired personal relevance more acute than in his earlier career" (1984 138). On the one hand, as I showed earlier, through revivals of his "classics" and the critical practice of using them as norms, his earlier work, his own artistic past, became one of his most staunch antagonists. On the other hand, we know that, in the seventies especially, he returned to the very beginning of his career, dramatizing meaningful sequences of his experience as a playwright. "History," writes Bourdieu, "is one of the most efficient ways to put reality at a distance" (1993 246). Williams did so not to evade but to better observe the reality that by the seventies had become his nightmare. Like Zelda in Clothes, he sought to use his earlier experience functionally as a vantage point, a cognitive matrix for illuminating and understanding the present. His discoveries were, like his protagonists', that it had all been a sequence of self-torture, endured behind the curtain of work (Conversations 332). He dramatized this in the way, as I have shown, the protagonists suffer their past experiences in the same way they suffer their present ones. Thus, if Williams meant to convince himself that the sense of endurance that characterized his earlier career was enough reason not to despair, he was served. But he was also lucid enough to know that, as he said in 1975, to still be a romanticist at his age was humiliating and self-destroying (Memoirs 227). He was quite aware that he had lost the energy that in the past always helped him surmount the "blocks," to use his own word (Where I Live 106). Also, if he simply sought strategically to use aspects of his earlier dramaturgy innovatively as a means to recapture his lost legitimacy, critical reaction to his use of the past, as I have shown, stifled his ambitions. With both his own realization
and this reception of his tool of self-understanding and justification, Williams suffered in his own way what Adler defines as "time as a perpetual re-experiencing." As it turned out, the past did not offer any solace whatsoever. In a sense in its power to transform the past into a therapeutic tool, just as in its power to create plays, Williams' later imagination invariably led him on to a similar track. His work, indeed, was the condition of his suffering; yet he never stopped writing or putting on plays. With this, we can turn in a more theoretical sense to the function of artistic process.

Williams' sense of drama largely accounts for his idea of artistic process, and it has the ring of an existential credo. Drama, he believes, is "something closer [than words] to being and action." For his later artist-figure, indeed, "Acting and being are presented as being synonymous. It is the proof of existence. I act therefore I exist" (Bigsby 1984 132). The artist-figures try to resist loneliness and disintegration, but soon they realize that their acts are mere jokes, futilities. For so overwhelmingly chaotic and fragmented are the environments or theaters in which they evolve that art necessarily fails to give a sense of order or hope. The Sisyphean image is an apt one. Typically, the dramatic action shows them at the end of the rope, in their moment of failure and pain. This is their tragedy.

There is a form of theatricalization that means offering the self as a spectacle. Jack Wallace finds indications of such a sense of the theatrical in Orpheus Descending where, for instance, seeking self-therapy, Carol Catrere indulges in a conscious self-exhibition, a compulsion "to be noticed, seen, heard, felt" (Wallace 331). Blanche in A Streetcar is a worthy predecessor to Carol and the later actresses and actors. But, as usual, in the later plays, there is a negative accent to this theatricality, in the sense that it comes to mean representing self-destruction. The Gnädiges Fräulein best exemplifies this in the form of
pure, naked action—that is, without aesthetic consciousness. Her compulsive returning to the verandah appears to amount to a sense of being. Indeed, that action is reminiscent of the rocking chair in the asylum of the screenplay *Stopped Rocking* (1979), the proof that time still flows. As with most of the weak in Williams’ work, a certain sense of endurance characterizes the Fräulein; it is her Sisyphean impulse—a compulsion and an undaunted willingness to act. In a sense, this is the particular form in which her action dramatizes her remaining artistic impulse, one that relies on her mere physical presence.

To paraphrase Clare in *The Two-Character Play*, it is the magic of habit—the habit inherent in the Fräulein’s former sense of identity as a popular star, existing in the spectacle she offered—that drives her. Mid-way in the action of the play, she loses most attributes of her art—the ability to sing and dance—except the ability to be on the stage. But, at the end of the play we are certain that when she returns this time, the spectacle she will offer of herself is macabre—a heap of bones. On another level, there is something dramatic in her returns to the stage—the dormitory. Her returns create suspense for her audience in the play as well for us. By the end of the play, the central question is "will she return with the fish that will prevent her eviction from the dormitory?" Given her physical state as she rushes outside at the whistle of the boat, she is unlikely to do so. Her physical disintegration expresses her loss of artistic powers, here, the compulsion to act, to get herself on stage.

If the sense of the theatrical that transpires with the Fräulein is peculiar, it remains evocative of Williams’ dramatization of the way he tried to use his artistic power to survive in the midst of the jungle of the sixties theatrical world. Compulsively jumping into action, the Fräulein recalls Williams’ own compulsion to write and rewrite his plays. Ever since he discovered writing as a form of therapy, it became an irresistible occupation. Always rewriting his plays, he sought to keep himself continuously at work,
and dreaded the moments he was about to finish a new play, for he feared that if he stopped, he might not be able to start again (R. B. Parker 1985 516). Till his death he never broke the habit of writing several hours in the morning, amazing more than one traveling companion or colleague. On the other hand, ever since early in his career in St. Louis, when he discovered the "incontinent blaze of live theatre" (Bigsby 1984 145), being in the theater was his mode of life. When in October 1971 he claimed that "he felt only half alive when he was not working in the theater" (Spoto 332), he expressed something deeply ingrained. During his later career, this found expression in his absurd stubbornness to keep producing his plays in the midst of a chain of failures and of the pain of bringing his plays on Broadway. This is one of the paradoxes of his later career. In the last section, I will return to some consequences of this for himself as an individual and his career as a playwright. For now, let us turn to role-playing--acts of theatricalization with a connotation of conscious acting.

The theatrical impulse, the act of self-theatricalization in Williams' plays, Bigsby aptly argues, is a way of counterposing "the destructive reality of death," an act whereby "the invented self hopes to deceive death" (144). In many regards, this expresses the meaning of role-playing in Williams' later plays. In the manner of Blanche and like a stage manager-cum-actress, Mrs. Golightly stages her act of resistance. When Chris manages to get to the villa, he must still go through other hurdles in order to reach her. Starting from the verandah, he must move to the blue villa, then to the library and finally to the bedroom. I have noted how the very dramatic action of the play is thus controlled by her. In this sense she is a creative stage manager shaping the flow of the action--which is synonymous with encroaching reality--and the drama's spatial organization. This appears to be an act of resistance, a bid to protect what, in her self-isolation, she deems essential. But soon, she must face the illusion of dramatic plot. Chris's advance proves
irresistible. Ingeniously, she quickly adopts the role of an actress in order to seduce him. But of course this is to no avail. The kabuki dance that she uses to demonstrate her acting ability, or (paraphrasing her) to parade her "anatomy" while praising it verbally as she used to do, capture her failure, for she cannot execute the dance (43). Her role-playing ultimately stands as a dramatization of her fall, her death both as a person and as an artist.

The Man fares no better in Kirche even though, unlike Mrs. Goforth, he does not experience physical destruction. His sense of theatricality shows, on one level, in the way, like a stage designer, he tries to perfect his "security" in the house. The structural separation between the Kirche and the Küche is a basic one. He equips the Kirche with a complex lighting system to warn him of any external intrusions, and paints the walls in different colors to objectify different threatening realities. If red means danger lurking outside, yellow, the color of the day-time keeper (the giant daisy), represents the "vibes of existence in this three-walled enclosure" (63). As a play of the seventies Kirche's reliance on color is perhaps indicative of the emphasis on visual effects then current. The bright colors and the grotesque symbolism contribute to heighten the Man's physical environment—thereby also revealing the utter failure of his scheme of self-protection. Like Mrs. Goforth before him, despite his effort and artistic ingenuity, the Man cannot blot out the external world. His wife's intrusions into the Kirche and the awareness of the passage symbolized by "the giant daisy and the night-blooming vines" (36), are unstoppable.

In the same way the Man's role-playing as an actor, an expert in pretense, his "bit of theater," as he calls it (45) proves useless. At the end of the play, it becomes clear to him that his earlier statement that his role-playing has helped him to "both endure and survive" his wife's presence (10) was premature. Noteworthy also is the result of his role-playing as a teacher. When his kids—"Kinder" in the play—return home expelled
from kindergarten, after fifteen years of attendance, he handles the situation not by disowning them as his wife does but by using his "rich experience" in the theater. He teaches them "all the worldly knowledge" he ever knew practicing in the theater (31). By the end of the play, however, as the kids return from the venture completely empty handed, he has just more proof that the efficacy of the "theater" is but illusory. His is a chain of failures in all instances of his artistic experience, as a designer, an actor, and a director-teacher. The whole point of the action here as in The Milk Train or in The Two-Character Play, is indeed a demonstration of the failure to sustain a dignified self in the midst of a hostile world. His theatrical ingenuity is, in short, a representation of the process of his failure. Through the parodic mode, Williams is laughing at the Man--and himself--whose endeavor, aimed at creating a "sanctuary such as once sought in places of worship" (13), is frustrated.

When Felice and Clare find themselves not at home but prisoners of the theater, it becomes clear that they need other ways of survival. As Ruby Cohn says, they try to "support each other in continued play within a meaningless cosmos" (1984 343). Their talents as actors, performers, become primary assets. They embrace the definition of performance in the theater as a mutually supporting process. To paraphrase Bigsby, acting and being become interchangeable. To perform The Two-Character Play or act out other roles indeed becomes for them synonymous with a quest for order and protection. Felice and Clare do not, however, achieve anything close to that. While Felice is desperately eager to play, Clare is utterly reluctant. Willy-nilly, they do perform, but with cuts, and much stumbling over lines. The lack of harmony in the execution of their roles as actors is indicative of a failure to impose order. The improvisations in which they indulge are a sign of the "threat of dissolution" (1984 134). They do not "gain the consolation of artistic form."12 On the other hand, as I have shown, when Felice and Clare
take up the roles of actors they are only toying with death because the play itself is a
deadly play. Also relevant at this level is the way they try to dominate their fear, warming
up for the interior play. As Felice starts a tape recording of a guitar and faces the
audience, they begin the following exchange:

Felice: And Fear is a monster vast as night-
Clare: And shadow-casting as the sun
Felice: It is quick silver, quick as light-
Clare: It slides beneath the down-pressed thumb (311).

Francis Gillen's analysis of the exchange is judicious. The "obvious use of rhyme
and the rhythm of the music both suggest the attempt to assert control through art. Fear
itself, spoken about and presented on stage, is fear already begun to be brought under
control. But such control breaks down quickly in the face of the chaos of their situation"
(228). Their attempt is reminiscent of the way August's resistance against the producer
comes out through verbal parallelism (infra, chapter 2). A significant variation on their
use of verbal language appears in the frequent way they complete one another's sentences.
It is all part of their continuous role-playing—and their continual failure.

The fate of Felice and Clare is paradigmatic. In several significant ways, their
role-playing reveals the way in which artistic practice is a form of self-destruction.
Taking up their different roles, they simply further expose themselves, on one level, to
the chill of their theater building, and on the other, to the scorn or alienation of the
audience. Their role-playing is, thus, one of the important ways in which Williams
questions art itself. I will return to other functions of role-playing in exploring the
communicative dimension of art. For now, I want to stress some possible motivations in
Williams' own use of role-playing, as a form of being.

The obvious source for Williams' inspiration in the particular use of role-playing
explored here is his knowledge of the theater. By this I do not simply mean the way he
knew how to write plays. Williams was also an actor in the literal sense of having appeared in the performance of his Small Craft Warnings in 1972, but also in the metaphorical sense of assuming roles. He knew what and how to do or say things in order to draw attention to himself. In a sense, as I have suggested earlier, the trait of exaggeration apparent in his attitude when talking or complaining about theater people partakes of his self-theatricalization: his role-playing. His "mysterious" disappearance heightened by the note he wrote to his brother may have been the result of a paranoid fit, but it achieved just the dramatic effect he longed for when appearing on TV or such other public arenas. In his acts of extravagance, laying out his private life, and in his displays of self-pity, insisting on his sufferings, Williams demonstrated a keen sense of the dramatic. But again, perhaps he believed too much in these roles, as some have pointed out. Overdoing, he perhaps numbed the public's sensitivity to his ease and his plays; if so, he contributed to the destruction of his own credibility. His appearance in Small Craft Warnings allegedly to promote his Out Cry not only marred the rehearsal (Spoto 334), but was itself a pathetic show that simply fed his already notorious public image. Spoto also remarks how in May 1979 appearing in a couple of universities to address their students, Williams did not do much to "increase the respect of a younger generation for an older playwright" (374). Williams' acts of theatricality were indeed acts of self-destruction; they damaged his career where he most wanted to hold it high--before the general public. This leads us to the theme of communication.

The specifically communicative purpose of art was of importance to Williams both as a person and an artist. This, however, is neither peculiar to Williams nor specific to his later plays. Silence and aphasia constitute a recurrent thematic line in contemporary American drama and fulfill various functions that Bigsby has explored more or less
extensively (1992 3). Williams’ concern with communication coincides with his conception of the audience and the Other for that matter, as a vital source of life. The Other exists as an image of God. "Williams conceives of God as anthropomorphic, made in man’s own image and likeness… the way we conceive of God is also the way we will see our neighbor and ourself.” Our hope for protection against fear and death lies in our search for the other; hence the recurrence in his work of the theme of interdependence. As long as the artist can communicate with a significant other there is hope for him or her. There too lies the vital function of drama that, as I have shown earlier, Williams discovered personally earlier in life. The audience foregrounds his sense of drama, for his interest in drama resulted from his discovery of it as a “way to communicate with large audiences” (Pease 1977 835). Essentially, writing for the theater he sought to use his drama as the lyric poet uses his poems. He endeavored to convert his lyricism into drama in order to speak to an audience larger than himself. He aspired to rise “above the singular to plural concern, from personal to general import” (Pease Op. Cit.). On the whole, he believed that though his individual experience is inevitably the departing point of his practice, it is always symbolic, never an end in itself (Where I Live 109).

In his later career he “was always interpreting himself and the world he knew or imagined—trying to understand, trying to communicate, trying to help others to understand what may at last be beyond rational comprehension” (Loney 1983 76). But he had become aware of the fundamental problem of communication between him and his audience. In 1971 he expressed the idea that as an artist, it was his “frightening responsibility…to make what is directly or allusively close to his own being communicable and understandable, however disturbingly, to the hearts and minds of all whom he addresses.” Dramatizing the artist-figure’s predicament or revisiting his own
past, Williams constantly addressed his plight. Significantly, in his earlier plays, though protagonists are often eloquent speakers and indefatigable actors and actresses—Blanche and Amanda come to mind—"more often [the artist-figures] prefer silence" (Bigsby 1992 42) like Tom, Sebastian (who is absent physically from the action), Val or Brick. Characteristically, Williams' later artist-figures want to be exuberant verbally or dramatically, but typically also, they are impaired by the very state of their art. Silence and aphasia become suspicious, the sign of the failure of their art. If performances are "masks, action intended for communication" (Bigsby 1984 140), the inability to perform becomes a failure to communicate. If communication is an instrument of power and language is thus power, the "absence of language is an index of relative powerlessness" (Bigsby 1992 3). All these characteristics apply to Williams' later artists. Realistically or metaphorically, Williams explores the status of art in his later plays, through the artist-figures' failure to communicate their ideas or views, or simply to connect with their audience, with others.

Very often, the idea of the medium of artistic expression as itself inadequate comes to the fore. Williams' dramatic language was not always adequate to the taste of those whom he primarily addressed. In Small Craft Warnings Quentin the script writer, who appears only briefly in the action, tells the origin of his "setback." It occurred, he explains, "when they found me too literate for my first assignment...converting an epic into a vehicle for the producer's doxy, a grammar school drop out" (256). This is clearly the story of Williams' experience as a script writer when an MGM manager hired him in the 1930s to write a play for a lover who turned out to be an incompetent actress. In Kirche the Man's language is not intelligible to his children and his wife is quick to remind him: "address 'em in words of a single syllable" (53). This is a clear parody by Williams of what he saw as the approvers' inability to appreciate his later plays in which
an experimental dramatic language is deployed. Consciously or unconsciously Williams drew from his experience in the theater world, dramatizing what the theater people considered to be an obstacle to their appreciation of his art.

The character who is a performing artist offers Williams two main ways in which to explore the communicative dimension of art: use of the body (as in dancing or acting) and use of the voice (language on stage). With performance, he gets the dynamism inherent in the process of communication and the sense of immediacy necessary in the theater. Physical ability and choreographic control are basic to performing. The ability to execute choreography correctly reveals the artist's control of his or her medium. Therein lies the intelligibility of his or her art, and his or her hope to communicate happily with the audience. Invariably, Williams' later characters are unable to dance or act. They have lost their physical and artistic abilities. Dancing, performing, they further distance themselves from their audience. Williams knew what this amounts to in the theater. As he said in a letter in 1971, "the failure to discipline the self to achieve its goal is the impulse toward self-destruction."16

I have already noted how in failing to execute the kabuki dance for Chris, Mrs. Goforth fails to seduce him. She has several counterparts. In The Güldiges Fräulein, the Fräulein keeps stumbling through her demonstrations of her craft. To Polly and Molly this is a further proof that she is a "real personage" to be admired only for her grotesqueries. One of the reasons Miriam, in In the Bar, shuns public appearance with Mark is that he continually bumps into people when he is not simply falling as he does on the stage. In this, we see an image of the distance that separates his art from the public for which he so longs. Zelda's fate in Clothes is similar when she decides to show her estranged husband an excerpt of her venture into dancing (220-221). In this and her theatricalization of her first encounter with him (212), Scott refuses to play the audience--
one more indication of the denials of which she has long been a victim. Whether she means to impress Scott or to arouse his sense of guilt, she fails to bring home her point. Unable to express herself coherently and intelligibly, she cannot hope to elicit Scott’s admiration or to hurt him. Instead, she further exposes the fact of her insanity—the basic reason for their initial separation. In *Something Cloudy*, sensing his failure to play out his past, Clare urges August to “drop the metaphysics” and to play it “straight, play it...as it was then” (24). In the same play the theme of Kip’s dance is voyage, but he never voyages because he cannot put his dance together. As indications of the lack of structure or coherence of the dancer’s medium, stumbling and loss of balance evoke the difficulties of the theatrical actor. As we have seen, Clare and Felice perfectly illustrate this. Their cuts and improvisations ruin the structure of the interior play and lead the audience to desert them. By analogy, on the level of Williams’ own practice, the effect of the cuts or stumbling suggests the lack of narrative structure in his later plays which so much annoyed both audience and critics.

An instrumental communicative tool for the performing artist is the phonic medium—voice and the ability to use words meaningfully on the stage. Most of Williams’ later performing characters fear losing their voice—literally and metaphorically—or actually lose it. One reviewer of *The Gnädiges Fräulein* defines the Fräulein as “an aging Soprano who is forever straining to demonstrate that her cracked voice can still hit the high pure notes that won her fame.” This is not an accurate assessment of the Fräulein, for she is not aspiring to anything. She is just playing out the game for which she has been accepted in the dormitory, offering a spectacle of the present condition of her art and herself. She is not performing but “demonstrating,” to use Molly’s word (233). She has lost the ability both to speak intelligibly and, for that matter, to hear; Molly’s use of a
A loudspeaker is a hyperbolic dramatization of this, in perfect accordance with the dramatic mode of the play.

In *The Two-Character Play*, Clare is not far from losing her voice or anyway so she claims: “My voice is going, my voice is practically gone!” (316). Felice continually reminds her to “stop wearing out” her voice (314). The meaning behind this emerges in Felice’s sarcasm: “yes, you never come on stage before an opening night performance without giving me the comforting news that your voice is gone...” (316). Should Felice become a solo actor as a result of the loss of her voice, it would be the end of the performance—indeed of their art. It would be a quicker way to alienate themselves from their approvers. Studying *The Two-Character Play*, Thomas P. Adler asserts judiciously that “it is a parable about the artist whose very significance and self identity depend upon being heard by others, and yet because of fear of continued rejection by those who do hear is afraid to expose his work and therefore himself to an audience” (81-82). Francis Gillen sees a similar significance in the central fact of the confinement in the same play. “Confined,” he argues, “suggests not only being retained with an institution, but an author whose anguished meaning is no longer being heard” (229). Gillen further elaborates on the significance of Clare’s and Felice’s attitude to the word “confined” itself. Taunted by Clare, Felice refuses to say it and explains: “I won’t do lunatic things” (339). Not until the desertion of the audience, when their confinement becomes reality, do they make up their mind about saying the “forbidden” word (364). Left unspoken, as Felice explains, “its silence increases its size. It gets larger and larger till it’s so enormous that no house can hold it” (338). Spoken, the word is no less frightening, for then it literally makes their condition present. As actors, their choice to say the word and face its consequences is more than a sign of madness. It has existential meaning. Voice and the use of it are a symbol of identity and activity for the actor. The irony in this case is that
since they are surrounded by chaos and live in absolute solitude, their voices simply bring back echoes of their existential condition, not the vital response from God-the-Other, here the audience.

Zelda's predicament also shows in her inability to get her words across to Scott, and more generally her audience. The windy atmosphere serves as a pretext to dramatize her difficulties. In the stage direction, Williams strongly insists that this must be very apparent in the scene where Zelda tries to communicate with the audience in a direct address:

In this scene Zelda must somehow suggest the desperate longing of the 'insane' to communicate something of their private world to those from whom they're secluded. The words are mostly blown away by the wind; but the eyes--imploring though proud--the gestures--trembling though rigid with the urgency of their huge need--must win the audience to her inescapably from this point through the play: the present words given her are tentative: they may or may not suffice in themselves: the presentation--performance--must (230).

This amounts to an injunction, which stresses communication as crucial in Zelda's predicament. It indicates her artistic impotence. It signals her death. In *Kirche*, as I said earlier, the Lutheran minister's loss of voice is a symbol too of his professional death as a preacher. In this particular play, the de-emphasizing of verbal language leads to a stress on physical action as a substitute. This is, one critic argues, Williams' "private joke for the public and critical vultures," parodying dramatic language from the experimental theater where they thought his later works belonged.

This is to say that Williams' practice was also influenced by the contextual reality of the experimental theater, especially its use of language. Though Williams sometimes denied Absurdist influence on his dramaturgy, his use of language is very often reminiscent of the works of writers like Harold Pinter. Experiments like the incomplete sentences in *In the Bar* capture the troubled personality of his protagonists, artists and otherwise. They dramatize an inability to formulate their ideas or views or simply to
communicate efficiently with others. If the foreign origin of the Japanese Barman is the pretext to dramatize his difficulties with the English language, for Mark stammering is more simply an indication of the present status of his art.

To a significant extent, Williams' exploration of the artist-figure's difficulties with the notion of language reflects his own fears, if not his entire experience in the sixties and seventies, as a person and an artist. Personally the sixties and seventies saw Williams unable to communicate satisfactorily with his audiences. "I don't complete sentences these days," he told interviewer Dan Isaac in 1969 after a long silence (Conversations 137). He was an anxious man who had grown to fear public appearances. Like his artist-figures, he often stumbled or fell in public. He summed up his predicament in the sixties in this way: "The most painful aspect of the depression was always an inability to talk to people. As long as you can communicate with someone who is inclined to sympathy, you retain a chance to be rescued" (Memoirs 204). Above all, we must seek the genesis of the communication problems in his plays' failure to appeal to audience. Some have argued that he had become unable to shock his audience because he either offered them déjà vus or his plays were "too personal, too autobiographical to communicate the inner world of [their] creator." To Williams himself—supported in this by some perceptive critics, as we have seen—his later experimental work was simply beyond the understanding or liking of the specific Broadway audience and critics he so much sought to communicate with (Ruas 1975 81). With his incomplete language and his experimentation with memory, play-within-the-play and other theatrical devices all through the late part of his career, he sought new and more adequate ways of expressing his own artistic voice. To paraphrase him, when an author employs unconventional techniques, he is trying new ways of interpreting reality. How effective or ineffective these were on the Broadway stage is apparent in the constant rejection he met.
The truth was that Williams' voice rang in new tones, and that for most people this was not the authentic Williams voice they wanted to hear. It "is so bloated, so static, so tedious—until I double-checked my playbill I was sure I'd walked into a play about Ed and Pegeen Fitzgerald by Tennessee Ernie," ironized Joel Siegel about Clothes. At the center of Williams' plight was indeed a communication problem, and the new aesthetics of his medium, his later work, was a crucial part of it. Overall, in dramatizing the artist-figure's inability to know how to connect with the audience, Williams made a crucial statement about art's failure to serve the artist-figure. But certainly the artist-figure him or herself is not blameless in this. Before getting at this, we must look at some other significant destructive aspects of art.

III. 2. Art as itself a Destructive Force

Williams often said that "Any artist dies two deaths, not only his own as a physical being but that of his creative power" (Memoirs 242). In his later plays the two types of death occur and are often related. To some extent, the latter death has been my concern in the previous section: the way art falls apart under various hostile pressures. Here, I want to focus on the artist-figure's physical death and its relation to his or her art. For the first time, in some of Williams' later plays, art itself functions not as a refuge or a struggle to communicate but as something destructive and hostile to the artist. For instance, in In the Bar, by embracing his art Mark destroys himself. This tells much about the nature of his art. With this particular representation of art, Williams expresses a deep level of his disillusionment with art itself. Image and metaphors of fire and bestiality especially, but also of other forms of destructive force dramatize the destructiveness of art. Bestial metaphor is not altogether new in his work or imagination. In Suddenly Last Summer, for instance, cannibalism and the carnivorous birds of the Galapagos symbolize
bestial, destructive forces in the play. But here he personifies art and often achieves a form of vitalism or animism, as some religious scholars would argue. In any case, he correlates the particular vitally destructive power or bestiality of art to the artist-figure's preoccupation.

The act of painting is for Mark a process of struggle against some living thing. Miriam complains that he talks to his canvas (28). For Mark himself, the reason is simply that, "color isn't passive, it, it has a fierce life in it!" (24). By Miriam's account, his artistic practice is a life and death struggle: "I've heard him shout at the studio canvas. 'You bitch, it's you or me!'" (38). Figuratively, the paint smearing his body and clothes represents the blood he sheds in combat. But the worst for him is that he is the loser. One of his main complaints when he comes on stage is that he cannot control the canvas, which like some ferocious beast, tries to run out (18). For another thing, to enter his hotel room filled with the canvas is to enter the space of a beast lying in wait. On a literal level, all this translates as follows: the practice of his art, the intensity of work and experimentation, is a process of self-destruction. Sounding like Williams about the demanding nature of production on Broadway, made all the more difficult by the attrition of time on his person, Mark says, "I've always been excited by work. But this time the excitement and the tension are." [sic] (15). When he falls dead in the middle of the bar, he regurgitates blood. By way of the analogy established earlier, this is a dramatic way of linking his death with "color"--the particular level at which, as a painter, he intensified his experimentation.

Like Mark, Felice and Clare experience artistic reality as an enchanted phenomenon in a very consistent and distinctive way. As if by enchantment, the theater building closes in on them after the audience has deserted them. The dream-like quality of the play, mixing different levels of reality, should not obscure the idea of enchantment.
For vitalism, in the sense defined earlier, is not casual in this play as the recurrence of animal metaphors testifies. The daisy is a grotesque two-headed creature who grows gigantic overnight; the statue that at one point Felice grasps for help is a giant monster, and the audience appears to Clare in a bestial light. The dynamic and cavernous appearance of the building projects, the image of the guts or the mouth of some giant creature. Death is indeed plausibly the ultimate fate of Felice and Clare. Closing its mouth, the giant creature seals their fate.

It is possible to attribute Williams' inspiration here as elsewhere to some abstract notions about the bestial, or to assert that bestiality as a device is not a new phenomenon in his work, as I pointed out earlier. The fact remains, however, that in the case of his later plays, bestial symbolism is consistent with his perception of the theater world as a jungle and the theater people as beasts. Extending the bestial image, here, he applies it to art itself to show that it has become an equally destructive force.

Bestialization, however, is only one among many devices for dramatizing the artist-figure's experience or perception of his or her art as a destructive force. Scott's experience with writing comes very close to Mark's. Scott's wife, has been the main material for his writing--and at this moment she is to him what color is to Mark. The Zelda that we see, the insane Zelda, defines herself judiciously, not simply as his wife but more as his heroine--Daisy. In other words, the insane Zelda is the creation of Scott's art; and the fact of insanity is an indication that, in reality, creation is just a synonym for destruction. In one instance, she asks rhetorically: "If he makes of me a monument with his carefully arranged words, is that my life?" (248). In another, she asserts, "What was important to you, was to absorb and devour!" (245). Zelda's assertion calls forth the metaphors of both fire and animal, but that of fire is especially relevant. Both dramatically and verbally, fire occurs as one of Zelda's worst fears. She will not come
close to the "flames" on the stage, and the asylum doctors report that she has a fixation on
the salamander--the creature mythologically believed to be immune against burning. That
it is Scott who, so to speak, unravels the meaning of her fixation is significant in that it
points to the origin of her insanity, linking it to him--his art, that is. The fire she dreads is
that of Scott's art. And so, because, as she says, she is not a salamander, she must indeed
keep away from Scott at the end of the action. Unlike Scott, Mark in In the Bar perishes
in fire--the fire of his own art. For, what he creates through his art is not a circle of light
but a burning fire.

Apparent in this picture of Mark's art is the notion of betrayal--an aspect of art
personified; and in Clother, too, we have noteworthy images of this dramatization of art's
destructive power. Created by Scott's art, by definition and extension, Zelda embodies
its very destructive qualities. In this way, when she rebels against Scott, it is his art
lashing at him. Thus when in the scene of the hotel room she asserts that she "must
resume the part created for me..." (248), she describes how her infidelity is indeed Scott's
art betraying him. Looking out at him from the window, she exclaims, "How like him,
how terribly like him, patiently seated outside while his wife and heroine of fiction
betrays him upstairs" (246). Her extra-marital love-relation is a dramatization of the
tragic Gatsby-Daisy relation--an enactment of the author's own tragedy. On another level,
when at the end of the action, she withdraws into her asylum, telling Scott to find himself
another book, we see a dramatization of art rebelling, as in the case of Mark, against the
artist. Standing outside the asylum, prey to the elements, Scott is left with no alternative
but to follow the path carved out by Mark.

The similarity between Mark's fate and that of Scott is not far-fetched. They also
resemble each other in the way their monomaniacal commitment to artistic quest has led
to a situation where art, personified here, kills their sexuality. "What about my work?"
(240), Zelda asks, when Scott claims his need of artistic discipline. Failing to perform his duty, he led her, as we have seen, to search for someone else to do it. Even more explicit is Miriam’s articulation of Mark’s plight: “Call me that [bitch] but remember that you’re denouncing a side of yourself, denied by you!” (30). In both cases, it is as if art, a living thing, takes the form of a jealous woman—or for that matter the femme fatale—who “absorbs” the artist and emasculates him. Indeed as Marks puts it, “canvas”—art, that is—“is too demanding” (30).

Mark’s is a severe judgment of his art, but he is not alone in this attitude. (I will later take up the betrayal theme in another aspect.) More relevant here is why August, in Something Cloudy, Something Clear, hates his writing for what it has become. A religious symbolism underscores his experience of its destructiveness. He experiences his writing like a ritual enactment. Observing him from a distance, Kip and Clare can see a man in a trance (22). But instead of the blissful quality of a successful trance, August experiences his possession as an act of prophanation (21). At this instance, August is like Murano or the sacrilegious drivers in Wole Soyinka’s The Road, invaded by the destructive energies of invisible forces. His art then becomes a destructive instrument or process. Significantly, the play closes on Kip throwing a gull’s skeleton onto August accompanied by the following comment: Make “something like this with” your art (12). A dead gull is a gull no longer able to soar. What Kip’s gesture and words suggest is the reality of August’s writing; it can do nothing else now but to destroy. The skeleton itself prefigures August’s fate. Reliving his experience of forty years earlier, the older August finds it illuminating in the sense that it tells him much about the present condition of his practice: a process of self-destruction. As an image of Williams at the end of his career, Older August’s relation to his writing projects his characteristic pessimistic perception of his art.
No matter the particular form in which Williams' later artist experiences the practice or his or her art, and independent of the meaning he or she attaches to it, the dominant fact remains that it means an encounter with a destructive force. This is consistent with the apocalyptic mood that characterizes the world of the later protagonist, and constitutes an ultimate expression of it. One dimension of my point here has been that the very artistic practice of the author himself, as he both perceived and experienced it in the sixties and seventies, orientated his imagination. Continually rejected by his audience, the practice of his art became for him a dramatization of his own destruction. An appropriate query at this point would be to know if he had to go through this self-destruction. In the next and final section, I will try to answer this, exploring his dramatization of the artist-figure's failure, and linking it to Williams' own sense of guilt.

III. 3. Artistic Sins and Apologies: The Artist-figure's Failure

As I have observed earlier, Williams believed that the artist can never retire, for some personal reasons. But to a large extent he also had a certain sense of family or gentlemanly pride. He liked to say that "I don't come from people who quit." Following the disaster of *A Slipstick Tragedy* in 1966, his mother who had attended the opening suggested: "Well Tom, you can always teach!" Of course, he "was not amused," comments his biographer (Spoto 295). To the last moments of his life not only did he believe that writing was ingrained in him as a way of life, but also stubbornly continued to practice an art that had become synonymous with self-torture. "My obligation is for me to endure" (Spoto 344) he kept repeating through his last years. To some extent, this captures the crux of his experience. On the other hand, in 1960 he defined, in a Hawthorntian cast of mind, what he always saw as the artist's unforgivable sin: "When the work of art becomes tyrannically obsessive to the point of overshadowing his life, almost
taking the place of it, he is in a hazardous situation." Through the sixties and seventies, this hazardous situation was his own because of his obsessive commitment to his work.

Solipsism is dangerous because, as Williams once said, "when you ignore people completely, that is hell" (Adler 1977 139). At the end of his career, Williams could see, and so can we, that he had long committed the artist's sin, probably as early as the 1930s when he and the theater "found each other for better or worse" (Memoirs 42), but most certainly as of the 1960s. When trying to understand things, in 1981 he looked back at the trajectory of his career, he could see a singled-minded, solipsistic and almost tragic devotion to work: "From one period to the other it has all happened behind the curtain of work. And I just peek out from behind the curtain of work now and then and find myself on totally different terrain" (Conversation 332). He clearly understood his predicament. Having wedded himself to the theater or obsessively committed himself to it, he made of his relation with his art a life-and-death story that he had to keep going as long as he lived. Only death could separate them, and so it happened. His belief in the status of his art in his life was his own deadly fiction, the one that shaped his art and with which he died in 1983 in New York, the home and symbol of American theater.

Some analysts have argued that his later plays are acts of apologia to all those, notably his sister Rose, whom through the practice of his art he had hurt. Like Zelda for Scott, Rose offered Williams much of the material for his writing. Clearly, what motivated his apologia was the failure of his art to live up to his expectations--commercially and therapeutically--in the sixties and seventies. (Again we can think of Scott at the end of Clothes envying Zelda's insanity when his art failed him, or also of Quentin in Small Craft Warnings [260-261] who, discovering Bobby's naiveté, blames himself for picking him up in the mistaken belief of offering himself solace.) If it were sincere, Williams' apologia required that he recognize his own guilt. This is something he
never failed to do. He always "accepted his weakness and sinfulness" (Spoto 399), asserts Kazan. Indeed, he never ceased talking about his guilt regarding the lobotomy of Rose; he felt he could have prevented it had he not been out in Iowa preparing his career. To some extent he does so also in his creative art by variously insisting on the artist-figure's guilt. The artist-figures' guilt does not simply stem from some abstract notion, held by the author, about the nature of the anti-heroic protagonist. It is inherent in his or her practice.

Because artistic practice takes place at the encounter between the objective reality and the practitioner's subjective expectations, the artist's expectations affect his or her fate. We may note that in The Glass Menagerie it is partly Tom's commitment to art, his expectations from it as a way of life, that motivates his decision to desert his family. In Suddenly Last Summer, discovering the fate of turtles, Sebastian "mistakenly equates his savage vision with a cruel God" (Adler 1977:141) and reverts to a predatory life. In the end both Tom and Sebastian stand guilty of their respective fates, or the hurt they bring others: the first recognizes his responsibility by the very act of remembering those he tried to leave behind, the second by his tragic end, his self-sacrifice in the cannibalistic ritual. In the later plays, the artist-figures' tragic sin is of two kinds: their commitment to their former identities as celebrities, and their unrestrained passion to create. These themes develop along the two interdependent lines elicited by the author's own experience: a refusal to retire, and the substitution of art for life.

Though the two themes that I have established are deeply interdependent, often one or the other comes to the fore. Either way, the artist-figure's mistake is apparent. For the most part, all of Williams' later artists are stricken by a sense of stubbornness and absurdity. Williams often pushed logic to the limits of absurdity and surrealism. In his
unpublished ghost play Will Mr. Merriwether Return from Memphis?, he resurrects Rimbaud and Van Gogh to have them long for continuation of their artistic activities, because without these "existence" is impossible. "The only thing I want is light again and paints and brushes," says Van Gogh's apparition (1-1-9). With ex-stars like Mrs. Goforth in The Milk Train, the Fräulein in The Gnädiges Fräulein, or the Man in Kirche, the plays stress a refusal to retire, though their characters have done so. Mrs. Goforth lives with the illusion of the omnipresence of her former identity as a star actress and an international beauty. Blackie makes the point clear enough: "Oh, no! Won't face it! Apparently never thought that her legendary--existence--could go on less than for ever!" (30). As an artistic compulsion, the Fräulein's sense of endurance constitutes her own deadly failure in her art. I have, for instance, noted that in The Gnädiges Fräulein what Molly and Polly find attractive in the Fräulein's demonstrations is their grotesqueness. In her past, she made the fatal mistake of loving someone who hated her (256). In the dramatic present, her tragic mistake is her absurd attachment to a space and practice that no longer bring anything but self-destruction. The Man in Kirche despises the prefix "ex" for what it tells about his present status, discovers the illusion in believing in his bits of theater, and yet delves deeper in the pursuance of "practice" as he eventually leaves SoHo for Uptown.

In many regards too, Mark and Clare/Felice, display some form of delusion and absurd stubbornness. Like the ex-stars, they are no longer physically or artistically able to sustain continued practice, yet they will not quit. In this way, they actively contribute to the destruction of their art, and for that matter, of themselves. In In the Bar Miriam eloquently and ironically explains Mark's obsession and illusion. Mark, she says, "hasn't shown any preference for figurative or conventional styles," and has now "arrived at a new departure that's a real departure" (41), and he will not stop until he has controlled it. In this instance, Miriam is like a mouthpiece of Williams commenting on his own
practice. We hear, through her, Williams telling John Gruen (Conversations 1965 123) that he had tried all dramatic styles—the result was, as we know, critical rejection on the ground of rehashes. The portrayal of Mark is a self-parody.

So too is the portrayal of Felice's and Clare's refusal to retire or their new perception of the significance of their art. Reinforcing their continued practice is their never-ending tour despite a chain of failures: "You know," explains Clare, "after last season's disaster, and the one before last, we should have taken a long, meditative rest on some Riviera instead of touring these primitive, God-knows-where places" (316). Clare's hatred of the theater is apparent in her choice of words. But as Felice tells her, "you couldn't stop anymore than I could, Clare" (316). The reason why not is worth investigating, because, with it, the theme of art becoming a substitute for life comes to the fore.

The irony inherent in the situation of Clare and Felice, or the other artists, for that matter, results from a paradigmatic tragic flaw: when the artist-figures achieve one-ness with their art or begin to believe that they have. For art then becomes a substitute for life, shaping it, dominating it, or creating the condition of a dangerously solipsistic life. It is a deadly mistake to allow oneself to lose contact with reality. For Clare and Felice, there are no more boundaries between their lives as individuals and their vocation as artists. The play-within-the-play allows Williams to render the merging of life and art. Past and present inextricably and confusingly interpenetrate each other, as do the settings and structures of the two plays. The identities of the two characters in the two plays are the same; their very gender identities appear difficult to establish from their names. Clare touches on a crucial fact when she explains to Felice, the author of the interior play and also its director in the present action, that "sometimes you work on the play by inventing situations in life that correspond to those in the plays, you're so skillful at it that even I'm
taken in..." (365). For Clare and Felice, the interior play, their "fiction" becomes the reality that life has to endlessly imitate. It is possible, Felice suggests, "for a play to have no ending in the usual sense of an ending in order to make a point about nothing really ending" (360). And because the interior play is a death play, their life is an imitation, a reproduction of death. Also because, literally, their theater has become their home, to stop being in it now is to commit suicide by freezing themselves, as Clare points out (363), or by imitating their parents. In the interior play, when their mother locked up their father's "quadrant and chart of night skies and psychic paraphernalia" (341), depriving him of the instrument of his vocation as an astrologer, he shot her and killed himself. This fate hangs right above them in their present lives. At the end of the action they stand victims--of their own fiction, and partly by their own design.

The idea of home is tragic here because it conveys the theme of a refusal to retire and of art invading life. (Invariably the ex-stars, Mrs. Goforth, the Fräulein, and the Man transform their homes into "theaters" and death-beds.) Here, I want to stress the effect of the passion to create. By way of their passion to create, art invades the homes of Mark and Scott too. Literally. Mark's room becomes his work studio, his canvas becomes his wife, and painting becomes a sexual activity. When she heard him talking to his canvas as to a person (28) or saw him crouching "naked over the huge canvas" (17), Miriam "naturally felt a little excluded" (28). Mark eventually recognizes his mistake: "I've understood the intimacy that has to exist between the, the--painter and the--I! It! Now it turned to me or I turned to it. no division between us at all anymore" (17). He seeks an impossible compromise with Miriam, agreeing to "take a chance of the interruption" (24). But she resolutely refuses, stressing instead, Zelda-like, her "need of some space between myself, and" him (39).
Scott's equivalent to Mark's passion for color is his compulsive obsession with artistic discipline. His studio becomes, as one of the flashbacks shows, a space forbidden to Zelda. Like Mark, at the end of *Clothes*, Scott acknowledges his mistake in his assessment of Zelda's insanity as a better fate than his own art, or when, like Williams about his wedding to his art, he reassesses their marriage: "The mistake of our ever having met! The monumental error of the effort to channel our lives together in an institution called marriage" (277). Like Miriam, Zelda refuses any compromise. She will no longer subordinate herself to his disciplining art despite her acknowledgment of his apology: "Something's been accomplished: a recognition—painful but good therapy is often painful" (278). Left musing on his plight, Scott is in a predicament not much different from Mark's; and he too has himself to blame. Scott has several other companions in guilt.

In *Vieux Carré* and *Something Cloudy*, the passion to create is an irresistible and tragic power in other aspects. In the first play, it pulls the Writer into an uncertain adventure in the West Coast. Earlier, I showed how standing at the door of 722 Toulouse Street, he dreads taking the first step outside. The fear has a familiar motivation: how can he know that he is not about to make a tragic mistake? He seems justified when we consider the experience of Scott, a writer practicing on the West Coast, or of August in *Something Cloudy*. Like Scott, August's passion for creation shows in his obsession with aesthetics, namely, poetic drama. This obsession is, as observed earlier, the very root of his failure. Nobody, from actors to producers, wants the poetic drama so dear to him. When he resigns from his quest under the pressures previously analyzed, it is an implicit acceptance of his mistake in trying to be creative within an environment totally closed to "creativity." August's ultimate realization has its counterpart in Kip's in the same play. Failing to find a space for the practice of his dance or to summon the necessary energy
from within himself, Kip typically responds to Clare's comforting words: "I think I made a mistake trying to get away. I tried to justify it by telling myself that I belonged to the art of dancing, not a war, but..." (17). We know the rest. And these are the confessions of a disillusioned and guilt-ridden artist. Typically, Williams' late protagonists acknowledge, or, are made aware of their guilt. I have shown that the author himself typically recognized his own. His return to his earlier experience, like Tom's in The Glass Menagerie, is of importance in that regard. The act of recognition was also a crucial governing moral and subjective principle in his practice.

It is Williams' idea that "we love and betray each other in not quite the same breath but in two breaths that occur in fairly close sequence" (Where I Live 51). This is especially true with organic artists, "those who write close to life." More than others, they risk betraying the material of their art which is often someone or something they love. Betrayal is a form of destruction with many sides. In the disintegrating world of 722 Toulouse Street, the Writer experiences his writing as a process of "self-exposition" (69). Self-exposition here brings to mind Williams' sense of "self-immolation" inherent in artistic practice, something he admired in Rimbaud's writing (Memoirs 250). It also evokes the way critics talked of Williams' later plays as utterly "confessional," a laying out of his private life, a public betrayal of himself. The real or supposed destructive dimension of such a writing resides in the fact that it leads, as in the case of both the Writer and Williams himself, to a critical rejection of the finished work. But above all, it is an act of self-betrayal. Artistic impulse occurs to the Writer under the unpleasant light of betrayal in another respect: "Writers are shameless spies" (95), he observes, when he realizes that he has eavesdropped on Jake and Tye and made them the subject of his art. The artist-figure's moral sense does not escape the corrosiveness of his art. Betrayal, it would seem, also justified Williams' interest in the stories of Scott and Hemingway in
Clothes as a meditation on his own. Much of their dramatization in the play stresses their self-justification as organic writers. As Scott betrays Zelda, Hemingway betrays himself and further tells Scott that he may someday do the same to him. This shows, as he argues, that "I can betray even my oldest close friend, the one most helpful in the beginning" (271).

The betrayal inherent in organic writing may—as when, in the case of Williams' later artists or himself, it fails in significant respects—ineluctably bring self-destruction. Commenting on his suicide attempts, Hemingway, says: "Yes, I may have pronounced on myself this violent death sentence to expiate the betrayals I've strewn behind me in my solitary, all but totally solitary—" [sic] (271-72). This is so because "the art work that results can never be in itself a sufficient recompense for the hurt it causes, and finally only self destruction can assuage the guilt" (Adler 1987 16). That Mark and Scott must die is therefore morally justifiable here.

In his own creative work, the choices Williams gives his protagonists are a testimony of his mood in the later years. Indeed, Williams eventually came to believe in death as an ultimate form of salvation or a meaningful gesture. In 1975, he argued that "when all the possible options have expired, we must attempt to accept [death] with as much grace as there remains in our command" (Memoirs 247). In 1980, he recognized that the only possible "release from other people's fiction" (Bigsby 1984 142)—that is, from the grip of Broadway, from the theater—was through death. In the seventies he took to reading works celebrating the triumph of death, for instance, Strindberg's Dance of Death (Spoto 323-324). Hearing of Yukio Mishima's act of hara-kiri, he justified it saying that Mishima "had completed his major word as an artist" (Spoto 328). That he himself never came to that would seem paradoxical, but is certainly understandable, especially if we consider his view of the root of his sense of guilt. Indeed, he saw his plight, his work's
loss of cachet, as typical, just another illustration of the plight of great American artists condemned, unlike Europeans, to critical rejection. This perhaps diluted his guilt and therefore restrained him from an expiatory self-destruction. Furthermore, contrary to what he says about Mishima, he never felt that he had completed his work. These qualifications may not justify him but, apparently, they made sense to him.

The reasons that kept Tennessee Williams clinging to his art are, as I have tried to show, numerous and understandable. However, we may also legitimately raise questions, as some have actually done, as to the wisdom of some of his choices. Glenn Loney summarizes the argument of the critics who wished he had retired: "Some Williams-watchers would have been happier with him if he'd settled into an august posture as America's oldest-living Great Dramatic Poet, giving gracious audiences, awarding playwriting prizes to young hopefuls, delighting the denizens of major universities with spritely sallies at seminars, and generally enjoying the role of Grand Old Man of American Letter, without feeling the need to write yet another play" (1984 74). Though the underlying statement of Williams' "mistake" is a judicious one, it is not at all clear that the problem lay in his writing yet another play. It appears to me that it lay in his failure to make an adjustment when, as he and others put it, he found himself on new theatrical terrain. As Zelda puts it, "Adjustments have to be made to faiths that have faded" (275). It is alleged that he wrote Period of Adjustment (1960) and The Night of the Iguana (1961), with, for instance, a "gentle" outlook and happy endings, trying to compromise with Broadway. If so, in a sense, he succeeded, since they were indeed his last Broadway hits. In the subsequent years of the sixties until his death, Williams failed to adjust his expectations to the new objective reality and thereby let himself become imprisoned in certain fictions about Broadway.
When he first wrote about the catastrophe of success in 1947 following The Glass Menagerie, he noted that "the public Somebody you are when you have a name is a fiction created with mirrors" (Where I Live 21). By the end of his career, Broadway mirrors had enclosed him. We must agree with David Gregory that Williams' self-identification with Broadway was a major obstacle: "If you live at the top of fame and material success, of course, it's hard to live anywhere else." For Williams Broadway was where his theater could find its meaning, in every way that theater practice mattered for him: large audience, popularity, material gain, fame. As I have tried to show in the first and second chapters, by the seventies, these could be gained elsewhere than on Broadway. He realized this and tried to adjust, but it was to no avail. Had he acknowledged early in the sixties that Off-Broadway (which incidentally he helped revive) was not just for minor plays, but also for experimentally "challenging new works" (Berkowitz 1992 8), he could have created a saner condition for the reception of his work. Perhaps it is unrealistic to suggest this to an established writer, and perhaps then he would not have produced plays that explore artistic practice, with a special bearing on his own experience. But the idea that Williams should have stopped writing is too extreme. There were other ways that had the advantage of not compromising his writing altogether.

As one whose reputation had been long and solidly established, Williams would have been better off dropping his cheap strategies for whining about his plight. He could have risen above the negative Broadway criticism by ignoring it (as some effectively did), or more profitably, turned to other types of approvers. For, as I have shown elsewhere, in the midst of persistent negative critical responses to his later work, there were voices claiming his literary and dramatic achievements. Those voices could be heard among newspaper critics, for instance, Clive Barnes and Walter Kerr. But for the
most part they were increasingly coming from the academic field.\textsuperscript{13} Esther M. Jackson, Phillip Jerrold, Leland Starnes, Francis Gillen, Albert Devlin, Christopher Bigsby are a few among them. For all these critics, Williams' later plays were experimental and constitute a fairly successful exploration of a new subject matter—the nature of reality (Bigsby 1984 131; Devlin 1989-90 15). Williams, however, was almost literally dumb to this criticism of his plays, simply dismissing them as not money notices or lambasting them as openly as he did New York critics (Spoto 387). Perhaps he always had in mind academic critics like Signi Falk who, as we have seen, rejects almost all of his later work. I want to suggest other possible reasons.

He often expressed his hatred for New York intellectuals (Conversations 9). Perhaps he did not mean simply New York critics, or perhaps he was aware of academia's relative lack of interest in the theater. For one thing, Bigsby asks: "Why is it that literary critics, cultural historians, literary theorists, those interested in the evolution of genre in discourse and ideology find so little to say about the theater in general, and the American theater in particular?" (Bigsby 1992 1). There may be a bit of exaggeration in Bigsby's claim. But whatever the case, as some have argued, academic interest in the theater is a recent phenomenon. It came only with the rise of not-for-profit theater.\textsuperscript{44} Focusing on Williams' critical reputation, John McCann\textsuperscript{45} also shows that it is long after popular criticism established his reputation that the academy took interest in him, starting in the late 1950s. Even then, notes G. Rogoff, the literary monthlies long "disdained him," and the "middle-class intelligentsia has always considered Arthur Miller a more important playwright."\textsuperscript{46}

Williams may therefore have had some good reasons beside the fact that theirs were not "money notices" to avoid listening to the academic voices. But, a posteriori, we can see that it is academia that ultimately appears as the agent for securing his place in
history, so dear to him in his later years. I have pointed out the increasing revivals of his later plays in academic institutions. The 1980-82 study in production, at the University of Wisconsin, of the later play that he always considered his major one -- The Two-Character Play -- was an important milestone in the rediscovery of his later plays. The several awards he received from Harvard, Brandeis and several other universities across the country are a recognition of his merit, though as we know, he often cynically alleged that it was just proof that these legitimizing institutions were asking him to retire. Too, the universities of Harvard, Delaware, and Texas (where he left his papers) are sure places for posterity to rediscover his plays through textual study. The Tennessee Williams Literary Journal, housed in New Orleans, is principally the creation and the responsibility of academics. It is regrettable however that up to today a later play like Something Cloudy, which some people compare to Long Day's Journey Into Night as a major late work, has not yet been published.

It is certainly true that, because plays are meant for the stage, they tend to make their place in history primarily there. But recognition of the texts or the author by respected institutions of legitimation may do just as well. In any case, Williams' failure to see and grasp the rope (whatever it might have been) that would have saved his later career in his own eyes and time resulted from the fact that, like his artist-protagonists, he was blinded by his obsession with commercial theater and what it stood for. His quotation of the Song of Solomon as epigraph to The Two-Character Play -- "A garden enclosed is my sister" -- may well apply to his own later career. However, it is not so much that Williams was trapped in the "theater endlessly recreating texts rather than reaching out into an experience external to art," (Biggsy 1984 147), but that he only believed in one kind of theater. Francis Gillen's rhetorical question about the resolution of that same play aptly hints at my point: "is it Williams the playwright, himself reflecting on his own
considering his recent failures and wondering if anyone care or listens anymore?

Williams had a mistaken belief that Broadway was the only place where he could be heard or, for that matter, where he could be ignored.
CONCLUSION
lyric theater with its particularly personal and symbolic significance (Where I Live 140-141). My larger idea has been that in the last two decades of his career, the theater world became the main source of his tensions, and that, being an organic and lyric writer, he translated them into his dramatic work.

Central to my study has been the idea of Williams' later plays as cultural products. With the notion of the theatrical world as a field, I have elicited not only Williams' position in it as characterized by relative powerlessness, but also facets of the forces that stood in his eyes as antagonists, his strategies to resist and assert his ambition, and the ultimate transformation of the very meaning of his art. His representation of the artist-figure and its correlation with his own plight leads us, synecdochically (James Clifford 1988 38), into the ideology and politics of the 1960s and 1970s theatrical culture. The financial, aesthetic, and production difficulties that sustain his portraits of the artist-figure are dramatic manifestations of Williams' own troubles. That Williams may have imagined some of these makes little difference, because imagination is grounded in experience. His real or imagined experience gives a picture of dramatic practice in a theatrical culture dominated by marketplace ideology.

The very aesthetics of his plays themselves tell their own cultural story. Indeed, beyond Williams' endeavor to get at the essence of his subject matter, we can perceive a dramatic practice current in the time. I have shown that the apocalyptic mood of his plays may be found, albeit with different motivations, in the plays of David Rabe. The "evils" of the artistic world that he represents obtain in the plays of Albee, Mamet, and Shepard. The functions of language are central to Williams' dramaturgy as to theirs. The episodic structure characteristic of Williams' plays became a staple in the 1970s, as dramatists turned to exploring reality with a sense of fragmentation, isolation (see, for instance, Albee's A Delicate Balance 1966 or Mark Medoff's Children of a Lesser God 1980).
When Williams chose to probe the plight of the artist, using new dramatic styles, he was just a playwright of his time. G. Rogoff's observation is judicious: "Whether [Williams] is 'current' with any given play, whether he succeeds or fails with technical experiments, he is surely a modern in temperament" (1987 86).

For Williams, art is "a criticism of things as they are" (quoted in Bigsby 1992 38). His target in his later plays is the primary source of his tensions, the contemporary theater world shaped by economic, social, and political contingencies. Harold Clurman asks a pertinent question when, insisting on Williams' own involvement in the new state of the theater world that he so scathingly criticized, he said: "Where has Mr. Williams been living that he has just discovered that 'the experience has made me realize that it [Broadway theater] is just a marketplace where middle-aged men get their jollies looking at Ann Miller'" (The New York Times 1980 3). It seems obvious that Williams himself had long bought into the system of commercial theater. But does that disqualify him from criticizing it? Not if he was not happy with it. And what is more, the commercialism of Broadway had reached such extremes that many beside Williams lamented it as vehemently as he did (see, for instance, William Goldman 1969).

The main reason for Williams' dissatisfaction had to do with his own position in the new theatrical world, subsequent to his critical demise. Early in the 1930s, he had suspected the destructive nature of commercial theater. Comparing it to the frontier wilderness, he had projected his likely future experience into his grand-parents', picturing it as "something similar to the defense of a stockade against a band of savages" (Where I Live 59). In the sixties and seventies, he felt and to some extent rightly so, that he had the proof of his suspicion, but contrary to his grand-parents' experience, the "band of savages" had the upperhand. Until his death, he never enjoyed or recaptured the recognition on Broadway that, in the forties and fifties, he almost took for granted. He
remained in limbo, standing between Broadway and non-Broadway, at once rejecting and coveting aspects of both theatrical subfields.

In the sixties, Off-Broadway was the arena of experimentation, but Williams never agreed that his new plays belonged anywhere else but Broadway. By the seventies, perhaps with the help of a pervasive individualized sense of reality, he came to accept and even encourage Off-Broadway or Off-Off-Broadway productions of his plays, but it was too late. By then he had characteristically become a subject of sensation. Images of failure, rehashes, bad taste hung heavy between him and those that he saw as the theater people.

Williams' error granted, the fate of his later plays clearly remains a powerful statement about the sixties and seventies theatrical culture, and especially of the Broadway arena. Esther Jackson is right stating in 1980 that Williams "appears to require at this moment an experimental theater devoted to his own work, one in which his innovative texts can be translated in concrete language of the theater through carefully designed and executed process of development" (58). There is a deeper dramatic and literary value to Williams' later plays that the discourse of commercial failure tends to bury too easily. It is therefore admirable that he kept writing and changing rather than retreating into some respectable position as an old and famous writer. He displayed a sense of endurance that is a central theme in his writing. And more importantly, he produced a different kind of drama which, taken in its own right, challenges some of our assumptions about his creative power, and offers insights into the complex theatrical world of the sixties and seventies.

Perhaps, the contextual approach adopted here tends to underscore the victimization of Williams and not enough of the weaknesses of his plays, or even of himself. Enough of this emphasis may be found in most popular criticism and
substantial share of academic criticism too. But a contextual approach is only one among many ways through which Williams' later plays can yield their significance. I reviewed some of these approaches in the introduction. Whatever perspective is adopted, we should not lose sight of the fact that, in his later career, Williams did not keep repeating himself. He explored new themes and created new plays.
NOTES

Introduction

2 S. Alan Chesler, "Critical Response to Williams’ Later Plays." Tennessee Williams Newsletter 2. 2. (Fall 1980): 56
8 Ruby Cohn, "Late Tennessee Williams." Modern Drama 27 (September 1984): 336-344

Chapter One

4 This is the conclusion reached by Esther Jackson in her 1982 study of The Two-Character Play: Quoted by Betty Jones in her "Tennessee Williams’ OUt Cry: Studies in Production Form at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Part II." Tennessee Williams Review 3. 2. (1982): 10.

6 Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. Studying the different types of writings, ranging from Theodore Dreiser's journalistic writing to the ethnic writing of Charles Chesnutt, that arose almost simultaneously in the late 19th century, Brodhead argues that "A work of writing comes to its particular form of existence within the network of relations that surround it: in any actual instance, writing orients itself in or against some understanding of what writing is, does, and is good for that is culturally composed or derived" (8). Stressing the essential function of the artist's "literary situation" or milieu, Brodhead's point has much resemblance with Pierre Bourdieu's field theory that founds my approach to Williams' later plays.


9 Theodore Shank (*American Alternative Theater*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1982, 1) elicits several types of theater organizations at work by the mid-1960s beside what he calls the alternative theater: theater as part of the training programs in colleges and universities, recreational and amateur theaters, commercial Broadway theater, Off-Broadway and regional theaters.


11 See G. Berkowitz *Op. Cit.* and William Herman, *Understanding Contemporary American Drama*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987, 9-10. Investigating the roots of the change, most attribute it to the waning of the counterculture movement and the economic crisis of the early seventies. The interrelationship between the economic and the cultural finds justification, theoretically and otherwise, in the works of Edith Blau as well as Pierre Bourdieu. The latter for instance writes that "external determinants—for example, the effect of economic crises, technical transformations or political revolutions [...] have an effect through resulting transformations in the structure of the field" (1993 182). Blau shows how cultural changes have paralleled economic and social change in the US. since the 19th century. See her *The Shape of Culture: A Study of Contemporary Cultural Patterns in the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 180-182.
Different analysts tend to use different terminologies. Thus, Szilassy uses rebellious drama for Off-Broadway (Albee, Kopit) and Intermedia for Off-Off-Broadway. I will use alternative, new or experimental theater indiscriminately to refer to Off-, Off-Off-, Beyond Broadway and performance theaters. What they hold in common, especially against Broadway and in terms of their dramaturgical outlook, is of primary concern here.

Concerned primarily with performance groups, Shank (Op. Cit.) identifies two main tendencies. First, there were those who, having come to the theater via political activism, had an outward look in their exploration of social issues. Second, there were those who originated from Cafe Cino and Cafe La Mama and had an inward look, and therefore concerned themselves with "how we perceive, feel, think, the structure of thought, the nature of consciousness, the self in relation to art" (3). For most analysts, the latter tendency, not the former, survived and expanded in the seventies, when the Vietnam war ended and a new sense of reality imposed itself.


Andrew B. Harris, Broadway Theatre. New York: Routledge, 1994, 100-104


The New York Times 8 May 1966: 3


34 Richard Jenkins (*Pierre Bourdieu* London: Routledge, 1992) elaborates on this as follows: "condemned to differentiate themselves from those immediately below them in the class system," they are also constantly aspiring to the values of those immediately above them (139). The middle-class is the most culturally avid class. Aspiration to or acquisition of legitimate lifestyle and taste is for that class a sign of upward mobility (144).

35 *The New Republic* 26 March 1986: 34


39 In practice the term "criticism" generically stands for both "reviewing" and "criticism," but fundamental differences separate these two terms (see Booth xiv or Richard Palmer, *The Critic's Canon: Standards of Theatrical Reviewing in America*. New York: Greenwood Press. 1988, 1-2). "A review focuses on a specific performance and carries time value, being written for publication or broadcast as soon as possible after the performance. Criticism may refer to specific performance but takes a broader, more theoretical view and commonly deals with a number of productions, an 'ideal' performance, or the script apart from its manner of presentation" (Palmer 1). More scholarly and theoretical, criticism is meant for the elite, the intellectual community. Williams, as I have pointed out, had less interest in this criticism whose concern for his work, by the way, came late in the lifetimes when he was already a popular and established playwright (John McCann 1983 xv). Having a more direct link with theatrical productions and looking at them from "the point of view of the audience" (Palmer 1), reviews were for Williams the reality of criticism.

40 Among others, Bourdieu, *Op. Cit.*, 30-34, elaborates on the differences that characterize the role of the consecrating or legitimizing agent in the two fields of commercial and non-commercial arts. Fundamentally, he sees connivance between audience and critics or belief of audience in the critics' value as that which explains the latter's power. The critics have far less power in non-commercial artistic subfield.

42 Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* New York: Praeger, 1984, 28-29. This concerns the role of both radical media known as the "underground press" and the traditional media in the political and civil rights movements. The Alberts also refer us to Todd Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching* (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 1980) as a recent critical analysis of media influence (60). This said, chapters 9 and 11 of *Present Tense: The United States Since 1945*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992, by Michael Schaller, Virginia Scharff and Robert D. Schulzinger, also give some insight into the role of the media in the sixties and especially in the political scandals and the popular culture of the seventies.


44 *Saturday Review* 44 (29 April 1972): 28


47 Rodney Simard (Op. Cit.) explores the apocalyptic dimension of Rabe's plays in depth (117-118). On the other hand, John Von Szeleski, quoted by Simard (125), states that in Albee's *A Delicate Balance* (1966), "we have the most significant representation of a world view of the 1960s and 1970s", a world in which the individual faces threats from all sides, and of isolation.


49 Tennessee Williams, *Dragon Country* New York: New Directions, 1970

50 Many other analysts date the beginning of Williams' estrangement from Broadway with the difficulties he had with this play. See for instance Henry Popkin, "Tennessee Williams Re-examined" in *Arts in Virginia* 14 (1971): 5.

51 Williams acknowledges in an interview (Conversations 1973 235) that his failure on Broadway as well as Frank's death contributed to his mental breakdown.


54 Her role-playing and self-theatricalizations will specifically concern me later in chapter three.


57 The nature of her antagonists in the interior and exterior spaces will concern me in chapter two.
59 Saturday Review 12 March 1966: 28
60 The Village Voice 30 May 1974: 73
61 Nation 202 (14 March 1966): 309
64 Sy M. Kahn, "Listening to Outcry: Bird of Paradox in a Gilded Cage." Gilbert Debusscher et al., Op. Cit., 45
69 The Village Voice 8 March 1973: 58
72 The New Yorker 10 March 1973: 104
73 The New York Times 2 March 1973: 18
74 Variety 7 March 1973: 70
75 Harold Clurman, Nation 208 (2 June 1969): 710
78 Saturday Review (31 May 1969): 18
80 Stephen Stanton, Tennessee Williams Newsletter 2. 2 (Fall 1979): 24
82 Richard Hornak, "Reviews of Productions: Kirche Kuchen und Kinder at the Jean Cocteau." Tennessee Williams Newsletter 2. 1. (Spring 1980)
83 The New York Times 22 May 1977, sec. 2: 5
88 Time 23 May 1977: 108
89 The New York Times 5 April 1983: C 13
90 Plays and Players July 1978: 21
91 Tennessee Williams Review 4. 1. 1983: 54-58
93 Plays and Players June 1980: 33
94 I will elaborate on other aspects of Zelda's insanity in the section about Williams' dramatization of refuge worlds.
96 Village Voice 7 April 1980: 74-75
97 In Something Cloudy he explored, through August and his relation to the past, how myth is more true and crushing than reality itself.
98 Though acclaimed by critics as a better play, the popular success of Small Crafts Warnings was rather limited.
99 The Sunday Times (London) 17 March 1974: 35
100 Plays and Players June 1980: 33
101 The New York Magazine 7 April 1980: 82
103 Something Cloudy, Something Clear, 14. This is a yet unpublished play. The pagination is mine. For practical purposes, I numbered them in the order I received the manuscript.
104 Chicago Tribune 9 April 1979: 2
105 In real life Williams' eye problem always kept occurring, and he often used it as "a gauze mask" (Where I Live 18), an excuse to withdraw from company.
106 His total rejection of the American theater is perhaps more symptomatic. This is developed further down.
107 See chapter two for more on that aspect of the theatrical world.
110 Tennessee Williams Newsletter 2. 1. (1980): 33
112 The New York Times 13 March 1977: 51
114 This rather unsympathetic name makes apparent Williams' distrust of award-givers.
Chapter Two


3 The genesis of social practice is a central concern in Bourdieu's theory of the field. Improvisation not rules, Bourdieu believes, guides social practice. His account of agency encompasses both the conscious and the unconscious as determining factors. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Op. Cit.* 134, 137; Richard Jenkins writes: "...practice according to Bourdieu, is not consciously--or not wholly consciously--organised and orchestrated. Nothing is random or purely accidental but, as one thing follows on from another, practice happens...." *Pierre Bourdieu* London: Routledge 1992, 69-70.

4 The notion of strategy here follows Bourdieu's definition. Cf. R. Jenkins (83, passim). In the artistic world specifically, it is a function of its inherent competitiveness. As an aspect of practice, strategies may be conscious or unconscious, but always, they involve the agent's habitus (Bourdieu 1993 133), constitute a form of action, and are ineluctably purposeful (Jenkins 71, 83).

5 Bourdieu helps understand the distinction when he explains that "symbolic goods are a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object." Cf. *The Field of Cultural Production*. 1993, 113. The difference calls for a distinction between commercial and non-commercial art.


8 As owner of an art gallery, Leonard Frishie in *In the Bar* may perfectly be subsumed by this paradigm. But because of the peculiarity of his overall significance in relation to the artist, he belongs to a distinctive heading. Cf. sub-chapter "A hero in the midst of the jungle."

10 Nation 202 (14 March 1966): 309


15 The New Republic 3 May 1980: 27

16 Perhaps more than any other, William Goldman has probed this image of the producer in many of its subtleties. Cf. his The Season: a Candid Look at Broadway. 1969, 103-123.


18 Fiddler on the Roof by Jerry Bock was the title of a Broadway musical hit in the late 1960s. Cf. Goldman, Op. Cit., 109

19 This is a yet unpublished play. The page numbers given here as well in subsequent quotations are my own numbering of the manuscript. See the theater collection library, Harvard University.

20 Williams tried several names before settling for Fiddler, which makes my interpretation of its significance even more plausible.


24 Quoted in Goldman, Op. Cit., 110


27 He repeatedly begged for the cooperation of the casts of his plays. He did so with the casts of In the Bar (1969), Small Craft Warnings (1972) and Crève Coeur (1979)--Cf. The New York Times 14 May 1969: 36; his correspondence with his artistic agent, and the director and producer of Small Craft Warnings in The Theater of Tennessee Williams,

28 Lyle Taylor, "The Two-Character Play: A Producer's View." Tennessee Williams Newsletter 1.2 (Fall 1979): 21

29 Ibid.

30 Nation 202 (14 March 1966): 309

31 The Village Voice 30 May 1977: 87-88

32 Time 23 May 1977: 108

33 The New York Times 22 June 1980, sec. 2: D1, D7

34 Christiansen Richard, Chicago Tribune 9 May 1982, sec.: 5-6

35 Chicago Tribune 5 April 1980, sec. 6: 25, 38


37 There is a distinction between artistic and biological age. See Pierre Bourdieu, Op. Cit., 107. But in Williams' later plays, the distinction collapses. His older artists are so artistically and biologically.


39 Quoted in Spoto, Op. Cit., 290

40 Ibid. 290

41 Ibid. 323


43 Ibid. 360; Sylvia Sidney interviewed by Spoto, July 30, 1983. See also Devlin's Conversations (1973 232) for his complaints about his growing difficulties in finding traveling companions.

44 Ibid. 362; Sidney quoted.


48 Harold Clurman, Nation 202 (14 March 1966): 309

49 Williams' use of action as a dramatic language here goes beyond the simple distrust of verbal language and looks more toward Off-Off-Broadway and its seventies variant that Bonnie Marranca (1984) calls Theater of Images. In this theater, the "performer, then, does not imitate; he serves as a symbol. Gesture and movement are always symbolic, reflecting the neo-platonism of this theater that replaces discursive language with a grammar of symbols. One confronts spatial and gestural motives instead of dialogue" (120).

50 Harold Clurman, Nation 230 (19 April 1980): 447
This is particularly reminiscent of Williams' conviction repeatedly asserted in interviews and his correspondence in which he argues that Europeans understand and treat their artists better than Americans. See Conversation 1975 296-297; see also the excerpt of a letter dated April 1976 to an unnamed French artist included in the file containing the unpublished play A House Not Meant to Stand (Harvard University collection of Tennessee Williams' papers.)

53 Playbill. vol. 63. University of Iowa. (June 1984): 24
57 For instance no one would deny that In the Bar is a little bit too conversational or that Williams did not away with his tendency to overuse symbols in The Two-Character Play, Vieux Carré or Clothes for a Summer Hotel.
60 Harold Clurman, Nation 202 (16 March 1966): 309.
61 Commonweal 77 (1963): 515-517
64 In 1969, he said that he knew Clive Barnes did not like him (Conversations 136); in 1973, he remembered that Claudia Cassidy revived Out Cry in 1971 with one review (Ibid. 239). European critics, he alleged in 1975, were better than American critics (Ibid. 296-297); and among the Americans, he preferred regional critics to New York critics (Ibid. 1979 319).
67 Time 23 May 1969: 75
68 The Village Voice 30 May 1977: 87
69 The New Statement 25 (August 1978): 251
Here, this perhaps evokes the pre-opening night enthusiastic audiences of The Milk Train (New York 1964) and Out Cry (Chicago 1971), or of the opening night of Clothes (26 March 1980) which spurred Williams on.


Esther Merle Jackson, Tennessee Williams Newsletter 2.2 (Fall 1980): 58

"Quoted by Sy Kahn. Op. Cit. 46

See among others his conversation with Robert Jennings (Conversation 1973 241, 248). This use of interviews, we must note, roughly corresponds to his period of "artistic rebirth" and was therefore accentuated by it.


The New Statesman 74 (22 Dec. 1967): 886-87

The New York Times 10 June 1969, sec. 2: 2

Kirche, Kuchen und Kinder (first performed in 1979) is a yet unpublished play. The page numbers provided are my own numbering of the manuscript that I got from the university of Delaware.


Norman Fedder offers the most systematic exploration of this in his "Tennessee Williams' Dramatic Technique" (in Tharpe Op. Cit., 1977 795-812). Jean Cocteau, for instance, once described Kirche, the play that, fearing the critics, Williams and his director preferred to advertise as a work in progress, as "a poetry of the theater," as opposed to, explains Roger Boxill, "one in the theater, that, is not verse drama, but a symbolic use of non-verbal elements within a theatrical whole." Roger Boxill, Tennessee Williams. New York St. Martin's Press, 1987, 163.

To take the case of plotlessness, we know that it is a dramatic mode characteristic of the plays of such influential playwrights as Chekhov or Brecht, and that by the sixties it had penetrated American theatrical culture—not just "serious" theater but also musicals. By the mid-70s a new kind of musical had settled. It sought to integrate, says Stephen Sondheim, not "the Rodgers and Hammerstein kind of song in which the characters reach a certain point and then sing their emotions," but all the "songs had to be used...in a Brechtian way as comment, a counterpoint" (quoted in Berkowitz 161). Taking Company as an example, Berkowitz himself argues that "it is an unchronological string of vignettes with no real story, but rather a subject--marriage--and attitude--mixed respect and wariness--toward it" (161). Concerning serious plays, one just has to look at such plays as Albee's The Zoo Story (1958), Landlord Wilson's Hot L Baltimore (1973), David Rabe's Streamers (1977) or David Mamet's A Life in the Theater (1977), to convince oneself.
93 Variety 23 Jan. 1963: 72
95 Saturday Review 49 (12 March 1966): 34
97 Newsweek 28 Jan. 1963: 79
100 Variety 23 August 1978: 90
102 Henry Hewes, Saturday Review 46 (2 Feb. 1963): 20
104 The New Leader 20 June 1977: 21-22
105 Newsweek 13 Jan. 1964: 70
106 The New Yorker 10 March 1973: 104
108 Paralleling the impact of both types of criticism, Sponberg argues that "Criticism from both academe and the media has been of little help in getting American theater out of its predicament." Op. Cit., xxvi-xxvii
110 "Dancing in Red Hot Shoes." Tennessee Williams Review 3, 2 (Spring/Fall 1982): 6
112 Boxill, Op. Cit., 155
113 Williams often denied that his plays had anything to do with absurd theater. This is an opinion that his plays themselves contradict, and, on the other hand, his denial may just be a strategic claiming of the distinctiveness of his dramaturgy. Taken in the perspective of the inherent struggle of the theatrical field, this was part of his search for legitimacy.
114 The New York Times 8 Nov. 1987, sec. 2: 5
115 Newsweek 13 Jan. 1964: 70
117 Time 25 January 1963: 53


When in 1947 he wrote of the catastrophe of success, his point was indeed the inconveniences that come with money, not the simple fact of subsistence. See, *Where I Live* 15-22.

7 *Chicago Tribune* April 9, 1979, sec. 2: 1


15 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8. 4. (Summer 1982): 786


17 *Newsweek* 7 March 1966: 90

18 R. W. Hornak in *Tennessee Williams Newsletter* 2. 1. (Spring 1980): 33


21 In his introductory note to *The Glass Menagerie*, New York: New Directions, 1966, 7


24 I have repeatedly mentioned his vision of the theater as a jungle and the theater people as beasts. Earlier in his career, when encountering success he soon realized its inherent
dangerous nature, he described it as: "a wolf at the door...the fangs of the wolf are the little vanities and conceits and laxities that Success is heir to..." Where I Live 21.


27 Williams himself liked the image of being bound to earth, in the way it expresses the failure of his plays. "The Mutilated," he says in Memoirs, is "a work that had potential but never got off the ground" (212).


32 Esther M. Jackson, The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. Madison: the University of Madison Press, 1965. See also her article in Stephen Stanton, Op. Cit. She has studied the notion of the anti-hero, particularly, how it applies to Williams' earlier protagonist. By virtue of the continuity that characterizes his work, the later artist-figure is an anti-hero too. In his "drama the anti-hero engages himself to suffer the agony of conscience, to confront hidden truth, and to accept the heavy burden of metaphysical guilt" (82). Necessarily related to his objective condition, the later artist-figure's guilt, as I will show, stands sharply distinctive.

33 See Richard Jenkins, Pierre Bourdieu (51-52, 91-97) or Pierre Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, namely when he says that the practices of artists and writers "are the result of the meeting of two histories: the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their dispositions" (61).


35 Beside the fate of his artist-figure which is our concern here, we may note two significant examples. The first is in I Can't Imagine Tomorrow, a very suggestive title. The story of the small man and Death that One, one the two characters, tells is a story of death wish. The second is dramatic situation of his unfinished play The Lingerer Hour. It dramatizes "a violent apocalyptic devastation and universal death." And significantly enough, the "first earthquake happens in California," and the symbol of commercial art, "Hollywood first disappears into the sea." (Spoto 401, quoting a reporter who got the story from Williams himself).

36 Letter referred to earlier in the manuscript of A House Not Meant to Stand.

38 See section in chapter 2 about the power of the audience.
40 It is noteworthy that, to most analysts, it is the revival of Williams' *Summer and Smoke* by Geraldine Page and Jose Quintero that launched the rebirth of Off-Broadway in the late 1950s. See, for instance, John McCann. *The Critical Reputation of Tennessee Williams: A Reference Guide.* Boston: G. K. Hall Co.; 1983, xix.
41 See the following examples in David Savran, *In their Own Words: Contemporary American Playwrights.* New York: The Theater Communications Group, 1988. Christopher Durang confesses he cannot help reading reviews but that he knows some artists "who don't read them and just do their work. I think that's healthy if you can get to it" (27). Among those who get to it is perhaps David Rabe: "When I first started, I read everything. Now I skim through or ask to be told. Reviewers don't have time or space to do anything very meaningful so I've stopped looking for that" (202). Perhaps it is unfair to compare Williams with these rather minor playwrights, but that they can do without reviews indicates an attitude also available to Williams.
42 Though commercial success seems to have preoccupied him more than anything else, to his last days Williams believed, and rightly so, in the intrinsic quality of some of his controversial plays--for instance, *The Two-Character Play*. He whined much about the approvers, but he was not always justified, unless perhaps when he meant his complaints to be strategic in the sense of drawing attention to himself. For, most often, his whining was also a product of his paranoia leading to unwarranted exaggerations, the effects of his general tendency towards the melodramatic.
45 John McCann, *Op. Cit.* It is John Gassner who in 1948 "delivered Tennessee Williams to the academy" publishing in *English College* (xvi). Yet it is only by the late 1950s that the academic community by and large took real interest in Williams, publishing on a wide range of themes on his theater (xxiv). Through the sixties and seventies this interest continued and even grew (xxv, xxviii); but as McCann rightly puts it, "As far Williams was concerned, his critical reputation would remain in the hands of those who gave him fame, those same critics against whom he railed for what he considered their provincialism, if not their conspiracy against him" (xxx).
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