FABIANE LAZZARIS

EXPRESSIONISTIC ASPECTS IN SOME WORKS BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND BY OTHER AMERICAN AUTHORS

PORTO ALEGRE

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EXPRESSIONISTIC ASPECTS IN SOME WORKS BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND BY OTHER AMERICAN AUTHORS

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Dissertação de Mestrado em Literaturas Estrangeiras Modernas, apresentada como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Mestre pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

PORTO ALEGRE

2009

Aos meus pais, que me ensinaram a lutar pelos meus objetivos, e ao Rodrigo, pelo amor, companheirismo e compreensão.

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RESUMO

A presente dissertação se propõe a traçar o desenvolvimento do Expressionismo desde sua origem na Alemanha da década de 1910 até o teatro estadunidense da década de 1920, assim como a influência desse movimento de vanguarda na obra do dramaturgo americano do pós-guerra, Tennessee Williams. Para esse fim, a relação entre artes visuais, teatro, literatura e cinema é apresentada, definindo essa dissertação no campo dos Estudos Interdisciplinares. A análise será principalmente enfocada nas peças expressionistas americanas da década de 1920 dos dramaturgos Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Elmer Rice e Sophie Treadwell, e em quatro peças de Tennessee Williams e suas respectivas versões fílmicas: *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). Primeiramente, serão apresentadas as origens do Expressionismo na Alemanha na década de 1910 para definir as características do movimento. Posteriormente, serão identificadas características expressionistas no teatro, literatura e cinema estadunidense da década de 1920. Por fim, será verificada a influência do movimento expressionista na obra de Tennessee Williams, tanto em suas peças quanto nas versões fílmicas. O objetivo dessa dissertação é provar a ligação entre a obra de Tennessee Williams e as peças de dramaturgos expressionistas estadunidenses anteriores, assim como discutir a inter-relação e o aspecto colaborativo entre artes visuais, teatro, literatura e cinema.

Palavras-Chave: Expressionismo. Teatro Estadunidense. Tennessee Williams.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to track the development of Expressionism from its roots in Germany in the 1910s to its outcome in the American theatre in the 1920s, as well as the influence of the avant-garde movement in the work of the postwar American playwright Tennessee Williams. For the purpose of the present thesis, a relation including the visual arts, theatre, literature and cinema will be traced, thus setting this work in the field of Interdisciplinary Studies. The analysis will mainly focus on 1920s American expressionist plays by Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Elmer Rice and Sophie Treadwell, and four plays by Tennessee Williams and their respective film adaptations: *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). Firstly, the origins of Expressionism in Germany in the 1920s are presented to define the characteristics of the movement. Later, expressionistic aspects are identified in 1920s American theatre, literature and cinema. And finally, the influence of the expressionist movement is verified in the work of Tennessee Williams, both in his plays and film versions. The objective of this thesis is to prove the connection of Tennessee Willliams's work with that of earlier American expressionist playwrights, as well as to discuss the interrelation and collaborative aspect of the visual arts, theatre, literature and cinema.

Keywords: Expressionism. American Theatre. Tennessee Williams.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first time I read *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) I felt I was getting in touch with a universal and timeless text though it also carried and intimate and private atmosphere. I believe that the mixture of these elements is what fascinated me about Tennessee Williams's work. The same happened when I read his other plays. His compassion towards worn out and neglected creatures who struggle to find a place where they can belong is clear in the portrayal of the protagonists. Their lack of ability to adapt in the modern mechanized world, their loneliness and sense of loss, their fragility and vulnerability are some of the characteristics in Williams's main characters that captivated me.

Tennessee Williams's relation to Expressionism is clear in the introduction of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), in which he defines his work with the term *plastic theatre*. However, I could only manage to relate the playwright and the avant-garde movement deeply when I read *A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and the Lantern,* by Thomas P. Adler, though the author just mentions briefly the relation of Williams's work and Expressionism. Curiously, when my research advanced I noticed that very little was said about the subject. Besides that, studies on American Expressionism were restricted to the 1920s theatre, especially in relation to Eugene O'Neill's work. Therefore, material is scarce on the subject and I had in my reach only two authors that researched deeply Expressionism in the American theatre: Mardi Valgemae and Julia A. Walker, both of them with absolutely distinguished points of view. Therefore, my research towards the present thesis started out of curiosity, in order to go deeper into the relation of Tennessee Williams's work and Expressionism.

However, in my way to analyse Tennessee Williams's plays, I found one of the richest and most prolific moments of the American stage: the American expressionist theatre of the 1920s. This movement marked a break of boundaries: playwrights had finally started to move towards modernism, getting rid of 19th century melodrama. Major authors from this movement like Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Elmer Rice, and Sophie Treadwell, have some of their works examined here in order to show their influence upon Williams's plays.

Therefore, an outline of Expressionism will be presented, so that readers can become familiar to the relation of German and American Expressionism, thus relating them to Williams's postwar era theatre. Also, the outline of the avant-garde movement in Germany and in the United States will be accompanied by a historical contextualization, which is

essential to understand the elements that motivated and influenced these movements and their outcome in the respective countries.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the influence of Expressionism in the work of some American writers of the 1920s and Tennessee Williams. For this reason, Expressionism will be presented, from its roots in Germany in the 1910s to its arrival in the American theatre in the 1920s, and then reaching the specific analysis of the work of Tennessee Williams in the postwar era, eventually focusing on his play *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and its 1951 film version.

By defining German Expressionism in the visual arts, in the theatre, and in the cinema, I intend to track the influential aspects of this avant-garde movement in the American culture. Through the analysis of the play *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), among others, by Tennessee Williams, and the homonymous film directed by Elia Kazan in 1951, I hope to find expressionist characteristics in these works, as well as delineate the relation of theatre, cinema and painting, thus setting this project in the field of interdisciplinary studies.

Chapter 1 will delineate the roots of Expressionism in Germany in the 1910s, having as its theoretical basis Christopher Innes's approach on avant-garde movements. Firstly, the origins of the expressionist movement in the visual arts will be investigated through the works by the artistic groups *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter*. Secondly, German expressionist theatre will be approached, setting traces of theme and form, though few primary sources were found in English or Portuguese as well as limited material on the subject. Lastly, early German cinema will be exemplified and discussed, having as background Lotte H. Eisner's theory on Expressionist German cinema. By describing German Expressionism in the 1910s and 1920s, I intend to determine some aspects that will also be found in the next chapter about American Expressionism. At last, the theoretical approaches on American Expressionism by Mardi Valgemae and Julia A. Walker will be discussed and some aspects will be defined for further analysis in chapter 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 will deal with American Expressionism in the 1920s. Having as its background the "Roaring Twenties", I start this chapter by connecting the decade to one of its most important literary accomplishments: *The Great Gatsby,* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. After illustrating the mood of the decade, the expressionist playwrights – Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Elmer Rice and Sophie Treadwell – are presented. Their plays are described and the analysis will focus on the expressionistic aspects mentioned in chapter 1.

Chapter 3 will start with the portrayal of the postwar era atmosphere. The unique aura of instability in the postwar years is portrayed by the paintings of Jackson Pollock and

Edward Hopper, the philosophical thoughts of Jean-Paul Sartre, and the advent of a new genre in the American cinema: the Film Noir. Again, visual arts, theatre and cinema meet in order to demonstrate the profound connection of these arts. An outline of the tragic is also delineated to show the evolution of the concept of the tragic flaw up to Arthur Miller's notion. Also, a brief summary of Tennessee Williams's life is revealed. And finally, some of his plays and filmed versions of his work are discussed having Mardi Valgemae and Julia A. Walker's ideas as theoretical basis. The purpose of this thesis is to track some aspects of the expressionist avant-garde movement in the work of some American writers of the 1920s and in Tennessee Williams's work.

2 EXPRESSIONISM: FROM GERMANY TO AMERICA

2.1 INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Association is the premise of Comparative Literature, which deals with the investigation of different movements, artistic forms, cultures, or languages. Therefore, Comparative Literature should not be understood as mere comparison, but an interrelation of associations of different sources. The interdisciplinary nature of this field provides students, researchers, and scholars the possibility to cross traditional academic boundaries, offering the possibility to apply different knowledge and tools from other disciplines, thus not confining a production in a single discipline and broadening the perception. According to Carvalhal (1986), the writing process is the result of an interpretation process of different literary texts; it is a natural and continuous process. "Comparing is a procedure that is part of the structure of the human thinking and the organization of culture. Therefore, availing of comparison is a generalized habit in different areas of the human knowledge […]"[1] (CARVALHAL, 1986, p. 50-51).

The interrelation of artistic forms has been extensively researched in the field of Interdisciplinary Studies, to which this thesis belongs. The associations presented will approach different cultures and nationalities, as well as different media – it will deal with three different artistic forms – visual arts, theatre, and cinema. Also, it aims to interrelate the expressionistic plasticity of these three varied forms of art. Therefore, the relation of the three artistic expressions cited above must be discussed.

It is undeniable the influence that the plasticity of visual arts has over the other artistic expressions, such as literature, theatre and film. On the other hand, a painting, just like a literary text, also expresses emotion, conveys ideas and suggests ideologies; it might or might not tell a story, it depends on its abstraction. The plastic nature of the visual arts – form, lines, colors, perspective, etc. – is identifiable in a novel or short story, but it is intrinsic to theatre and cinema. The production of a play involves designers responsible for the scenery and lighting and costume designers in charge of the visual depiction of the characters. In a film,

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[1] "Comparar é um procedimento que faz parte da estrutura do pensamento do homem e da organização da cultura. Por isso, valer-se da comparação é hábito generalizado em diferentes áreas do saber humano [...]." [Translation by the author]

the art director is responsible for the set and the director of photography is responsible for the arrangement of lighting and the capturing of the images. All these signs and devices can be interpreted as text. Moreover, both theatre and film have a close relation to the literary text: a play's production on stage involves the interpretation of the playwright's text, and a film usually derives from a script.

Although theatre and cinema are based on performance, they diverge at certain aspects. "[…]Like a play, a film concretely presents scenes between physical beings rather than between abstract 'characters', beings who seem to be enacting their thoughts and feelings directly for us." (MAST, 1982, p. 288) However, the presence of the character is not primordial in the cinema as it is on stage. The film director can convey several ideas through images in which the actor is absent. In the theatre, the actor is the center of this form of expression, because the theatre is based fundamentally on the action. Thus, "[…] the real impact of a character's depiction comes from action, thus what is *not* said should also be taken into consideration"[2] (OLIVEIRA, 2002). Evidently, the premise of action in the theatre was challenged by the vanguard movements of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Also, the narrator, usually absent in the theatre, is inevitably present in the cinema: it is the camera, which may be considered as being the eye of the director. It is through this technological device that the director will show the point of view that he wishes to expose. Thus, a film is a subjective product, because it involves the interpretation of signs by the cast and crew involved in the production of the motion picture, as well as the subjective interpretation of the spectators. "[…] because every shot in a film is controlled by the guiding narrative presence of the camera's lens, even those scenes that seem to be played for us as if the players stood before us directly on a stage are really interpreted for us as if they were narrated in a novel." (MAST, 1982, p. 288) On the other hand, a play's subjectivity is absolute, because the audience does not count on the guidance of the camera. The spectators are free to interpret the theatrical performance as they please. However, "increasingly the use of lighting directing the attention of the spectator to a certain point plays the role of the cinematographic camera in the theatrical production."[3] (OLIVEIRA, 2002).

Both the film and the play are performance arts "presented for a group of persons gathered together at a specific place and time" (MAST, 1982, p. 288), but the temporality of these forms is different. A film is shot during a certain period, and after released it persists the

[2] "[...] o verdadeiro impacto da caracterização de um personagem provém de sua ação, devendo-se também estar igualmente atento para o que *não* é dito." [Translation by the author]

[3] "[...] cada vez mais a utilização da iluminação dirigindo a atenção do espectador para determinado foco assume na montagem teatral papel equivalente ao da câmara cinematográfica." [Translation by the author]

same forever. Even though varied interpretations can be made of it throughout the years, the object remains the same. In opposition, in a play, the live contact with the audience and numerous performances may submit it to the unexpected and give the play a mutable aura. In addition, different productions result into different scenery, lighting, and consequently, performances.

The influence of literature, prose and play, in the making of films is undeniable. It is patent that the nineteenth century theatre was one of the foundation elements for the conception of the earliest silent films. Also, the cinema equipped itself from literature, adapting major literary canons, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), to the cinema. But films have also contributed to the development of literature. The habit of watching films in a dark room with a dreamy atmosphere has influenced practically everything – to the point of possibly having changed the way that writers write and the way readers read. Influenced by cinematographic techniques writers and playwrights have introduced new audiovisual aspects to their work. Therefore, it is possible to say that the differences between these art forms do not minimize the importance and the relevance of each of them. On the contrary, they add to each other in order to enrich and amplify their spectrum.

2.2 THE *AVANT-GARDE* MOVEMENT

The concept of art varies throughout the eras. By the end of the eighteenth century, with the emancipation of the bourgeois society, art had a status of autonomy, which implied a separation of social life and the institution of art, thus not demanding a social or political character from art. "The autonomous status and the concept of the work of art operative in the bourgeois institution of art imply separation from social life. This is essential for an art intending to interpret the world at a distance" (BÜRGER, 1999, xxxix). However, a change in the social function of art was demanded in the beginning of the twentieth century and the *avant-garde*[4] movements emerged to question the autonomous status of art in bourgeois society.

These movements – Symbolism, Futurism, Dadaism, Cubism, Expressionism, and Surrealism – manifested in several types of artistic expressions such as painting, literature,

[4] Military terminology meaning, in French, *front guard* or *vanguard*, borrowed by Mikhail Bakunin, who entitled his anarchist journal *L'Avant-garde* in Switzerland in 1878 (INNES, 1993, p. 1).

theatre, architecture and cinema. They flourished simultaneously and shared some characteristics such as the repulse to social institutions and artistic conventions, the revolt against post industrial society as well as industrialist and mechanicist values. According to Bürger (1999), their aim was to reintegrate art in the praxis of life, and to intervene in social life. They attacked the institution of art but still used the characteristic of nil consequence given by its autonomy status. “All those needs that cannot be satisfied in everyday life, because the principle of competition pervades all spheres, can find a home in art, because art is removed from the praxis of life” (BÜRGER, 1999, p. 50). Therefore, the *avant-garde* movement is more a political and philosophical attitude than a set of analogous characteristics. The rejection of social institutions, like family, marriage, and work, and the rejection of artistic conventions, are just the first layer of a complex net that can be traced from the 1910s to the 1960s.

Innes (1993) points out three common aspects to characterize the *avant-garde* movements: anarchism, carnavalesque and primitivism. The concept of anarchism relates to *avant-garde* as the philosophical thought of “extreme individualism”, in the sense that it promotes psychological and spiritual liberation. Also, anarchism emphasizes the artistic process of creation in opposition to art as a product. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnavalesque is the second aspect highlighted by Innes. It expresses the idea of unity among people, the idea that during such festivals all social, economical and political conventions are suspended, thus transforming all individuals into one body. “It dissolves the concept of an atomized bourgeois individuality by making each festive participant conscious of ‘being a member of a continually growing and renewed people’” (INNES, 1993, p. 7).

The counter culture of carnival subverts social, moral and aesthetic values. It displays a different perspective of the conventional truths, a new way of seeing things, thus it is usually related to madness and irrationality. The third concept which Innes presents is primitivism. “This has two complementary facets: the exploration of dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche; and the quasi-religious focus on myth and magic, which in the theatre leads to experiments with ritual and ritualistic patterning or performance” (INNES, 1993, p. 3). In other words, primitivism promotes a return to the roots of human kind – a return to the original forms of drama, promoting ritualistic performances and experimentation; and a return to the inner soul, to the psyche, conferring a feeling of transcendence. By searching the primitive and the unconscious, the *avant-garde* tried to present alternative values, a remedy to the decadent bourgeois society, consequence of the

ascendance of capitalism. As a reflection of this conviction, some exponent artists like Ernst Toller, André Breton and Arthur Adamov joined the Communist Party.

However, having vanguard artists among the comrades did not free them from criticism. The *avant-garde* movement was bombed from both sides: the despotic governments and the socialists. They were accused of being 'degenerated' by authoritarian governments, and they were discriminated by communists for being apolitical. George Lukáks presents one of the hardest criticisms against expressionism saying that it is nothing but a "romantic opposition" (MACHADO, 1996, p. 32) because it does not reach the essence of the problem. He also criticizes the expressionist abstraction and irrationality for being an escape from reality.

However, what really set the *avant-garde* theatre in a distinguished place was the use of ritualistic performance in order to manipulate the audience and thus make them aware of certain issues and finally propagate the seed of change. They believed that social change would only come with individual change. "In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become *another*" (INNES, 1993, p. 11).

Moreover, Innes proceeds by stating that the *avant-garde* movements are not dated and fixed, on the contrary, they kept renovating and changing into other directions until the 1960s. According to Innes, its members "are linked by a specific attitude to western society, a particular aesthetic approach, and the aim of transforming the nature of theatrical performance: all of which add up to a distinctive ideology" (INNES, 1993, p. 4). The *avant-garde* movements of the beginning of the last century are undeniably the seeds to all the other movements in our contemporary society; it is possible to track their influence in several artistic fields up to the present.

2.3 EXPRESSIONISM AND THE VISUAL ARTS

Expressionism is a German movement that came up as an answer to the nineteenth century traditional bourgeois lifestyle – in the visual arts it served as a response to Impressionism, the same way as in the theatre it served in relation to Realism and Naturalism. Expressionism was certainly an art movement able to capture the "zeitgeist", i.e., the

intellectual and cultural mood of its time – the decadence, the grotesque, and the chaotic were all symptoms of a dehumanized world predicting the war. Expressionism is not a homogenous style but an artistic reaction to the unstable social mood installed in Europe in the beginning of the twentieth century. Art historian Karin Thomas believed that Expressionism innovated more in terms of its passionate posture than in terms of formal principles: "[...] the revolutionary *pathos*, that [...] sets Expressionism as a vanguard modern art, does not come from a stylistic concept, but from the nerve to settle the individual, and his emotional life, in the centre of the artistic expression"[5] (BRILL, 2002, p. 401).

It seemed that the artists shared a collective feeling of disintegration and disbelief that later would culminate with the First World War. The visual arts, specially painting, were the first to introduce this new form of expression as an expansion of post-impressionism with Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Edvard Munch, by the end of the nineteenth century. In general terms, expressionist painting is characterized by deformation in order to highlight the internal reality; it is instinctive and subjective, using color as a way of expressing sensations and feelings. The painting technique of Expressionism, with its use of thick paste, aims to provoke an effect that may suggest violence, dynamism, abruptness and vibration. Some of the most important artists of this period are the Austrian Oskar Kokoschka and the Russian Wassily Kandinsky, both followers of different "schools" inside the expressionist movement, known as *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (the Blue Rider), respectively. Both painters also wrote plays which will be analyzed here later.

The group *Die Brücke* started in 1905 and was first based in Dresden, where they did not receive much attention from the critics or the public. Later, they moved to Berlin, where their painting was finally recognized. However, the movement disbanded after three years in Berlin. *Die Brücke* was characterized by the deformation of real objects, the transfiguration of reality in order to bring to surface the emotional inner truth. The historian Giulio Carlo Argan (*El arte moderna*, 1976) considers the expressionist deformation to be the real beauty in opposition to the ideal beauty, in other words, the ideal beauty transformed into real beauty becomes ugliness.

> In the expressionist poetics, still fundamentally idealist, the human condition is the one of the fallen angel. There is a double movement: fall and degradation of the spiritual principle, or divine, which, phenomenolizing, combines with the materialist principle in order to merge with the spiritual – which determines the

[5] "[…] o *pathos* revolucionário, que […] marca o Expressionismo como arte moderna de vanguarda, não resulta de um conceito estilístico, mas da coragem de colocar o indivíduo, e sua vivência emocional, no centro da expressão artística." [Translation by the author]

> dynamism, the dionisic, orgiastic and tragic essence of the image, and its double meaning: the sacred and the demoniac[6] (BRILL, 2002, p. 402).

The nude paintings are great examples of this dichotomy between sacred and evil, because the expressionist faced the naked human body as a primal force, as we can notice in *Reclining Nude with Mirror* (1910), by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and *Girl Before a Mirror* (1915), by Carl Schmidt-Rottluff; both paintings coincidentally use the imagery of the mirror and the idea of duplicity and ambiguity. The mirror might also symbolize the unconscious and the inner truth.

It is possible to say that *Die Brücke* was also an artistic movement concerned not only with the aesthetic but also with social issues. They were trying to reestablish the connection between man and nature by valuing manual work, dissolved by the accelerated process of industrialization and urbanization.

> Indeed, the aspiration to free the arts from the aesthetic sphere in which they have exiled since the 18th century might be considered the fundamental engine of the group's ideas and practices in their years in Dresden. The profound interest in the so called 'primitive' art, non-European, or non-gothic, and considered an authentic manifestation of an artistic craft completely integrated to the other spheres of social life, was born from this ideal[7] (MATTOS, 2002, p. 47).

Friedrich Nietzsche was a fundamental influence on the group, having as one of its members Erich Heckel, who painted a portrait of the philosopher and poet in 1905. Nietzsche's aversion to the middle class values and his ideas of breaking all conventions were inspirational to the artists of *Die Brücke*.

Opposed to *Die Brücke*, whose imagery oscillated between "urban society and natural paradise" (KUSPIT, 2007), *Der Blaue Reiter* imagery was mystical and abstract. Donald Kuspit[8] believes that "both groups were emotional revolutionaries – emotional freedom mattered to them above all – but the *Blaue Reiter* artists were more aesthetically revolutionary than the *Brücke* artists. The former carried Expressionism to an abstract extreme […]"

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[6] Na poética expressionista, ainda assim fundamentalmente idealista, a condição humana é aquela do anjo caído. Há um duplo movimento: queda e degradação do princípio espiritual, ou divino, o qual, fenomenizando-se, une-se com o princípio materialista para unir-se com o espiritual – que determina o dinamismo, a essência dionisíaca, orgiástica e trágica da imagem, e seu duplo significado: do sagrado e do demoníaco. [Translation by the author]

[7] De fato, o desejo de libertar a arte da esfera do estético para o qual se refugiara desde o século XVIII, pode ser considerado o motor fundamental das idéias e práticas do grupo, em seus anos em Dresden. Desse ideal nasce, por exemplo, o interesse profundo do grupo pela arte assim chamada 'primitiva', tanto não-européia, quanto gótica, consideradas manifestações autênticas de um fazer artístico inteiramente integrado às demais esferas da vida social. [Translation by the author]

[8] Professor of art history and philosophy at SUNY Stony Brook and A.D. White professor at large at Cornell University.

(KUSPIT, 2007). According to Mattos (2002, p. 49), although *Der Blaue Reiter* was still linked to the idea of "representation of the inner world"[9], they innovated towards abstraction, which later would be outshined by the Cubists. Their process of creation was very much based on the study of colors and forms; they were extremely concerned with expressive symbolism. In 1912, the first exhibition of Kandinsky's work took place in the art gallery *Der Sturm* (The Tempest), owned by Herwarth Walden, who also published a homonymous magazine; also, the first edition of the *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac was written, a sort of manifesto explaining the purposes of the group, which was less homogeneous than *Die Brücke*. What the *Blaue Reiter* group searched for was the spiritual manifestation without special techniques or fixed structures. In addition, to the members of this group, art would follow an "inner necessity sharing a universal language" (MATTOS, 2002, p. 50).

Wilhelm Worringer[10] was one of the first to analyze the art of abstraction and thus justify Expressionism in the pre-war period in Germany. His best-known work is *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), where he explains the "metaphysics anxiety" of the Northern European countries, in opposition to the art of abstraction in Mediterranean countries. In other words, he believed that Northern European countries had always had a tendency to express themselves through the "art of empathy" (associated with Realism) and that Expressionism broke the boundaries with the past by performing and expressing the "art of abstraction" deeply linked to primitivism. Later, he wrote *Form Problem of the Gothic* (1912), where he presents more arguments to differentiate German Expressionism from other paintings. He believed that the German "metaphysics anxiety" provoked distorted and strong images and colors (BRILL, 2002, p. 392). However, it is possible to say that the German "metaphysics anxiety" crossed the borders of its country long ago. Kandinsky himself admitted at the time that "nowadays metaphysic anxiety is the general condition of humanity [...] what distinguishes one nation from another is simply the level of conscience of this anxiety, of each individual and each person"[11] (BRILL, 2002, p. 392).

Although Expressionism was a short-lived movement – it lasted only twenty years – its importance to the development of Western art is undeniable, especially in the United States. The study of the symbolism of colors, first explored by the neo-Impressionists, such as Van Gogh, led to another school called Orphism, created by Georges Delaunay, who kept strong bonds with the group *Der Blaue Reiter*. Later, Orphism would influence the American

[9] Translation by the author.
[10] German art historian associated to Expressionism.
[11] "hoje a ansiedade metafísica é condição geral da humanidade […] o que distingue um povo do outro é apenas o grau de consciência dessa ansiedade, de cada indivíduo e de cada povo." [Translation by the author]

artists Stanton MacDonald Wright and Morgan Russel, who created Synchronism, which consists on producing abstract chromatic painting based on a system of color scales. Its creators believed that they could orchestrate the colors like the composer arranges the notes in a song. All these schools led to what we call today Abstract Expressionism, which has as one of its most important artist the American Jackson Pollock, whose career flourished in the 1950s.

Abstract Expressionism was an American movement that emerged immediately after World War II. After the end of the war, Europe was completely devastated, and New York became the center of the art world. Besides Jackson Pollock, other Abstract Expressionists that we can cite are Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline and Louis Schanker. The term, "Abstract Expressionism" had already been used to refer to German Expressionism in the magazine *Der Sturm* in 1919. However, the two movements contain several differences and there is a gap of at least twenty-five years between them. Although American Abstract Expressionism was influenced by the European vanguard, it was a genuine American movement, whose artists, mostly New Yorkers, had no interest in imitating imported styles. Moreover, they were trying to break with the geometrical style inspired by the Cubists.

> Indeed, the Abstract Expressionists rejected any pictorial element that evoked the machine-made: impersonal, polished surfaces from which all signs of the artist's hand had been eliminated. [...] Instead, they experimented with unstable, indeterminate, dynamic, open, and 'unfinished' forms – directly exploiting the expressiveness of the painting medium to suggest the particular creative action of the artist, his active presence and temperament (SANDLER, 1976, p. 30).

2.4 EXPRESSIONISM AND THE THEATRE

Expressionism in literature and theatre followed Expressionism in the visual arts. In Germany, this new type of theatre was influenced by the Swedish playwright August Strindberg, whose plays were extremely symbolic and mythic. His theatre was "largely autobiographical and attempted to transcribe subjective experience directly into stage terms." (INNES, 1993, p. 28) Moreover, the setting was intended to produce alien perspectives and the dialogues were fragmented and musical. Among his most important plays are *The Father* (1887), *To Damascus* (1898-1901), *A Dream Play* (1901) and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907).

Expressionist theatre, following Strindberg's steps, innovated in form and theme. The purpose was to provide the audience an awkward feeling of alienation, in such way that the symbolic elements, such as colors and sounds, would be understood by the spectators subconsciously. The expressionists believed that certain colors would "automatically trigger specific emotional associations" (INNES, 1993, p. 41).

Thus, "the expressionist play or painting should ideally be a conductor, transferring the artist's subjective vision to the spectator's mind without being filtered through the intellect or socially conditioned perspectives, so that it is experienced as 'lived truth'" (INNES, 1993, p. 41). They believed that it would be much faster and easier to reach the audience in a subconscious level using archetypical conceptions. However alienated it may sound, this detachment in terms of staging and acting was nothing more than a criticism of the mechanized society and dehumanized world; they were trying to find the roots of civilization. Another characteristic of the expressionist theatre was the reduction of verbalization, the "telegraphic style" or the senseless and musical verbalization of sentences and phrases, which was an attempt to "reach a more basic stratum of awareness" (INNES, 1993, p. 41) in face of the rationally over-verbalized industrial world.

All these attempts to express the primordial are found in Wassilly Kandinsky's play *Yellow Sound*, first published in 1912 in the *Blaue Reiter* Almanac. In *Yellow Sound,* colors and sounds make the performance: there are no dialogues; the colors in the background, on stage and on the actors' clothes express the sensations and feelings; and there is a choir chanting disconnected sentences. Most of the play, when read, is a compilation of requisites and steps to be followed. However, when seen, Kandinsky's play might look like an expressionist painting in motion and sound. Here is an extract of the text with translation by Mendes (1994):

> À esquerda no palco, um pequeno edifício inclinado (semelhante a uma capela muito simples) sem porta nem janela. Ao lado do edifício (a partir do telhado), uma torrezinha estreita, inclinada, com um pequeno sino rachado. Pendente do sino uma corda. Uma criança pequena, de camiseta branca e sentada no chão (virada para o espectador), puxa devagar e compassadamente a parte inferior da corda. À direita, no mesmo alinhamento, um homem muito gordo está de pé, todo vestido de negro. O rosto todo branco, muito indistinto. A capela é de um vermelho sujo. A torre, azul estridente. O sino, de lata. Fundo cinzento por igual, liso. O homem de negro está de pé, de pernas abertas e com as mãos postas na cintura.
> O homem (ordenando muito alto, com bonita voz): 'Silêncio!!'
> A criança larga a corda. Fica escuro (KANDINSKY, 1994).

However, the first play considered to be truly expressionist is Oskar Kokoschka's *Murderer Hope of Women* (1909). In this play, Kokoschka, who was firstly a painter, dealt

deeply with the antagonism of the archetypes of man and woman, and their erotic and violent struggle for dominance, as well as the dichotomy between sex and death. Grand gestures and archaic language and the participation of a chorus reminded of the ancient Greek theatre. His play deals with the fear of the female principle, in other words, the fear of being "bewitched" by women, a fact which would definitely lead men to death. According to Innes (1993, p. 52-53), "the play's aim is to open the spectator's subconscious to these depths by presenting archetypal sexual patterns of domination and destruction". The first performance of *Murderer* was so controversial in form and content that provoked a riot. *Murderer* was Kokoschka's shout against bourgeois values and some critics as Bram Djkistra accuse the expressionists of misogyny in his book *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (1986). Djikstra's argument is that *fin de siècle* artists innovated in style and form, but did not pay any attention to matters of theme, maintaining the nineteenth century perspective of women's inferiority (CERNUSCHI, 1999).

The struggle between death instinct and erotic instinct is constant in the expressionist theatre – the isolated human being, abandoned from the moment of birth, seeks either erotic satisfaction or destruction. Sigmund Freud had been studying this antagonism based on the Greek mythology of Eros and Thanatos – two major conflicting desires – and published his book concerning this theme, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* in 1920. According to Freud, the libido energy of Eros would drive people to creativity and production, while the death force of Thanatos would drive people to self-destruction and a desire of non-existence. Actually, several other Freudian concepts were dramatized by the expressionist theatre. *The Son* (1914), by Walter Hasenclever, which deals with the issue of patricide, was first performed in the same year of the publication of *Totem and Tabu* (1914) by Sigmund Freud, where he explains the oedipal complex concept. Moreover, the centralization of the dramatic action in the conscience and perception of the protagonist follows the Freudian notion of subjectivity.

Genuinely interested in showing the character's subjectivity, the expressionist plays often dramatized the spiritual progress of their protagonists, thus they are referred to as *Stationendramen* (station plays), based on the episodic presentation of the suffering and death of Christ in the Stations of the Cross. However, the *Stationendramen* model might lead the protagonist towards two different directions: self-redemption or self-sacrifice. Also, space and time tend to be arbitrary concepts; the action might take place anytime, anywhere, which "leads the spectators to an abstract universalization" (INNES, 1993, p. 39). Moreover, a step further from Strindberg, expressionist theatre not only reproduced the dreamlike atmosphere but the illogical sense of a dream in its structure. Therefore, the production of an expressionist

play was absolutely anti-realist. As the purpose was to show the protagonist's subjective perspective, everything should look distorted and confused, like the inner world of the character; hence the tangled lines of the scenery represented the hallucinations of the protagonist; and sudden light was focused on a specific character or object so that the audience would concentrate on either one of them, leaving the rest of the cast in complete darkness. The inner world of the protagonist is also represented on stage by the setting, colors, symbols, and, especially, lighting. It is possible to say that the Northern arts have always had a shadowy tendency. The *chiaroscuro* effect is actually a tradition since Rembrandt's[12] brownish paintings. Later this tradition in lighting would be developed masterly by the director Max Reinhardt, who would play an important role in the development of German cinema. The return to the primitive marked also the acting: grand and exaggerated gestures, faces transformed into masks, frozen positions, emphatic tones and telegraphic phrases, everything reminded of the classical Greek style of acting. About the rhetorical acting style of the expressionists, Christopher Innes says that "the whole surface effect was angular, corresponding to the crooked arches and oblique perspectives of the expressionist sets in which the actors were framed. It was grotesque, gothic and sharply conventionalized" (INNES, 1993, p. 45). All these staging techniques, intentionally artificial and exaggerated, served to provide archetypical emotions to the audience. Therefore, the contradiction between archaic style and subjectivity was not a problem for the expressionists, because what mattered to them was the universality of emotions. This universality of emotions and the reduction of dialogues probably are the aspects which carried over expressionist acting into the silent film and contemporary dance (INNES, 1993).

Similarly to the visual arts, Expressionism in the theatre is not a homogenous style. Bernhard Diebold wrote *Anarchie in Drama* in 1921, where he identified the different models of expressionist theatre. He divided them into three categories: representation *Geist*, spiritual and abstract, like Kandinsky's *Yellow Sound*; representation *Schrei*, bizarre deformation and internal logic of the characters, like the plays of Richard Weichert and Hans Hartung; and representation *Ich*, absolute expression of the self, similar to *Schrei* but centered in a singular character, some examples of which are the plays of Leopold Jessner and Max Reinhardt. The first two types were introduced in the beginning of the movement, whereas the *Ich* prevailed by its end (FERNANDES, 2002).

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[12] The Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606 – 1669) was one of the most important artists in the 17th century. He is most famous for the creation of the effect *chiaroescuro* used to produce forms and dramatic effects.

Undoubtedly, the expressionist movement was a representation of the German and European political situation by the time of the First World War. It was almost an unbearable atmosphere and the young artists screamed against the destruction they were foreseeing. However, Expressionism was not an isolated movement; it reverberated throughout the Western world, especially the United States. Playwrights like Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice and Sophie Treadwell were deeply influenced by the techniques applied by the German movement of the beginning of the century, and the Americans put them into practice only ten years after the premiere of Kokoschka's play (*The Hairy Ape*, by Eugene O'Neill was first performed in 1922). Certainly the migration of several European artists of Jewish descent to the United States promoted an artistic encounter of major consequences. So it is that, in the United States, the expressionist influence in the theatre can be tracked at least until the 1950s, with Tennessee Williams's plays.

2.5 EXPRESSIONISM IN THE GERMAN CINEMA

The cinema may have been the most accurate form of realization of German Expressionism. The new medium provided the exploration of new forms of expression, and there could not be a finest form to illustrate unreality. Robert Wiene, director of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, stated that "The film medium lends itself naturally to the expression of the unreal, to representing it precisely in the Expressionist sense" (KRACAUER, 2004, p. 95). The expressionists believed reality lied underneath the surface, and that it could only be reached through visions, dreams or hallucinations. The new medium, the motion picture, provided the ultimate abstraction required by the post World War I period. The atmosphere of horror and despair caused by the bloody memories of the war were inspirational to the German soul, which had always had a somehow gloomy characteristic. Nietzsche criticized the German thought by saying that it is "a first-rate nerve-destroyer, doubly dangerous for a people given to drinking and revering the unclear as a virtue, namely, in its two-fold capacity of an intoxicating and stupefying narcotic."[13] (NIETZSCHE, [s.d.], p. 10)

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[13] "uma máquina de primeira ordem para destrambelhar os nervos, e, assim, duas vezes perigosa para um povo que gosta de bebida e preza a obscuridade como se fosse uma virtude, perigosa por causa da sua dupla propriedade de narcótico que produz a embriaguez e envolve o espírito em vapores 'nebulosos'." [Translation by the author].

The evil in German expressionist cinema is a key concept to understand the period. Leopold Ziegler, in *The Holy German Empire* (1925), states that

> we must qualify solely of demoniac this enigmatic behavior in relation to reality, the solid and closed unity that the world represents. The German man is demoniac per excellence. Demoniac seems to be, indeed, the gap that cannot be fulfilled, demoniac is the nostalgia that is impossible to soothe, the thirst that is impossible to satiate[14] (EISNER, 2002, p. 10).

The German expressionist cinema is famous for its devilish atmosphere: the dim light or the effect *chiaroscuro*; the distortion of scenery and the actors exaggerated facial features; unrealistic and geometrically absurd settings; recurrent themes like madness, insanity and betrayal, which intend to criticize the relations of power, etc. – all these characteristics reinforce the idea of demoniac. However, Lotte H. Eisner, one of the most influential authors on German cinema, affirms that in her book *Die Dämonische Leinwand* (translated to English as *The Haunted Screen*), first published in France in 1952, the word *Dämonische*, or “demoniac”, does not mean “diabolic”, it must be understood in the Greek sense:

> Daimon is the Greek derivative for the term demon. In this sense the term ‘demon’ means ‘replete with knowledge’. The ancient Greeks thought there were good and bad demons called 'eudemons' and 'cacodemons.' The term 'daimon' means ‘divine power’, ‘fate’ or ‘god’. Daimons, in Greek mythology, included deified heroes. They were considered intermediary spirits between men and the gods (HEFNER, 1997)

Moreover, according to Jung, “the Greek words *daimon* and *daimonion* express a determining power which comes upon man from outside, like providence, or fate, though the ethical decision is left to man” (JUNG, 1959, p. 27) Therefore, the demoniac nature of German Expressionism would suggest an internal awareness of fate, though ethically regulated by men.

German expressionist cinema starts around 1913-1914. One of the first films of the genre is *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague or A Bargain with Satan*), released in 1913, directed by Stellan Rye, with screenplay by Hanns Heinz Ewers, which resembles the myth of Faust and the idea of double suggested by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe. The film tells the story of a brilliant student who, in search of success, sells his soul to the devil and ends up being threatened by his evil double (his shadow). The film already shows

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[14] “devemos qualificar simplesmente de demoníaco esse comportamento enigmático com relação à realidade, ao todo sólido e fechado que o mundo apresenta. O homem alemão é o homem demoníaco por excelência. Demoníaco parece de fato o abismo que não se pode preencher, demoníaca a nostalgia que não se pode apaziguar, a sede que não se pode estancar [...]” [Translation by the author]

expressionist aspects like the *chiaroscuro* lighting, deformation, demonization and subjective conflicts. Eisner (2002) affirms that from that moment on, the German artistic community understood that the cinema allowed to reproduce the fantastic atmosphere and vague visions, so well portrayed and described by previous writers like E.T.A Hoffmann. However, the great masterpiece of expressionist cinema is *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), directed by Robert Wiene and screenplay by Hans Janovich and Carl Mayer. Contrary to what many people may think, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is not just about an insane asylum director who has gone mad. The intention of the authors, at first, was to question the power conveyed to social authority. However, the beginning and the end of the film were changed even against the authors' will, and the film was softened in its intention. The artists in charge of the scenery were Walter Röhring and Walter Reimann. They recreated in canvas a medieval town with unexpected angles and distorted lines. The entire oblique atmosphere served to displace harmony, and consequently, disturb the audience and provoke a sense of horror and danger. The distortions in scenery and the shadowish lighting functioned as a form of showing the inner soul of the characters, and instigate a feeling of dream. In addition, the distorted atmosphere of dream causes the roads and houses of the little medieval town an extraordinary impression of animation, as if they were alive. The idea of the inorganic animation was first brought up by Wilhelm Worringer in 1907:

> The Nordic [...] always feels the presence of a 'veil between him and the nature', thus, he aspires an abstract art. Tormented people, due to an interior discrepancy, which finds almost unbridgeable obstacles, need this pathetic disturbance that leads to 'inorganic animation'[15] (EISNER, 2002, p. 21).

Moreover, both characters in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* Caligari and Cesare, are clear representations of the expressionist concept: Cesare, the sleepwalker isolated in his inner world and destitute of his individuality, kills by order of his master, Dr. Caligari, an unprincipled and ruthless man that tries to subvert the moral codes. Is it not ironic how *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* predicted what would be later the Nazi era? Although Nazism has banned Expressionism from galleries and theatres considering it a "degenerate art", its representation was so deeply imbedded in the German soul that it came out in the daily routine of the Third Reich. "Hitler incorporated in his being the tyrannical and mysterious character of the Caligaresque plots. The rough gestures of the actors were extended to the

[15] "O nórdico [...] sente sempre a presença de um 'véu entre ele e a natureza', e por isso aspira a uma arte abstrata. Os povos atormentados por uma discordância interior, que encontra obstáculos quase insuperáveis, precisam desse patético inquietante que conduz à 'animação do inorgânico'." [Translation by the author]

German population as a whole in the compulsory Nazi greeting"[16] (NAZÁRIO, 2002, p. 536-537).

The success of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* at the time was not a surprise as well as that of other films which came subsequently. The fact is that expressionist films were not experimentalist (although they seemed to be), they were already part of the German film industry; it was called the conglomerate UFA, which was financially fomented by the Government until 1918, when the German were defeated in the war and the Deutsches Bank took control suspending all censorship (NAZÁRIO, 2002). German cinema was the most fruitful in the 1920s Europe, and it was used also as a way to differentiate from and compete with Hollywood, which had already achieved the degree of greatest film industry. Therefore, in a time when ideas were lacking and the audience was not satisfied, German producers decided to gamble in a new film concept, investing in a more artistic type and gathering young artists who had no previous experience on using the new medium. Literature was used as base source to create screenplays (also called *"Autorenfilm",* or literary screenplay) and the theatre was the greatest inspiration to expressionist filmmakers.

One of the most important aspects of expressionist cinema, if not *the* most important, is lighting. Some scholars bestow the Israeli dramatist Max Reinhardt as the genius creator of German lighting, the *chiaroscuro*. However, although Reinhardt used and developed the effect *chiaroscuro*, the brownish melancholic atmosphere already existed since Rembrandt. The truly German soul has always preferred darkness to light. Spengler[17] tried to explain this preference by justifying that "the light limits the eye, creating corporeal objects, in other words, the night dissolves the bodies, the day dissolves the soul"[18] (EISNER, 2002, p. 48). According to Deleuze, the effect *chiaroscuro* represents an opposition of forces, "the struggle of the spirit with darkness" (DELEUZE, 1983, p. 115).

In addition, the camera subjectivity would also help to establish a new way to make and see films. The camera is no longer just an eye that sees, but it simply shows. "A presence that does not contemplate, but violates ...ceasing to be an eye, the camera has become a far more complex and active device by which 'showing' is one of the various functions, and not the most important" (KRACAUER, 2004, p. 93).

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[16] "Hitler incorporou na sua pessoa as características do personagem tirânico e misterioso das tramas caligarescas. [...] Os gestos bruscos dos atores foram estendidos à população da Alemanha como um todo na obrigatória saudação nazista." [Translation by the author]

[17] Oswald Spengler (1880 – 1936), German historian and philosopher.

[18] "[...] a luz do dia impõe limites aos olhos, cria objetos corpóreos. A noite dissolve os corpos, o dia dissolve a alma." [Translation by the author]

German Expressionism was "imported" to the United States in two waves. The first one took place in the 1920s with the hiring of several German talents by Paramount and MGM due to an agreement with the UFA. Among the artists who migrated to the United States were Ernst Lubitsch, Eric Pommer, Carl Mayer, Friedrich Murnau, and Marlene Dietrich. The second wave of migration happened when Hitler was invested in power in 1933 – many Jews, Jew descendants and anti-regime German were compelled to move to North America. Among them: Fritz Lang, one of the greatest expressionist filmamkers who had a prolific career in the United States. Oskar Fischinger, who worked in films like *Fantasy,* by Walt Disney, and Hans Richter, creator of *Rhythmus 21* (1921), one of the most important early abstract films, were other names that went to the United States to start over. The consequence of this migration would contribute to the development of the American Film Noir which was an immense gain to the twentieth century cinematographic history. This film genre will be dealt in Chapter 3.

2.6 AMERICAN THEORIES OF EXPRESSIONISM

Scarce material has been written on the subject of Expressionism on the American stage. Basically, there are two texts about American expressionist drama. The first was *Accelerated Grimace* (1972), by Mardi Valgemae, where the author declares that German Expressionism deeply influenced the American theatre in the 1920s. Mardi Valgemae attributes the use of expressionistic devices on the American stage to the ascendance of expressionist German films among American intellectuals at the time. Moreover, he states that American dramatists were concerned mainly with the expressionistic techniques rather than the movement's ideas.

> Like romanticism, expressionism does not lend itself to precise definition. In attempting to gauge the impact of this European movement on American drama, the picture becomes even more blurred, because only a few Continental expressionist plays found their way into our theatre. The American temperament was at that time not receptive to many of the philosophical and hence thematic excesses of Continental expressionism. Thus American dramatists were interested primarily in utilizing the techniques of expressionist dramaturgy. To complicate matters further, in the case of several native playwrights, notably Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice and John Howard Lawson, acquaintance with the new mode either preceded American productions of these plays or was based on contacts with the German expressionist film (VALGEMAE, 1972, p. 3).

When Valgemae comments about Eugene O'Neill, the most important playwright when it comes to American Expressionism, he says that O'Neill's denial of the German influence was an attempt to minimize his ties with the Continental expressionists. Although O'Neill has firmly and clearly stated that he was not influenced by the German expressionists but by August Strindberg, Valgemae believed that he was.

> O'Neill's skillful projection of his character's inner states through distorted settings and masks suggests a much closer affinity with the German expressionists than with Strindberg, in whose dream plays the consciousness of not the protagonist but of the author holds sway over the surreal action (VALGEMAE, 1972, p. 40).

Mardi Valgemae also comments on Elmer Rice's works among others playwrights. He mentions that Elmer Rice was probably greatly influenced by *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* when writing *The Adding Machine*. A comment to which later Rice would answer to Valgemae saying:

> [...] I was greatly impressed by the film (as I have been upon subsequent viewings). I certainly did not have the film in my mind when I wrote The Adding Machine, though what its unconscious influence may have been, it is, of course, impossible for me to know (VALGEMAE, 1972, p. 66).

The great question for American critics is whether American Expressionism in the 1920s was influenced by German Expressionism. It is possible to say that it was but only to a certain extent. The problem with Valgemae's discourse is that he condemns the American drama to a Eurocentric standpoint by saying that German Expressionism played a central part in the American *avant-garde* theatre of the 1920s, the same way that the French theatre of the absurd did in the 1960s. "[...] Berlin-centered Expressionism was as much a part of the American avant-garde theatre and drama of the 1920s as the Paris-oriented theatre of the absurd has been in the 1960s" (VALGEMAE, 1972, p. 111). But the truth is that, whether American playwrights suffered an influence or not, they created a new form of expression based on their reality. This is the argument of Julia Walker's book published thirty three years after Mardi Valgemae's *Accelerated Grimace* (1972).

Julia Walker wrote *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words* in 2005. This book, recently released, presents a completely different view of American Expressionism; it strongly disagrees with Mardi Valgemae's book. Walker believes that the reason why Expressionism developed in the United States had nothing to do with German influence but with new technologies and the way they changed the experience of

communication. The 1920s were a period of great technological innovations. The new technologies invented at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, such as the telephone, the radio, the cinematographer, the telegraph, the phonograph and the typewriter had become common home and office devices by the 1920s, which would originate massive changes in the way that people communicated. “The act of communication – once experienced as a relatively integrated process – must have felt as if it were suddenly rent apart, splintered into the newly separable elements of bodies, voices and words” (WALKER, 2005, p. 1).

Walker’s ideas follow Walter Benjamin’s 1935 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, where he also approached the subject of the mechanization of communication. His greater concern was the loss of the object’s aura. By reproducing the object of art several times, the object would lose its authenticity and would be displaced from time and space. We might say that it was precisely what the American dramatists in the 1920s were trying to show by presenting alienated characters unable to communicate and, therefore, disconnected from their own sense of existence. Their feeling of detachment in a meaningless world might represent precisely an equivalent to the loss of the object’s aura. By quoting Luigi Pirandello, Benjamin illustrates his thoughts:

> For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor represents himself to the public before the camera, rather than representing someone else. One of the first to sense the actor’s metamorphosis by this form of testing was Pirandello. […] “The film actor,” wrote Pirandello, “feels as if in exile—exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence... The projector will play with his shadow before the public, and he himself must be content to play before the camera (BENJAMIN, 1935, p. 56).

According to Walker, the theatre would have been the art form most shaken by this alteration in communication, because of its bodily dramatic characteristic. She also affirms that because of modernization “rhythms of industry and mechanization had thrown the body’s natural rhythms out of alignment”. Proposing a theory based on the expressive culture movement (commented below), she affirms that this alienation, provoked by the mechanized and industrialized world, also affected people’s spiritual health, “causing one to feel out of harmony with the universal life force” (WALKER, 2005, p. 132).

Walker presents several reasons for her argument against Valgemae’s point of view, but we can say that both theories can be summed and not oppose each other. American

dramatists were influenced by German Expressionism, but by appropriating this new theatre form of expression they gave it a new breath of life, a different perspective in agreement with their country, their language, and their cultural background.

Walker's fist argument against Valgemae's idea is that German plays were performed on the American stage after the American expressionist plays had been written. However, it is obvious that the American playwrights had access to copies of German plays as well as films. Also, the dramatists responsible for the first German expressionist performances on the American stage were mostly the experimentalists from the Theatre Guild and the Provincetown Players, to which some of the most important American expressionist playwrights belonged, like Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill. Another point to be discussed is the fact that the American playwrights strongly denied the German influence, which might have been caused by the anti-German sentiment that persisted after World War I and the suspicion against foreigners and foreign ideas that grew beneath the surface of American society.

So far, Julia Walker's argumentation has not proved satisfactory against Valgemae's. However, she presents three other aspects that might be fundamental to differentiate her analysis to the former. Walker's strongest argument is S. S. Curry's theory of expression, which had a major influence in the beginning of the twentieth century. A disciple of the French instructor François Delsarte, Curry proposed a new approach for communication. He believed that communication involved the whole body and not only the voice. His ideas would later influence the *expressive culture movement*, "a broad-based program of personal and social reform advocating the performing arts as a means of overcoming the alienating conditions of modernity" (WALKER, 2005, p. 5). Curry's theory was so popular that it was implemented in high school and college literary instruction in the 1910s. Although the movement and the theory were almost completely forgotten later, it is quite possible that the 1920s dramatists had had access to his theories when studying at school.

In addition, composition and production were relatively independent. The playwrights wrote the text but did not participate so intensely in the process of creation of scenery and production. Many scene designers had studied in Germany and came back to the United States with new ideas. Moreover, some German producers, designers and directors had come to America to escape World War I, and started working in Broadway and off-Broadway plays, which led to a great influence in terms of production of the American plays.

Moreover, she states that the 1920s drama marked the beginning of the American dramatic modernism. The legal dissociation of dramatic text and performance brought

autonomy to art, that is, autonomy of creation, production, interpretation, performance, etc. Drama had become an individual experience, not only for the author, but also for the audience.

> […] playwrights were independent producers of an art form that was increasingly devoted to the portrayal of bourgeois life and consumed by audience members who, plunged into silent darkness, were encouraged to experience it individually rather than as part of a collective social whole (WALKER, 2005, p.9).

Certainly, it is possible to say that German Expressionism had some influence on the 1920s American stage. However, the composition of the plays was probably based on an attempt to criticize ironically the alienation that the new technological advances had brought to society. Thus, the American theatre was taking their first steps into dramatic modernism and releasing themselves from the Eurocentric standpoint by creating original scripts and performances.

By analyzing some significant American expressionist plays, Walker (2005) proposes three analogous characteristics. First, the central character is usually the figure of an anti-hero and functions as the personification of the artist's struggle with the challenges to adapt in this new technological environment, harassed by the forces of commerce and industry. Secondly, the relation of technology and the characters is usually experienced as spiritual disquiet, a quite pessimistic aura hanging above the stage. And finally, the formal disarticulation of the play's verbal, vocal and pantomimic languages resulted into an unusual and provoking outcome of performance on stage. By counterpointing S. S. Curry's three languages rather than coordinating them, the expressionists were able to fully represent the "spiritual disharmony of their artist-figure alter-egos" (WALKER, 2005, p. 120).

Undeniably, German and American Expressionisms are distinct movements. One does not follow the other otherwise chronologically. Obviously, the European *avant-garde* movements of the beginning of the twentieth century had an essential influence in all forms of art all over the Western world, but American Expressionism would have existed independently from the former German movement. It is unquestionable that the technological advances and the mechanization of the world had a major influence upon these artistic movements, and both considered and answered their cultural, social and historical questions according to their own respective realities. Having Mardi Valgemae and Julia Walker's theories in mind, in Chapter 2, I intend to track expressionistic characteristics in some of the most important American literary works, among them theatrical plays of the 1920s.

3 EXPRESSIONISM IN AMERICA: THE 1920S AND BEYOND

The apparent aura of prosperity and abundance that involved the beginning of the 20th century was tremendously shaken by the outbreak of World War I in August 1914. The young generation trooped to recruitment, not aware of what the future held for them, and Europe turned into an open battlefield, which resulted in around fifteen million deaths by the end of the war. The United States were able to keep out of war in the beginning but in April 1917, when five American vessels were sunk by German submarines, they joined the Allies, which were almost completely worn out (especially France and Great Britain) and needed back up. The Allies defeated Germany in 1918.

> World War I was the great turning point of modern history. […] The universal presumptions of the Victorian Age – progress, order, and culture – were blown to bits. For those who had endured the savagery and the fighting and those who lost husbands, fathers, brothers, lovers, and friends, life would never be the same again. The war ushered in a world of violent change that produced the leviathan state, consumerism, mass culture and mass communications, and the global economy – an era in which America would be supreme (MILLER, 2004, p. 16).

After the war was over, the Versailles treaty was signed by the Allies and Germany. However, it is possible to say that Germany was over penalized and blamed alone for launching an aggressive war. Germany had to pay thirty three billion dollars in reparation and the German colonies were taken away: these facts were to become the seeds of World War II. For the American imaginary, the end of World War I meant the achievement of a noble task, saving democracy, and the beginning of a bright future. When the war ended, Europe was in chaos, and Russia was going through a civil war – the Bolsheviks had seized power and installed a Socialist government. Later Russia would expand to become the Soviet Union, the nightmare of all American dreams, and would be considered a threat to the American values, religion and democracy. Due to the advent of socialism in Russia, Americans – inspired by the government – became suspicious of foreigners and radicals; this period was called the "Red Scare".

> The Red Scare had its roots in wartime propaganda, censorship and violence. 'Woe be the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way this day of high resolution,' Wilson [former president of the United States] had warned after the declaration of war. In creating an atmosphere of total war, the administration lent credibility to blind hatreds and suspicions against foreigners and foreign ideas that lay just below the surface of American life (MILLER, 2004, p. 36).

After the war, the United States went through a brief phase of depression, but with the return of the soldiers to labor they soon restored the market and economy soared. However, this period of prosperity did not reach all the social levels: African Americans, immigrants, farmers and the working class were not affected by the boom of the economy. This period of wealth and abundance would be interrupted by the Wall Street Crash in 1929 and the increasing influence of socialist forces in Europe.

The "Roaring Twenties" arrived glittering and shining, and brought with them some of the greatest inventions and discoveries of the 20th century in the scientific and engineering fields, an overwhelming industrial growth, an accelerated consumer demand, as well as innovations in customs, fashion and attitude. According to Nathan Miller, "Much of what we consider contemporary actually began in the twenties" (MILLER, 2004, Introduction).

No other writer portrayed better the "Roaring Twenties" than F. Scott Fitzgerald in his 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*. Considered one of the greatest American novels, *The Great Gatsby* portrays not only a wide range of contemporary innovations – electricity, cars, telephones, motion pictures and photography – , but also the real feeling of the twenties.

Nick Carraway narrates the story of a mysterious wealthy man, Jay Gatsby, who dreams of meeting again the woman with whom he had fallen in love in the past but could not marry because he did not have the fame and fortune that a sophisticated young woman like Daisy Fay would desire. Jay Gatz (his real name) and Daisy (who happens to be the narrator's second cousin) break up and he spends the next five years devoting himself to become rich in order to satisfy her ambitions. He lives focused on the past, always hoping to meet her, and carefully plans the right moment for their encounter, hoping they would give themselves one more chance of happiness. However, Daisy is married now and although her husband, Tom Buchanan, has frequent affairs with other women, she does not really want to leave him.

The novel compiles all the technological innovations available at the time. The great emphasis on electric light and the extravagant exaggeration of Gatsby's illuminated mansion is perceived in several moments in the novel. Also, the telephones had become the easiest form of communication, at least for rich people, and usually used as a tool to denote Gatsby's illicit connections in other States around the country: in several moments he is interrupted to answer a long-distance phone-call.

Cars had also become common for any Americans and the rise of the vehicle industry contributed to the ascendance of the oil industry and increased the number of gas stations. In the novel, the presence of George Wilson's garage and his admiration for Tom Buchanan's blue car is a reference to the expansion of the car industry. Moreover, the roughness of

machines, especially cars, is present in the aggressive way Myrtle Wilson (Wilson's wife and Tom's lover) dies: run over by a car.

The ascendance of women's power and increasing freedom in terms of attitude and fashion at the time are very well revealed in Fitzgerald's novel. The modern ones who wore shorter hair and skirts, make-up and smoked cigarettes were called the "flappers", and were common personas in Gatsby's parties, where they danced the *fox-trot* and the *Charleston*. A good example of a 1920s flapper is the seductive Jordan Baker, Daisy's friend, who is a successful and dishonest golf player.

The radio and the cinema are also present in the novel. Daisy and Jordan spend their idle afternoons listening to the radio. And when they decide to go to New York on that fatal hot day, Jordan suggests the movies: "Those big movies around Fiftieth Street are cool" (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 80).

Fitzgerald's 1920s is depicted as extravagant, superficial and immoral. The author touches deeply the topic of embellished futility and uncontrolled materialism and the subsequent lack of morality that accompanies the rich and glamorous characters in the story. Immorality permeates the novel, exemplified by Gatsby's fortune, which is made out of the bootlegging business (illegal commercialization of alcohol, prohibited from 1920 to 1933). His extravagant parties and the wealthy, careless lifestyle of the Buchanans are vivid pictures of the time. Money, alongside immorality, destroyed the American dream:

"The idealism of the colonists and the Founding Fathers has now mutated into a consumerist ideology; 'liberty' and the 'pursuit of happiness' become a series of choices about where one plays golf or what shirts to buy" (FITZGERALD, 2001, Introduction, XII).

Consumerism is the key element to understand the novel. In the 1920s, the American society starts presenting the seed of what would be their identity, and suddenly happiness is deeply connected with consumerist choices. Daisy is the personification of this aspect. For Daisy a man is what he has obtained, in other words, a man is the shirt that he wears. Therefore, "Daisy's love for Gatsby is conditioned by fascination with his wealth" (FITZGERALD, 2001, Introduction, XIII). All her remarks about Gatsby have to do with the things he has and not with what he is, for example, when she sobs over his shirts: "They're such beautiful shirts […] It makes me sad because I've never seen such – such beautiful shirts before" (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 59); or when she compares Gatsby to the man in the advertisement: "You remind me of the advertisement of the man…You know the advertisement of the man" (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 79) Daisy's ultimate superficiality is

defined by Gatsby himself when he comments to Nick about the tone in her voice: “Her voice is full of money” (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 76).

Nevertheless, the novel breaks away with Victorian moral values in the sense that it is receptive to a brand new culture that has just emerged.

> The 1920s were a decade of great technological innovation and circulation, when many of the inventions of the previous thirty years finally achieved a common currency in American society: electricity, especially electric lighting; cars; telephones; the movies and photography (FITZGERALD, 2001, Introduction, VII)

Indeed, the novel is full of references to effects of lighting, as we can perceive in this extract:

> I sat on the front steps with them while they waited for their car. It was dark here; only the bright door sent square feet of light volleying out into the soft black morning. Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind above, gave away to another shadow, and indefinite procession of shadows, that rouged and powdered in an invisible glass (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 69).

Moreover, the novel presents not only the clash of shadow and light but also the collision of artificial and natural light, reflecting another of its aspects: Is Gatsby’s personal glow produced by his money or his personality? Nick describes Gatsby’s mansion:

> When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o’clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw it was Gatsby’s house, lit from tower to cellar (FITZGERALD, 2001, p. 52).

Fitzgerald is one of the authors who belong to a literary period unofficially labeled the Lost Generation, which was characterized by the suggestion of alienation, disillusionment and cynicism. This new generation of artists “wanted to make a clean break with the past so a better America could emerge” (MILLER, 2004, p. 204). Having fought during the war, some of these writers, especially Ernest Hemingway, presented a contemptuous disgust for authority and hatred for the “‘old men’ who had bumbled into World War I, perpetrated its butcheries, and then bungled the peace” (MILLER, 2004, p. 207). For this reason, most of them alienated themselves from politics and were deeply involved in becoming rich and famous. One of the consequences of this attitude towards their country was their settling in Paris. Gertrude Stein, whose flat was the meeting point for the Americans in Paris told Hemingway once: “All of you people who served in the war. You have no respect for

anything. You drink yourselves to death" (MILLER, 2004, p. 203). This generation profoundly moved by the disasters of war and experimenting new technologies was gazing at a new world coming fast and harshly. Living away from their homeland made them broaden their views of it; the experience abroad may have made them even more American.

All the changes in the world, such as photography and especially the movies, provoked a change in fictional narration, in the pace and rhythm of a novel or a play, or even a poem. In the very beginning of the 20th century, the arts were still deeply attached to the 19th century realism and Victorian moral values:

> A play should always teach a moral; a good play subtly does; a few successful plays do not. Precisely what we are to learn from a succession of plays based on the crusade against an unmentionable evil, remains to be found out. Perhaps we may venture the opinion that the stage is not the place in which to fight such crusades. To make a drama -- a poor, crude, mechanical drama of the subject -it is necessary to take for protagonists types that are frankly exceptional. Now the drama, to be widely useful, cannot be confined to narrow possibility; its types must be broad, its teachings general. That is one good reason for putting the Red Light play out of the theatre. Another is that the lesson it teaches is repulsive and immoral. The stage is no place for these distressing lessons... Have our dramatists no higher aim than to dramatize contemporary excitements? (GAGEY, 1947, p. 21).

Therefore it is not surprising that the European experimentalist theatre was not well accepted by the American audiences. At first, Expressionism was repudiated both because of its "degenerated" value and its German roots. Due to World War I, a war mainly fought against Germany, Germans were seen as a threat and many were considered to be spies.

> Once war was declared, German-Americans became the victims of American prejudice. Although previously highly respected, they were now suspected of espionage and sabotage. The German language was banned from schools, German books were burned, Beethoven and Wagner were dropped from orchestral programs and with patriotic zeal, *sauerkraut* was transformed into "liberty cabbage". […] Writers with Germanic-sounding names, among them Henry Mencken and Theodore Dreiser, were harassed. Super-patriotic vigilante groups such as the American protective League and the National Security League rounded up supposed "slackers", pacifists, and conscientious objectors, with official approval (MILLER, 2004, p. 37).

It was not until Eugene O'Neill's plays that the American theatre recognized their own identity and accepted American Expressionism as a new way of making theatre. Through the sound of jazz, genuine American music, the American artists were finally recognizing their own potential, detaching themselves from the European milestone and adopting an American style. Expressionism is undeniably Europe's greatest influence to North America. However, by the end of the 1910s, New York was being pointed out as the new capital of world art.

Marcel Duchamp, who visited New York in 1915, said “If only America would realize that the art of Europe is finished – dead – and that America is the country of the art of the future” (FOSTER, 2003). In this period, the visual arts were greatly upheld by the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who nurtured and promoted a group that included himself, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Paul Strand, and a variable seventh member, who was often Charles Demuth.

World War I also brought other fruitful social changes to American society, such as the emergence of the Black community. While white writers would go to Paris, black ones would go to Harlem, New York City. “Harlem was the center of the cultural and intellectual life of Black America during the twenties” (MILLER, 2004, p. 220). The Harlem Renaissance, as the period is called, consisted of a cultural and social movement that developed the visual arts, drama, music, literature, dance, as well as sociology, history and philosophy. The Harlem Renaissance was a consequence of the emergence of a new generation of Blacks whose grandparents were slaves: it was accelerated by the immigration of African-Americans to northern cities, as well as World War I and other great changes in the early 1920s, such as industrialization and the surfacing of a mass culture.

Black artists wanted to break up with the past and build a new future; they were trying to explore their identity as African-Americans and break away with European standards as well as white paternalism by celebrating their roots and culture and recreating their ties to Africa.

> Like the white writers of the lost generation, black intellectuals considered themselves orphans – their people had been kidnapped from Africa and brought to an alien land – and they tried to create a culture that would be a source of pride and ultimate proof of their equality (MILLER, 2004, p. 220).

Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Jones, Claude McKay, Nella Larsen, Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston and Alain Locke are some of the names that built the Harlem Renaissance reputation. The blossoming of the black community also coincided with a white interest in everything black: black became fashionable. White people would go to Harlem jazz clubs such as the Savoy or the Cotton Club to listen to emergent musicians as Louis Armstrong.

However, with the advent of African-American culture, also came the revival of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The Ku Klux Klan first appeared in the American South after the Civil War as an aggressive repressive organization against African-Americans, Jews and other

racial and religious minorities. It was revived in 1915 by the Methodist preacher William J. Simmons and it boosted in the 1920s. KKK preached white supremacy and urged the followers to protect America from everything alien to their culture. Most of the members were average Americans and many policemen and deputies were KKK members. For this reason, the culprits for the atrocities committed by the organization were never punished. The Klan was able to reach so many people because it preached that immigrants, Jews, African-Americans and others "non-Americans" were responsible for the lack of jobs. Also, they preached against Wall-Street interests, and in favor of the farmers, thus reaching a great mass of people in the rural areas. They were also the greatest guardians of Prohibition and Christian purity.

> The typical Klansman lived in a small town or rural area in the South or Midwest. As the influence of the organization spread, it attracted displaced sharecroppers and tenant farmers who had taken jobs on the factory production lines of Detroit and in the mills of Cleveland. Small-town businessmen, desperately trying to maintain their status against the growing influence of chain stores and monopoly, were also a ripe source of recruit. Nervous about the present and fearful about the future, these people believed themselves and their ideals mocked by the nation's social economic elite and sought revenge (MILLER, 2004, p. 144).

Eugene O'Neill's play *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) reflects the racial issues of the country in the 1920s. The play starts with a racially mixed group of children playing in the street. Ella, a white girl, and Jim, a black boy, are playing happily with each other until some of the children start calling them Painty Face and Jim Crow, respectively. The play follows the characters' life story, also showing how prejudice had grown with the years. Ella Downey, the white girl, who does not talk to black people anymore, ends up getting involved with a ruffian and has a child with him. However, the child dies and Ella feels lonely and threatened. In desperation, she seeks for protection and Jim Harris, the black boy from the beginning of the play, who graduated in Law, offers her protection because he had always loved her. Ella marries Jim, almost in gratitude. Unfortunately they cannot surpass the barrier of prejudice. Jim is ashamed of his race but thinks that through his studies he can reach another level in society and be accepted. Ella feels superior because she is white though she admits that he is morally superior to herself and other white people she knows. Jim wants to be a lawyer and needs to pass the examination that will admit him into the Bar (the association of lawyers responsible for the regulation of the profession). Ella feels that if he passes, this fact will prove his black superiority over her whiteness; and although she loves him she cannot deal with the fact that he is black and better than her. At this point Ella goes mad, and starts talking

nonsense to a Congo mask which hangs on the living room wall. At the climax of the play, she calls him “Nigger!”, fact which summarizes how she feels about him despite her love and gratitude. He ends up not passing the examination and at the end she invites him to play as if they were children again and kisses his hand gently.

Eugene O’Neill received death threats because of the play; many took it to be racial offensive. Also, children were forbidden to perform in the first act and they had problem with the city’s commissioner, who threatened to shut down the theatre. However, *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* served as inspiration to one of the greatest musicals on the American stage: *Show Boat* (1927) (MILLER, 2004).

Eugene O’Neill’s most famous black character is Brutus Jones, from *The Emperor Jones* (1920), a play focused on an Afro-American who is said to have killed a man in America and escaped to a Caribbean island where he proclaims himself the emperor of the small nation. The play is composed of eight scenes, but most of the narrative is a monologue unfolding Jones’s decline from self-confidence to utter despair. In the beginning, Jones tells Smithers, an illegal white trader, about the rebels: “Does you think I’d slink out the back door like a common nigger? I’se Emperor yit, ain’t I? And the Emperor Jones leaves de way he comes, and dat black trash don’t dare stop him – not yit, leastways” (O’NEILL, 2005, p. 12). Smithers does not like his arrogance, but he has some respect for him to a certain extent.

The play is heavily permeated by expressionistic devices: sound, voices, lights and shadows. The darkness of the forest tricks Jones and he starts losing his sanity, he does not know what reality is anymore; his mind is playing tricks on him. The beat of a tom-tom off-stage is heard in almost every scene and it represents Jones’s fall into madness: the stronger the beat, the crazier he gets. “Except for the beating of the tom-tom, which is a trifle louder and quicker than in the previous scene, there is silence, broken every few seconds by a queer, clicking sound” (O’NEILL, 2005, p. 19). Jones tries really hard to maintain his sanity. He says to himself: “Is you civilized, or is you like dese ign’rent black niggers heah? Sho’! Dat was all in yo’ head. Wasn’t nothin’ dere” (O’NEILL, 2005, p. 21-22). O’Neill also explores the expressionist style in the slave-market scene, where actors move like marionettes:

> There is a crowd of curious spectators, chiefly young belles and dandies who have come to the slave-market for diversion. All exchange courtly greetings in dumb show and chat silently together. There is something stiff, rigid, unreal, marionettish about their movements. They group themselves about the stump. Finally a batch of slaves are led in from the left by an attendant – three men of different ages, two women, one with a baby in her arms, nursing. They are placed to the left of the stump, besides JONES. The white planters look them over appraisingly as if they were cattle, and exchange judgments on each. The dandies point with their fingers

> and make witty remarks. The belles titter bewitchingly. All this in silence save for the ominous throb of the tom-tom (O'NEILL, 2005, p. 26).

Jones is followed by hallucinations relentlessly and finally reaches a point that he cannot stand anymore. The rebels, who had planned his downfall by scaring him with chanting and drum beating, realize that the moment to get him has come. Jones is killed by a silver bullet, because the rebels believed this was the only way they could kill him and it was also how Jones would have killed himself if he were caught. The play is permeated by superstition from beginning to end. Jones uses superstition to threaten the rebels; and the rebels, in their turn, also use superstition to defeat him. However, the fear is not overcome, as its frightening aura is always present, as if it were part of the darkness in the forest, which can also represent the unconscious, the unknown.

In conclusion, Eugene O'Neill deals with racism in a different level in *The Emperor Jones*. Although he portrays Jones as a product of the racist American society, he presents Jones as a racist himself. As an emperor he distinguishes himself from the other Blacks on the island, therefore he considers himself superior. "Who dare whistle that way in my palace? Who dare wake up the Emperor? I'll git de hide fravled off some o' you niggers sho'!" (O'NEILL, 2005, p. 5). Probably Eugene O'Neill's objective was to state that anyone who assumes a powerful position is susceptible to become racist, even those who have already suffered prejudice. However, *The Emperor Jones* was not considered a politically correct play by some critics and scholars, especially because of the use of black dialect, which might have been considered offensive. Taking into consideration the historical and political moment in which the play was written, *The Emperor Jones*, undoubtedly, raised some important aspects for discussion at the time.

O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922) has as its main character, Yank, an Irish steel worker who struggles to belong somewhere. He starts the play highly self-confident and proud of his position, being responsible for moving the ship makes him feel important and as if he belonged somewhere. "Slaves, hell! We run de whole woiks. All the rich guys dat tink dey're somep'n, dey ain't nothin'! Dey don't belong. But us guys, we're in de move, we're at the bottom, de whole ting is us!" (O'NEILL, 2005, p. 105). His confidence is shaken when Mildred Douglas, the spoiled daughter of an industrialist, visits the stokehold and calls him a "filthy beast", fact which makes him aware of class distinction. Yank leaves the ship and wanders (after her) in the streets of New York, trying in vain to belong somewhere. After being barred from every attempt to fit in, he ends up in the zoo with the gorillas, where he is crushed to death with an embrace.

In *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill expresses his concern with the workers, who, in the 1920s, suffered with the miserable working conditions and the ineffectiveness of workers unions:

> Most steelworkers were illiterate, usually from Central and Eastern Europe, and lived in primitive conditions in drab shacks near the mills, often without running water or indoor plumbing. The steel companies employed spies and if a man was discovered talking union he was summarily fired and blacklisted. Meetings held in foreign languages were banned. Labor organizers were beaten by the police and run out of town (MILLER, 2003, p. 43).

Another relevant aspect about *The Hairy Ape* is the alienation and dehumanization of both worlds portrayed in the play. The world of the rich on Fifth Avenue is completely devoid of life and artificial, miles away from any natural trace. "A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankensteins in their detached, mechanical unawareness" (O'NEILL, 2005, p. 123). The world of the poor, the world in the stokehold, on the other hand, has more life because of its constant struggle to survive. However, at the bottom of the ship, there is no sunlight, they are badly fed, and they live like animals in a cage. What type of life is this?

By discussing Yank's need to belong, O'Neill attempts to discuss Man's struggle to find himself in a world completely detached from nature. Although we, humans, all belong to the same species, according to the play, there is a differentiation inside the same species according to which social group you belong. Therefore, belonging is deeply connected to social class, education and wealth. The further one is from nature, the 'higher' one's level is, and vice versa. However, the play discusses this topic in a symbolic level, which is exactly the reason why the play is considered expressionist. Even though *The Hairy Ape* mixes doses of social realism, its expressionism lies in its symbolic discussion over Man's detachment of nature.

Another great influence on the 1920s American stage was the ideas of the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud, the creator of psychoanalysis. His beliefs had great impact on the American arts in several areas. The field of literature saw in Freud's thoughts new ways to explore human attitudes and forms of expression. Definitely, Freud's greatest impact on literature was the surfacing of the stream-of-consciousness in novels, plays and poems. Also, expressionistic techniques in the theatre, such as the use of voices off-stage and effects of lighting, colors, and symbols to show the characters' point of view are great contributions of psychoanalysis.

Eugene O'Neill, considered one of the greatest American playwrights of the 20th century, dedicates great part of his work to the exploration of obsessive characters, an attempt

to unveil the American psyche. However, he denies Freud's influence on his work. "I find fault with critics [who] read damn much Freud into stuff that could very well have been written exactly as it is before psychoanalysis was ever heard of" (MILLER, 2004, p. 219). Eugene O'Neill's great inspirations were Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, and although he denied the influence of the German expressionistic theatre in his work, it is difficult to believe that what was happening in Europe would not have an outcome in the United States. Some of his works definitely carry its mark.

In *The Great God Brown*, the expressionistic device used with more emphasis is the mask, a fact which also makes reference to the Ancient Greek theatre. The feelings and moods of the characters are perceived through the actors' masks that are changed throughout the play. However, O'Neill's great achievement here is the dissection of the dichotomy between appearance and personality. *The Great God Brown* is the story of a tragic triangle: William Brown, Dion Anthony's friend, is in love with Margaret, who loves and marries the latter. However, she does not love the real human being that he his, sensitive and bruised, but a perception of him, cynical and scornful. When he reveals his real inner self to her, she does not understand and draws back, frightened. Never again would he appear in her presence without his mask, showing his true personality only to his lover, the prostitute Cybel.

> MARGARET--Dion! *(She comes running in, her mask in her hands. He springs toward her with outstretched arms but she shrinks away with a frightened shriek and hastily puts on her mask. Dion starts back. She speaks coldly and angrily.)* Who are you? Why are you calling me? I don't know you!
> DION--(*heart-brokenly*) I love you!
> MARGARET--(*freezingly*) Is this a joke--or are you drunk?
> DION--(*with a final pleading whisper) Margaret! (But she only glares at him contemptuously. Then with a sudden gesture he claps his mask on and laughs wildly and bitterly.)* Ha-ha-ha! That's one on you, Peg!
> MARGARET--(*with delight, pulling off her mask*) Dion! How did you ever--Why, I never knew you!
> DION--(*puts his arm around her boldly*) How? It's the moon--the crazy moon--the monkey in the moon--playing jokes on us! (*He kisses her with his masked face with a romantic actor's passion again and again.*) You love me! You know you do! Say it! Tell me! I want to hear! I want to feel! I want to know! I want to want! To want you as you want me! (O'NEILL, 1988, p. 481)

When Dion dies he leaves his mask to Billy Brown, who had kept his love for Margaret hidden. He wears Dion's mask and easily fools her. However, he feels that he has to express his love for Margaret being the person he truly is, and not Dion's mask. She does not accept any move from Billy, and he ends up trapped and damned by Dion's mask.

> BROWN--Listen! Today was a narrow escape--for us! We can't avoid discovery much longer. […]Anyway, that doesn't matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! And Margaret loves me more! You think you've won, do you--that I've got to vanish into you in order to live? Not yet, my friend! Never! Wait! Gradually Margaret will love what is beneath--me! Little by little I'll teach her to know me, and then finally I'll reveal myself to her, and confess that I stole your place out of love for her, and she'll understand and forgive and love me! And you'll be forgotten! Ha! (*Again he bends down to the mask as if listening--torturedly*) What's that? She'll never believe? She'll never see? She'll never understand? You lie, devil! (*He reaches out his hands as if to take the mask by the throat, then shrinks back with a shudder of hopeless despair*) God have mercy! Let me believe! Blessed are the merciful! Let me obtain mercy! (*He waits, his face upturned--pleadingly*) Not yet? (*despairingly*) Never? (*A pause. Then, in a sudden panic of dread, he reaches out for the mask of Dion like a dope fiend after a drug. As soon as he holds it, he seems to gain strength and is able to force a sad laugh.*) […](*He suddenly cannot help kissing the mask.*) I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! (*He puts the mask over his face and stands for a moment, seeming to grow tall and proud--then with a laugh of bold self-assurance*) […] (O'NEILL, 1988, p. 518-519).

Betrayal, failure and the search for identity are the main themes evoked in *The Great God Brown*. The play is named after William Brown, denoting an ironic reference to Billy's capacity to juggle his different roles in society: the father, the husband, the lover, the businessman, until he collapses. The play is a harsh criticism of society's rules and demands.

Eugene O'Neill was not the only one to introduce expressionistic aspects on the American stage. Susan Glaspell, Sophie Treadwell and Elmer Rice also made major contributions to the American theatre.

Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) presents Mr. Zero, a bookkeeper of a department store who has been working for the same company for twenty-five years and is married to an irritating superficial woman. He has always endured life, he does not really feel alive but he keeps on moving, doing the same repetitive job everyday. His life is all about numbers, he has never done anything unexpected and he will never rise to another rank in society, in short, his name reflects his importance in the world – precisely zero. When fired to be replaced by an adding machine, he goes mad and kills his boss in a cataclysmic and exaggerated scene:

> His voice is drowned by the music. The platform is revolving rapidly now. Zero and the Boss face each other. They are entirely motionless save for the Boss's jaws, which open and close incessantly. But the words are inaudible. The music swells and swells. To it is added every off stage effect of the theatre: the wind, the waves, the galloping horses, the locomotive whistle, the sleigh bells, the automobile siren, the glass-crash. New Year's Eve, Election Night, Armistice Day and Mardi Gras. The noise is deafening, maddening, unendurable. Suddenly it culminates in a terrific peal of thunder. For an instant there is a flash of red and then everything is plunged into blackness (RICE, 1950, p. 76).

The murder is an apocalyptical act of despair and horror. He goes to court. Convicted and executed, he spends scenes five and six in the next world. Eventually, he realizes that he is dead, and in scene seven he finds out, with despair, that he is going to be recycled and returned to the living world. Lieutenant Charles, who is in charge of sending Zero back, explains that this [the next world] “is nothing but a kind of repair and service station – a sort of cosmic laundry” and tells him how things work:

> Charles (nodding): You’ll be a baby again – a bald and red-faced little animal, and then you’ll go through it all again. There’ll be millions of others like you – all with their mouths open, squalling for food. And then when you get a little older you’ll begin to learn things – and you’ll learn all the wrong things and learn them all in the wrong way. You’ll eat the wrong food and wear the wrong clothes, and you’ll live in swarming dens where there’s no light no air! You’ll learn to be a liar and a bully and a braggart and a coward and a sneak. You’ll learn to fear the sunlight and hate beauty. By that time you’ll be ready for school. There they’ll tell you the truth about a great many things that you don’t give a damn about, and they’ll tell you lies about all the things you ought to know – and about all the things you want to know they’ll tell you nothing at all. When you get through you’ll be equipped for your life work. You’ll be ready to take a job (RICE, 1950, p. 106).

Zero’s memory is erased and again he is an ignorant human baby who will probably do everything wrong all over again. “Mr. Zero is like an animal reared in captivity, feeling distant primal instincts but completely incapable of realizing them” (HAYES, 2004). Rice’s play is a harsh criticism of bourgeois values and mechanized society; it may even be seen as a nightmarish tale on the advances of technology.

Rice’s experience in Hollywood as a scriptwriter and his disgust for the film industry that had oppressed him might have had some influence in *The Adding Machine*:

> For, having learned to plot stories through purely visual means, having worked within the limitations of the film medium like a poet perfecting his craft, Rice returned to the theatre with the ability to disarticulate and redeploy its verbal and vocal language in new and complicating ways (WALKER, 2005, p. 174).

Besides that, he ridicules the lack of communication skills in society; he disconnects sound and image which lead to a complete failure in communication. He also touches deeply the issue of alienation of society – the author portrays man acting mainly as a machine in a claustrophobic world detached from the truth of life.

In contrast, Susan Glaspell presents a character compromised with reality in her 1921 play *The Verge*. Susan Glaspell and Eugene O’Neill were both part of the innovative group the Provincetown Players, in the 1910s and 1920s, but it seems that her work has been overshadowed by his. However, *The Verge* was the first expressionist production on the

American stage. It brings a new independent woman personified by Claire Archer, a botanist who dreams of creating an original form of life in her greenhouse-laboratory. Her restless desire to create this new form of life denotes her awareness of the different, the “otherness”. She suggests a break with the past; she wants new forms of seeing reality, forms that are not always safe and certain. She says in the beginning of the play: “[…] But it can be done! We need not be held in forms moulded for us. There is outness – and otherness” (GLASPELL, 2004). On the other hand, her husband, Harry Archer, thinks that her ideas of creating new forms of life are not appropriate for a woman. He says:

“That’s an awfully nice thing for a woman to do – raise flowers. But there’s something about this – changing things into other things – putting things together – and making queer new things […] it’s unsettling for a woman” (GLASPELL, 2004). Claire’s daughter, Elizabeth, who has arrived from school to spend her holidays with her family, does not understand her mother either.

> Elizabeth: Well, now that I’m here you’ll let me help you, won’t you, mother?
> Claire: (trying for control) You needn’t – bother.
> Elizabeth: But I want to. Help add to the wealth of the world.
> Claire: Will you please get it out of your head that I am adding to the wealth of the world!
> Elizabeth: But, mother – of course you are. To produce a new and better kind of plant –
> Claire: They may be new. I don’t give a damn whether they’re better.
> Elizabeth: But – but what are they then?
> Claire: (as if choked out of her) They’re different.
> Elizabeth: (thinks a minute, then laughs triumphantly) But what’s the use of making them different if they aren’t better? (GLASPELL, 2004)

Claire sees her daughter as a finished experiment that went wrong. They have nothing in common, especially because Elizabeth spends most of her time at school or with Claire’s sister, Adelaide, who also thinks that Claire has gone mad. Claire tries to explain her experiments to her daughter and husband: “They have been shocked out of what they were – into something they were not; they’ve broken from the forms in which they found themselves. They are alien. Outside. That’s it, outside; if you – know what I mean” (GLASPELL, 2004). Claire rejects all bourgeois values and searches for freedom, this “otherness” of the modern woman which she is.

It is possible to say that Claire as a character is the personification of expressionist beliefs. In several moments of the play the author gives tips of what she is actually doing through Claire’s words and actions. She says: “But madness that is the only chance for sanity” (GLASPELL, 2004) a sentence which summarizes the relation of expressionist art and

madness. Through the pictorial image of madness, artists try to figure out reality and sanity. They draw a new and subtle line dividing madness and sanity, breaking with Victorian puritan values. When Tom and Claire are talking about their feelings for each other (in fact, they are lovers), they say: “Tom: The words know they’re not needed. Claire: No, they’re not needed. There’s something underneath – an open way – down below the way that words can go.[…]” Here, the author makes a point about the importance of words in the expressionist theatre. It is subtle, succinct, and telegraphic. Finally, through Tom’s words the central character is defined: “Your country is the inside, Claire. The innermost. You are disturbed because you lie too close to the heart of life” (GLASPELL, 2004). However, Claire cannot be what she is supposed to be, a new woman, because of Tom’s male presence. Her love for him ruins her plans of creating a new different form of life. In an apocalyptical scene, she ends up murdering him by choking him violently in order to pursue her objectives. She is also the representation of feminist values and to a certain extent, *The Verge* may be seen as a feminist answer to Kokoschka’s *Murder, Hope of Women* (GRACE, 1989). Also, the scene of the tower recalls the scenery of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, with distorted and depicted staircases that lead the characters to a tower that is not completed, it is only half a circle.

The Verge is an apocalyptical expressionist vision. Claire’s mutating plant and her effort to create something completely original may be associated to the expressionist effort to break with the past and reject tradition. “Her mutating plants providing a clearly symbolic reference to the tenuous position of women in American society. Claire serves as Glaspell’s variant on the German expressionists’s ‘New man’” (RYTCH, 2006, p. 101). She is a revolutionary character because she breaks with patriarchal patterns. Her effort in doing so leads her to an uncontrolled infuriated act. By killing Tom when he tries to persuade her into the conventional world of family and romantic love, she demonstrates an exasperated need to break with patriarchal society, and thus create new social values.

> Glaspell, like Treadwell after her, substitutes the murder of the would-be patriarch for the Germans’ murder of the father. These violent acts serve to attain the same goal: to overturn the current system and bring into being an entirely new language with which to describe and recreate new social values (RYTCH, 2006, p. 102).

Sophie Treadwell’s play *Machinal* (1928) also portrayed great changes for women in the 1920s. However, instead of portraying a well-educated, self-confident and politically aware woman, Treadwell chooses to portray an ordinary romantic young woman who would

represent "everywoman", a woman defined by the structures around her. According to Treadwell's manuscript, she defines her main character this way:

> Of the characters, only the Young Woman is to be played as a straight, realistic performance. (She is any ordinary young woman. In age, anywhere from eighteen to thirty, but probably twenty four). All the other characters are to be played as "personifications" of what they represent (genuinely, type actors, giving type performance). Their make up (dress and facial) should be the "expression" of the kind of people they represent, and once found should remain fixed (so as to become clear and established in the imagination of the audience). Gestures should not be quite automatic but simple and repetitious (as the make-up, - constantly declarative of what the characters are) (WALKER, 2005, p. 215).

Machinal was inspired in the true story of the convict Ruth Snyder, who together with her lover, killed her husband and was sentenced to death in the electric chair. The play is very much concerned with the role of women in the 1920s: her role as a worker, a daughter, a wife, a lover, and a mother; and the central point of the play lies in the character's inability to perform these roles with conviction as it is demanded by society. The author approaches the power that social institutions and patriarchal society had over women's lives in the 1920s, and their great effort to deal with those demands.

The title also makes a reference to the senseless and mechanical life which the Young Woman, the central character in the play, leads. The opening scene is full of sound references to this mechanical world: sounds of adding machines, typewriters and switchboards have great importance in the performance; and will also influence the character's perspective of her meaningless life and will lead her to ultimate acts. By using several sound devices to show the central character's inner world, the author is able to provoke identification between the protagonist and the audience:

> Treadwell's audience, then, aurally participates not only in the Young Woman's routinized existence, but also in her very thoughts and desires. By taking the notion of objectification and subjectivity to a level which implicates the audience into the very dialogue and aurality of the play, Treadwell creates a tangible empathy between her viewers and the Young Woman on a level that is not merely visual, the usual hallmark of expressionist staging (RYTCH, 2006, p. 107).

The Young Woman works in a company and she is unhappy with her job. She seeks for love in her life, but eventually marries her boss, a man who she repulses. She feels confined by her husband and society's rules. He tells her: "You don't breathe deep enough – breath now – look at me. (*he breaths*) Breath is life. Life is breath." Suddenly she asks: "And what is death? And he replies: Just – no breath" (TREADWELL, 1928, p. 518). When she has

an affair with a handsome young man, she fully realizes how hopeless she is and how miserable her life is. She feels forever trapped in a life which she does not desire. Instead of divorcing her husband, she decides to kill him, inspired by her lover's stories of murdering a man to be free. She has finally done something which is truly her own, and accepts her faith as a criminal: "When I did what I did I was free" (TREADWELL, 1928, p. 528). She is sentenced to death and dies in an electric chair, another machine. Her death could mean transcendence and liberation. However, the author's irony over the possibility of this freedom suggests the annihilation of women. This point of view is quite contrary to that of Susan Glaspell's feminist heroine in *The Verge*. While Claire transcends patriarchal values by killing her lover in order to achieve some other level of understanding, the Young Woman in *Machinal* is exterminated:

> Her physical body, represented by her hair, is stripped from her as the barber shaves her head. Her personality, represented by the words she wishes to tell her daughter, is denied. Led off to her execution, the Young Woman calls for "Somebody!" to help. But when she calls again from the margins of the darkened stage, "her voice is cut off" (529), effecting her total annihilation. She herself has become a disembodied voice and, in death, a mute presence (WALKER, 2005, p. 221).

Machinal is considered one of the greatest expressionist American plays, and it calls attention due to the vast use of sound effects, such as voices and music which are deeply related to the action in the foreground, as well as mute characters in the background.

> (YOUNG WOMAN sits, staring ahead of her – The music of the hand organ sounds off very dimly, playing Cielito Lindo. Voices begin to sing it – 'Ay, ay, ay,ay' – and then the words - the music and voices get louder.)
> THE VOICE OF HER LOVER. They were a bunch of bandidos – bandits you know – holding me there – what was I to do – I had to get free – didn't I? I had to get free –
> VOICES. Free – free – free
> LOVER. I filled an empty bottle with small stones –
> VOICES. Stones – stones – precious stones – millstones – stones – stones – millstones –
> LOVER. Just a bottle with small stones.
> VOICES. Stones – stones – small stones –
> LOVER. You only need a bottle with small stones.
> VOICES. Stones – stones – small stones – […] (TREADWELL, 1928, p. 519).

The play presents quite well how women felt in the 1920s. Despite the slight sexual freedom and attitude revolution brought by the flappers, many chains remained still to be broken. "[…] the flapper was the symbol of the sexual revolution associated with the postwar era. She challenged prevailing notions about gender roles and defied the double standard. In

essence, she demanded the same social freedoms for herself that men enjoyed" (MILLER, 2004, p. 253). However, in reality, the situation was different for women. They were still very much controlled by paternalistic standards: they earned less money than men and struggled to voice their political opinions. There were few job opportunities and women were usually confined to minor positions such as those of stenographers, clerks and salespeople. Also, for the great majority of women at the time, having a job was a way of getting a good marriage, so they were not interested in having a career. When they did get married, they believed that they were supposed to be happily married and not just supposed to procreate as their ancestors had done in the past; marriage was supposed to be a "culmination of romantic love and a pleasurable experience in itself" (MILLER, 2004, p. 264). Moreover, the 1920s also brought a revolution in terms of fashion and attitude. Women had become more independent: shorter hair, shorter skirts and the massive consumption of cigarettes inspired by the movie stars – Clara Bow and Louise Brooks, for example, who were the hit of the moment.

The movies had a major influence in the American everyday life.

> Movies provided Americans with a unifying cultural experience. Everyone, no matter what section of the nation in which he or she lived or their social or economical status, saw the same movies, admired the same stars, imitated their dress, mannerisms, and hairstyles, and shared an interest in the same celebrity gossip (MILLER, 2004, p. 195).

However, the majority of American films did not present artistic characteristics. They were mostly made purely for entertainment; and Hollywood was nothing but an industry, the cinematographic industry, with hardly any artistic expectations. Except for Charles Chaplin's films, art films were mostly from Europe and Russia.

The same way the American dramatists, Chaplin was able to grasp the aura of the 1920s. But opposite to his theatre fellows, he used precisely the weapon of their oppression to criticize the mechanized world which alienated individuals: the cinematographer. In *Modern Times*, he approaches one of the greatest issues of the 20th century: the tyranny of the machine. The rise of industrial automation and its consequences – poverty, unemployment, strikes, political intolerance and economic inequalities – turned people into imprisoned spirits, automatons in a mechanized world.

The first scene of the film shows a clock-hand moving relentlessly. The message is clear: time is money. After that an ironic juxtaposition of a herd of sheep and workers pouring out of a factory appear on the screen. However, there's a black sheep among the white ones, which already gives the audience a hint about the outcast role of the main character. The

beginning of the film clearly denotes Chaplin's philosophical position in relation to economics and social circumstances in the beginning of the 20th century.

The alienation is also portrayed when the Little Tramp, as a worker in the factory, suffers a nervous breakdown caused by the endless repetition of his task. The hurried pace, the monotony and mindless work, turned workers into automatons, dehumanized from their natural human characteristics. When the Little Tramp collapses, his movements turn into a ballet. His rebellion unchained him from oppression. Once Chaplin said: "Unemployment is the vital question. Machinery should benefit mankind. It should not spell tragedy and throw it out of work".

Curiously enough, *Modern Times* was made in 1936, one decade after talking films started being produced. Besides that, *Modern Times* was the last great silent film in Hollywood and also the first Charlie Chaplin's talkie. Although Chaplin resisted dialogues, depending only on silent pantomime, in *Modern Times*, he felt compelled to use some voice, mainly reproduced by technological devices. For example, when the director of the factory delegates tasks and orders to increase the speed, the workers hear his voice through a machine. Music plays the part of the dialogues, setting the mood of the scene and the personality of the characters. Hence, the first and only speech of the Little Tramp in the motion pictures is made when he sings the Italian song *Titine*, without any subtitles, which indicates Chaplin's belief in music and pantomime as a world language.

The film ends with the sentence "We'll get along", and Chaplin and his companion, the Gamin (Paulette Goddard), walk down the empty highway. The line is extremely significant in several senses. Firstly, it is the first time that the Little Tramp ends up with a companion. Secondly, it might denote the American people's determination to reconstruct and rise after the Wall Street Crash in 1929 (by the time the film was made, the United States was still suffering the effects of the Great Depression). Last but not least, Chaplin's final line in the pictures, a fact which may, in a way, mark the end of the silent era.

The 1920s American expressionist theatre was extremely interested in the discussion of the central character's struggle to adapt in a new, modern and technological world. The plays focus on the feeling of threat that shakes the protagonists' balance: the stressing experience of technology leads the characters to an alienated world. Therefore, criticism against the mechanized and industrialized world are present in all plays: Yank's struggle to fit in a world of appearances, in which words, actions and gestures are automated; Brown's effort to adjust to the roles society imposed to him refuting his inner self; as well as the Young Woman's effort to fit in the roles of wife and mother demanded from her; Claire's

attempt to create a unique plant denoting her endeavor to find "otherness" in a world of industrial standardization; and Zero's nervous breakdown when pushed by this world of numbers and results. These characters feel harassed by new technologies and distressed by the advances of technology. Consequently, feeling under-pressure, they flee from sanity, taking inconsequent actions. Claire kills her lover; Zero kills his boss; the Young Woman kills her husband; Ella offends her beloved husband calling him a "nigger"; Jones is defeated by superstition and self-confidence.

Also, we can notice the presence of elements of primitivism in the plays: the Congo mask in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*; the savage island in which Jones lived and his superstitions about his death *Emperor Jones;* and Claire's eccentric botanic laboratory in *The Verge*. These elements denote an attempt to turn to the past, to an idyllic machine-free world.

Moreover, the dichotomy between appearance and reality is strongly present in most plays. This relation appears in varied levels of awareness in the plays, but it is central in *The Great God Brown*, the dichotomy appearance versus reality is concretely portrayed on stage by the actor's use of masks.

Other important aspects of Expressionism present in the 1920s American expressionist plays are the use of sound cues, echoes, music, and lighting to express the protagonists' inner truth. The dramatic action centered in the protagonist provides the audience the chance to perceive the subjective point of view of the main character. This aspect can be noticed especially in *Emperor Jones* – sound cues, echoes, music, drums beats are present along the play and increase as Jones goes crazier – , *The Adding Machine* – the revolving stage, echoes and sounds, present in the scene Zero kills his boss – and *Machinal* (songs, music, conversations in the background are presented along the play showing the protagonists' inner state of mind). The expressionist telegraphic speech is also present in the first scene of *Machinal*, and *The Adding Machine* in order to show the machine's oppression over the protagonist.

Undoubtedly the works analyzed in this chapter influenced Tennessee Williams's work. Therefore, the aspects mentioned here will serve as referential points that will be investigated in Tennessee Williams's plays in Chapter 3.

4 ASPECTS OF EXPRESSIONISM IN THE WORK OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

4.1 THE POSTWAR ERA

Around April 1945 World War II came to its closing stages. In July 1945, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and France signed a treaty in which they suppressed all the power of the German Nazi Government. In the following months the Allied leaders decided the destiny of Germany:

> resettled war territory boundaries, […] organized the expulsion of the millions of Germans remaining in the annexed territory and elsewhere in the east, ordered German demilitarization, denazification, industrial disarmament and settlements of war reparations […] (WIKIPEDIA).

On August 6 and 9, 1945, the world saw the most devastating weapons being dropped over two Japanese cities: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "Little Boy" and "Fat Man", as the bombs were called, were sent by the United States to Japan in order to compel the Japanese forces to surrender. The atomic bombs killed around 220 thousand people in both cities, mostly civilians, and since then, thousands died from injuries and illnesses provoked by the exposure to radiation released by the bombs.

The world had been shaken. The image of the mushroom cloud would not leave the imaginary of contemporary man. A new world order was about to begin. European economy was devastated and trying to recover from World War II wreckages. Although the United States went through a brief period of recession right after the end of the war, the European reconstruction let the way free to American markets. This fact gave the opportunity to the United States to gain monopoly over international trade, thus provoking great expansion in the country, which entered a phase of abundance and growth. The economic expansion was so great that it seemed it was making up for the war years. There were a great number of marriages, now that the war had ended, and people felt safe to start a new life. Therefore, there was also an enormous increase in the birth rate, the "baby boom", especially during the 1950s. The new model of family started moving to the suburb communities in the city areas. There was also a huge increase in the production and sale of household appliances, as the role of women was being restructured – they should leave their positions in the labor market,

which they had occupied while men were at war, and go back home to take care of their children and husbands. Even the roles of men and women were being reassured in society: men affirming their masculinity and women returning gracefully to the housework chores. The postwar suburb family also contributed to the contemporary model of consumerism, which, since the 1950s, is the base of the American internal economy.

By the mid-1950s a new world order had already been settled: the bipolar world – American capitalists against Soviet socialists – established the Cold War. This silent war would influence tremendously the expansion in technology, chemicals and aviation. However, the rush to space between Russia and the United States and their struggle for territory and economical influence led society to a feeling of unease, horrified by the slight mentioning that another atomic bomb would be released. The era of nuclear terror had begun. Needless to say that the American fear of an atomic bomb and the "red" enemy was allegorically immortalized several times by the science-fiction films of the 1950s, like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), directed by Don Siegel and adapted from the book *The Body Snatchers* (1954), by Jack Finney. The film tells the story of a small-town doctor who has to deal with the fact that the city's population is being replaced by emotionless alien creatures.

American Film Noir would also be another transfiguration of the country's anxieties in the postwar readjustment by reflecting the nation's neurotic personality, their most pressing fears and secret desires. "Betrayal and mistrust dominated the headlines and shaped the fictional stories that transformed public concerns into popular entertainment" (SKLAR, 2002).

It is also important to highlight the Film Noir connection to Expressionism. Influenced by expressionist techniques of photography and setting, Film Noir[19] was based on the 1930s crime stories, also called "hard-boiled" stories, created by writers such as Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, and Dashiell Hammet. This "hard-boiled" fiction was said to be subversive because the reader was led to sympathize with the criminal, most stories were written in first person, which would give the reader only one perspective of the facts. In order to emphasize this biased perspective, Film Noir used the narration in off, a classic technique of the genre, in order to maintain and even reinforce the subjectivity of the camera. One example is the film *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), directed by Billy Wilder, whose first scene shows a corpse floating face down in a swimming pool. The narration starts and we hear a voice explaining that the

[19] The term *noir* was coined in 1946 by the French critic Nino Frank to classify the American crime stories written by Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Mick Spillane – many of their stories were published in a series called *Serie Noir*, because their covers were black.

dead man was a writer and soon we find out that the corpse belongs to the narrator himself. The film then, in flashback, tells the story of Joe Gillies – an unsuccessful writer who ends up meeting a decadent silent-film diva, Norma Desmond, and becoming her prey. Billy Wilder also directed *Double Indemnity* (1944), screenplay by Raymond Chandler (based on the novel by James M. Cain), which is considered a masterpiece of the genre. It dealt with the classic theme of Film Noir: adultery and murder; and in terms of aesthetics, it established a new paradigm in Hollywood – black and white contrast, texture of lighting and the shadow of the blinds that gave the impression of prison bars. Also, Film Noir expresses a feeling of not belonging, the feeling of the outsider, which is pretty clear in Billy Wilder's intention in showing sunny Californian streets in contrast with the shadowish interiors. Eddie Muller[20], author of *Dark City: The Lost World of Film Noir* (1998), affirms that "*Double Indemnity*, Film Noir in general, was basically heralding a sea change in American consciousness. [...] The American public had lost its innocence and it wanted more adult stories about the way people actually behaved, and noir films are the movies that addressed to that." The narration is also told in flashback with voice-over, as the main character, the insurance salesman Walter Neff records his confession on a dictating machine. And again, there is the strong presence of the *femme fatale*, Phyllis Dietrichson, who manipulates the male character in order to achieve her objective, in this case, to kill her husband and get the insurance money. The image of women in Film Noir usually portrayed the villain, the danger, or the unknown. This fact denotes the unconscious fear that men felt of women's independency after the war: "Film Noir in this sense conveyed postwar American culture's injunction to women to give up the independence gained during wartime and return to domestic life and economic reliance on men" (SKLAR, 2002).

Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948) tells the story of Michael O'Hara, played by the director himself, a mysterious sailor who happens to fall in love with a married woman, the fatal Rosalie Banister (Rita Hayworth). Soon he is seduced and entangled in a labyrinthine plot. According to Peter Bogdanovich[21], *The Lady from Shanghai* "is pretty much in the Film Noir vein, but it is more complicated, more grotesque, more bizarre…darker I think than most pictures". Orson Welles uses the background symbolically as a way to comment the foreground. For example, the scene in which Michael and Grisby are

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[20] PACTO de sangue [Double Indemnity]. Direção: Billy Wilder. Produzido por: Intérpretes:Bárbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray e outros. Roteiro: Billy Wilder e Raymon Chandler. Baseado no romance *Double Indemnity in Three of a Kind* de James M. Cain. USA: Paramount Pictures, 1944. 1 DVD (107 min.), P&B, Son., Leg.

[21] A DAMA de Shanghai [The Lady from Shanghai]. Direção: Orson Welles. Produzido por: Orson Welles. Intérpretes: Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth e outros. Roteiro: Orson Welles. Baseado no livro de Sherwood King. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1948. 1 DVD (87 min.), Widescreen, P&B, Son., Leg.

overlooking the ocean by a cliff gives the audience a sense of insecurity and instability; in the scene of the aquarium with Michael and Rosalie, we have a grotesque feeling provoked by the strange images of the fishes in the background. Moreover, Welles also makes use of symbolic montage. For instance, the scene in which the judge is playing chess and then it cuts to a high view of the court room, representing a game. Also, the scene of the mirror room, at the end of the film, represents symbolically what the film is all about: lack of self identity – things are not really what they seem; they are multifaceted, as Rosalie says to Michael: “I’m not really what you think I am”.

Alfred Hitchcock’s *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), considered the first truly American Hitchcock film, tells the story of Charlie Newton (Theresa Wright), a bored young woman who does not like to be “an average girl in an average family”. Her life is shaken when her uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten), whom she had been named after, a “successful businessman”, arrives in the city of Santa Rosa to visit the family. However, Uncle Charlie, whom she adores, is not exactly what he seems to be. And she eventually finds out that he is a serial killer, known as the “Merry Widow Murderer”, who seduces widows and then kills them for their fortune. The film can be summarized in one line said by Uncle Charlie to his niece: *"Do you know the world is a foul sty? Do you know if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine?"* The film puts at risk the base of the American dream: the family; and Charlie, the naïve small-town girl, is forced to grow up and face the facts.

Fritz Lang’s *The Blue Gardenia* (1953), presents a plot of murder involving a beautiful young telephone operator, Norah Larkin (Anne Baxter). After being abandoned by her soldier boyfriend, the brokenhearted Norah accepts Harry Prebble’s (Raymond Burr) invitation to go out. The next morning, accused of his murder, she does not remember anything due to the amount of alcohol she had consumed with the victim. A journalist, Casey Mayo (Richard Conte), starts investigating the crime and names the case *The Blue Gardenia Murderess*, because the supposed murdereress had received a blue gardenia that night. And Norah questions herself if she could have committed the crime. *The Blue Gardenia* deals with the inner dark forces of individuals when led to desperate situations. Nevertheless, the film does not go deeply into the psychological aspects of the characters. The noir lighting, *chiaroscuro*, is rarely seen in the film, being replaced by a flat, grey image and overhead lighting, very much used in television in the 1950s. The film can be analyzed as a great projection of modern life, in which mass media play an important role: the telephone company, where Norah and her friends work; the press, where the columnist Casey Mayo writes his articles; the music industry (after Nat King Cole is seen at a restaurant, his record is played at several

different moments of the film); and photography, when Norah has dinner with the photograph of her boyfriend who is actually in Korea.

Robert Aldrich's *Kiss me Deadly* (1955) is considered by many critics to be the "apotheosis" of Film Noir. The film is dark and nightmarish; most characters are morally ambiguous and untrustworthy; and there is a search for an existential foundation. It starts with the image of a girl (Cloris Leachman) wearing a raincoat and running barefoot on the asphalt of a California highway. Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker), a dishonest detective specialized in divorce, is driving on the same road and gives the girl a lift. Running away from something mysterious, she tells him: "If we don't make it to that bus stop… Remember me!" And that is when they are attacked by another car and Christina, the girl in the raincoat, is tortured to death while Mike is beaten senseless. Mike survives and decides to find out what happened to Christina. He finds himself in the middle of a race for a box, whose content he ignores but which he is sure it is valuable.

Film Noir subverted the American bourgeois values by producing a fruitful field to the expressionist aesthetics: darkness, immorality, insanity and exaggeration of female sensuality, subjective camera, introspective tone, long flash-backs and voice-over. Mike Chopra-Gant, in his book *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America* (2006), affirms that the early years after World War II can be vastly and richly analyzed through Hollywood cinema. Differently from previous researchers and scholars, he negates that Film Noir would fully represent the American imaginary after the war due to the analysis of the highest revenue-earning films between 1946 and 1950. According to his analysis, American audiences were not aware of the difference between popular and "tough" films (John Houseman's definition for Film Noir at the time[22]), and most of the successful films during this period were not Film Noir, but comedies, musicals and romances. Therefore, Film Noir represented a small parcel of America's mood after the war. After all, in a way the United States were the single victorious country of World War II, their position settled them as a true global power, and they were going through a phase of economical abundance, confidence and optimism. This mood matches much better with the upbeat mood of musicals, comedies and romances released in the years after the war.

[22] John Houseman was an actor and film producer and wrote an article about Film Noir for the *Hollywood Quarterly* in 1947.

> Simply substituting one unequivocal image of cultural consensus for another is, however, of limited value in understanding the movies of the period and the complicated way contemporary films and genres registered the mood of US society. […] it is not so much a case of the mood of early postwar America having been either entirely gloomy or totally optimistic: in reality it was a complicated and often contradictory mixture of both (CHOPRA-GANT, 2006, p. 4).

One possibility raised by Chopra-Gant is that the conflict of moods might have happened because of the existence of two ideologies: the official and the unofficial. The official image of the United States would perform an upbeat optimistic mood mainly for political reasons. "[…] the issue of individual happiness became a political one, and discontent could be seen as an expression of political critique since it implied the failure of the political system to achieve its key goal of ensuring individual content" (CHOPRA-GANT, 2006, p. 5). The popular films were an attempt to reinvigorate the myths and cornerstones of the American national identity – the American Dream. The unofficial image was more gloomy and pessimistic, spread by intellectuals and artists who were more critical in relation to the order of postwar America. Therefore, while the United States sold an idea of growth, and preached happiness and optimism, the core truth was that individuals were feeling lonely, hollow, impotent and alienated.

Edward Hopper's paintings reflect very well this feeling of loneliness, stagnation, and endless silence. A restless feeling is caused by the lighting of his pictures – his realist images are almost betrayed by his surrealist lighting. He usually represents the "lonely crowd", lonely individuals lost in the crowd of the industrial cities, repressed by the quiet urban magnitude: a man sitting by the sidewalk in what appears to be a ghost city in *Sunday* (1926); a sad woman having some coffee in a restaurant in *Automat* (1927); a man by the gas pump almost being swallowed by the wild vegetation of the forest in *Gas* (1940); the lonely usherette alienated from the scene and concerned with her own private thoughts in *New York Movie* (1939); the women by the window, melancholic in *Morning in a City* (1944), anxious in *Cape Cod Morning* (1950), and contemplative in *Morning Sun* (1952). His paintings which involve more than one individual always reflect a sort of discomfort, tension and detachment. One of his most famous and discussed works is *Nighthawks* (1942), where he represents a diner in an intersection of two streets. The scene is set by the contrast of interior and exterior: the light comes from the interior of the diner, thus provoking the exterior to be extremely dark. The glass windows of the diner seem to involve the characters in a hermetically closed vessel, like fishes in a bowl. Although the people might know each other, the aura of tension is clear: the four characters portrayed in the painting are completely detached and alienated from each

other. “The silence of his scenes is deafening, the monotony striking, the alienation absorbing” (TINDALL, 1989, p. 830).

Unlike Hopper, Jackson Pollock, the exponent of the American Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s, denied any effort to achieve literal representation. His provocative works caused polemic discussions among the critics and the general public. He would put his canvases flat on the floor and then walk around them pouring and dripping paint on them. “In practice this meant that the act of painting was as important as the final result, and that art no longer had to represent one’s visual surroundings” (TINDALL, 1989, p. 831). Pollock’s technique promoted an event, the event of painting without any interest in reflecting reality, which denounced the postwar man’s inability to represent the world where he lived in.

Postwar man’s anxieties were discussed by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre as well. He did not believe in the existence of God and he also believed that existence preceded essence, in other words, he thought that man existed first and then defined himself as a subject. For that reason man would be entirely responsible for his choices and actions, therefore being responsible for what he is. “Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders” (SARTRE, 1989). However, Sartrean existentialism did not preach egocentric individualism. He thought that if man was responsible for his own choices, he was also responsible for all men, meaning, “in choosing for himself, he chooses for all men” (SARTRE, 1989) And man’s anguish would come precisely from this fact – the fact that men have to cope with the consequences of their actions not only for themselves but also for others. According to Sartre, anguish “is the condition of action itself”, because by choosing between one thing or another, one would never know what is the right choice to be made, and that would be the source of all anguish. The feeling of abandonment comes from the fact that there is no one else to blame. As God does not exist, man is fully responsible for his choice and action. It is also not possible not to choose or not to act, because by not acting or not choosing one already makes a choice or takes an action. Without any excuse, man is free. “We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does” (SARTRE, 1989). Therefore, Existentialism defines man by his actions, “[…] he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his action, nothing else but what his life is” (SARTRE, 1989).

In terms of performance, Existentialism is very well portrayed in 20th century drama. Let us have a brief summary of the theory of tragedy through time. Tragedy as an artistic act is a performance, in other words, a form of drama, a symbolic staging that touches deeply the spectator provoking catharsis (purification or expurgation of feelings through pity or horror). According to Aristotle, "the name 'drama' is given to such poems, as representing action" (ARISTOTLE, 1997, p. 4). According to him, tragedy is made based on superior men, free men who are part of a privileged cast; and tragedy could only happen with the superior men, because they would serve as an example emphasizing the correct from the moral point of view. In classic tragedy the hero (the superior man) represented the collectivity, thus serving as an example to society.

> Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower level type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. [...] for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life (ARISTOTLE, 1997, p. 3-4).

Classic tragedy dealt with the issue of passing on the scepter or approached issues of procreation, such as the incest. These two factors were the base of the tragic action. They did not represent the individual transgression, but a deviation from the State, a deviation that affected society as a whole. The presence of the choir denoted this collective experience. Probably, the reason why the choir was suppressed as time went by was that the necessity to represent the collective did not exist anymore.

In Renascence tragedy the hero is still a superior man (a king or a noble) representing the collectivity, but now he is imbued with inner subjectivity. The Renascence hero brings misfortune to himself through an error of behavior. The tragic motif, then, starts moving to a process of interiorization, in other words, "the way in which one deals with suffering is now as important as the way in which one lives and learns from it"[23] (WILLIAMS, 2002, p.47). For instance, in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, all dramatic action takes place inside the protagonist's mind, in Hamlet's hesitation of taking an action. His hesitation comes exactly from the fact that he has an exacerbated conscience, hence his melancholy.

In classic tragedy there is no subjective questioning, because the classic hero is objectively put into a situation where he has to act, thus struggling with another objective value. Therefore, the consequence is the nullification of both values – the death of the tragic

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[23] "O modo de lidar com o sofrimento é agora pelo menos tão importante quanto a maneira de vivenciá-lo ou de aprender a partir dele." [Translation by the author]

hero is the symbolic nullification of these two values. In *Antigone*, by Sophocles, the protagonist sees herself in an objective situation: she has to fulfill her duty; she must bury her brother, be it for religious pity, sense of justice or incestuous love. In Renascence tragedy all the process is interior and subjective. The focus of the dramatic action is in Hamlet's questioning of how to act. The renascent tragic action emerges subjectively leaving gaps to be fulfilled by the spectator/reader.

According to Williams (2002, p. 51), "the essence of tragedy is a sense of order in which one understands the organization of life that is not only more powerful than man, but also acts upon him, specifically and consciously."[24] Therefore, it is possible to say that the tragedy is about the representation of a great crisis – in classic tragedy, the crisis of man and his destiny; in Renascence tragedy, the dualism of man. Tragedy expresses the need of order, but to achieve the order we must go through the phase of the disorder. Nietzsche (apud WILLIAMS, 2002, p. 61), affirms that "a tragedy takes us to a final objective which is resignation"[25]. The tragic heroes are purified through their suffering thus losing the will to live and resigning to an end. Nietzsche sees tragedy as the perception of finitude, that everything there is will come to a dissolution.

Contemporary tragedy shapes its concept in the matter of choice. Now, the tragic hero is not a superior man anymore, he is an ordinary man who has conscience of his actions and even so throws himself towards destruction. Schopenhauer (apud. WILLIAMS, 2002, p. 60), affirms that "characters with a regular morality, in common circumstances... [are] placed in such way facing one another that their position impel them, consciously and with eyes wide open, to cause each other the greatest damage they can, without any of them being wrong."[26] Hence, misfortune is not an exception anymore, or a characteristic of monstrous characters, now it is intrinsic to the character of men. At the moment that man perceives that, he is aware of the absurd of his existence and art becomes the only way to endure life. "Therefore, in this supreme risk of will power, art […] can turn the nausea [of men] into figurations with which are possible to live"[27] (WILLIAMS, 2002, p. 63).

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[24] "a essência da tragédia é um sentido de ordem pelo qual se entende uma organização da vida que não apenas é mais poderosa que o homem, mas que também, específica e conscientemente, age sobre ele." [Translation by the author]

[25] A tragédia nos conduz ao objetivo final, que é a resignação[Translation by the author].

[26] "personagens de moralidade comum, em circunstâncias que ocorrem com freqüência ... [são] situados de tal modo com relação um ao outro que a sua posição os impele, cientes e de olhos abertos, a causar um ao outro o maior dano, sem que nenhum deles esteja inteiramente errado." [Translation by the author]

[27] "Então, nesse supremo risco de vontade, a arte [...] pode transformar os acessos de náusea [do homem] em figurações com as quais é possível viver." [Translation by the author]

Tragedy loses its public aspect and now it is based in a set of beliefs relatively stable, yet variable from culture to culture, which determines an order. Then tragedy happens when there is a flaw, a crack in this orderly system.

> The order of tragedy is the result of action, even when it corresponds, entirely, and abstractly, to a preexisting conventional belief. The order is created more than exemplified. […] In tragedy, specifically, the creation of order is directly connected to disorder, through which action happens[28] (WILLIAMS, 2002, p.77).

However, tragedy can also happen in a historical moment when beliefs are unstable but going through a process of change. The confrontation of old and new beliefs may result in the perfect setting for the tragic action. This is the case of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), by Tennessee Williams. The ideological conflict that serves as background, the clash between the traditional South and the innovative North, is never clearly mentioned in the play but it is clear in the representation of the main characters, Blanche DuBois e Stanley Kowalski. Thomas P. Adler (1990, p. 49), in his book *A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and The Lantern*, says that Tennessee Williams emphasizes the tragedy of the modern civilization: materialism, mechanicism and utilitarianism (represented by Stanley) destroy beauty and sensibility (represented by Blanche).

A clash of generations is approached by Arthur Miller in *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Willy Loman is an aging traveling salesman in decline who centers his life and that of his family on material achievement and popularity. Trying to teach his sons Biff and Happy to be like himself, he says “Be liked and you will never want”. However, both his sons, and especially Biff, feel unfulfilled and unhappy. They realize that their father had taught them superficial and fragile values. Willy learns that he is not as well-liked as he thought when his boss, a much younger man, tells him that he is a failure. He has no friends and his relation with his family is not intimate at all, he feels lonely and abandoned. He loses himself in idealized reminiscences, and flashbacks of his life are represented on stage mingling with the present, thus denoting his lack of discernment to distinguish present and past. Finally, he comes to the conclusion that his only alternative is death and kills himself just after paying the last installment of the mortgage.

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[28] A ordem na tragédia é o resultado da ação, mesmo quando ela corresponde, inteiramente, de forma abstrata, a uma crença convencional preexistente. A ordem é recriada, mais do que exemplificada. [...] Na tragédia, de modo específico, a criação da ordem está diretamente relacionada à ocorrência da desordem, por meio da qual a ação se move. [Translation by the author]

In a set of essays about the theatre, Arthur Miller (1978) affirms that tragedy must cause knowledge and enlightenment, not only express and provoke sadness, empathy, fear or identification. Miller believed that the nature of tragedy was intimately related to the idea of unaccomplished possibilities. It is not only a matter of understanding the tragic end of the hero, but also understanding what he could have done to avoid his end and the reason he did not do it.

> Tragedy, called a more exalted kind of consciousness, is so called because it makes us aware of what the character might have been. But to say or strongly imply what a man might have been requires of the author a soundly based, completely believed vision of man's great possibilities (MILLER, 1978, p.10).

His understanding of the tragic involves the relation of cause and effect, and the fact that things could always be different, therefore there is always the possibility of victory, that is exactly where his idea of the tragic lies. His view of the tragic agrees with Sartre's Existentialism: man is condemned to freedom and his life is a product of his choices and actions. The arts and philosophy of the postwar era tried to reconstruct the logic of morality, maybe in an attempt to cure the miasma of the holocaust – being man fully responsible for his actions, there was no excuses for those "who operated the Nazi killing-machine" by justifying that they were "will-less agents of a hierarchy and thereby absolved of responsibility and guilt" (BIGSBY, 2001, p. 83).

In conclusion, postwar American drama was marked by a denial of realism on stage, which denotes the denial of authority. The alienation of the characters reflects the refusal to accept the new order of consumerism, also caused by society's fading values and morality. Likewise, contemporary tragedy brings to surface man's greatest fears: to be dislocated from the place to which he belongs, be separated from the image which he believes to be his own, and be withdrawn from his beliefs, feeling completely lonely.

4.2 TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: LIFE AND PRODUCTION

Although World War II had great impact in the American life, the fact that stroke the American imaginary in the twentieth century is the Great Depression, after the Wall Street crash in 1929. According to Bigsby, "Any account of post-war theatre in America must begin

not with the war […], but with the Depression" (BIGSBY, 2001, p.72). The seeds of the 1930s Depression would result in a series of artistic productions based on the loss of dignity and self-assurance, the feeling that they had been abandoned and that the promises had turned to dust. This feeling was well-known by the Southerners who had been going through hard times since the Civil War, never fully recovering from its consequences. "It is not too much to say that when the country entered the Great Depression, it was doing no more than arriving at where the South had been since 1865" (ELLIOT, 1988, p. 777). For this reason, the South had great influence during the Depression period, and for the first time, it became a dominant region in literature. It is the time of the so called Southern Renaissance, with prominent writers such as William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Katherine Anne Porter, and Tennessee Williams, among others.

The South has always driven in a different direction: trusting the power of the ownership of land and slavery in a nation that believes in freedom from tyranny; encouraging aristocratic values and preaching religious fundamentalism against Blacks, Jews and homosexuals in a country that expects equality.

> All this loss, resistance, poverty, violence, backwardness, and defeated gentility gave the region both its unity and its identity. […] the South's loss and subsequent resistance to middle-class industrial progress put its writers in intimate touch with the alienation of modernism (ELLIOT, 1988, p. 779).

The feeling of abandonment and loss, the disillusionment is very well portrayed in the film *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), written by William Inge and directed by Elia Kazan. The title is taken from a line of William Wordsworth's poem *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*:

> What though the radiance which was once so bright
> Be now for ever taken from my sight,
> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind...

The film tells the story of a teenage couple in love, Deannie Loomis (Natalie Wood) and Bud Stamper (Warren Beatty) who, by following their parents' advice, decide not to give in to their sexual impulses. As the story progresses, they are tormented by this repression and eventually separate, making Deannie suffer a nervous breakdown. She is interned in a sanatorium and Bud's family lose everything they had in the 1929 Wall Street crash, when

Bud's father commits suicide. They take different directions in life, and when they meet again Deannie is about to get married and Bud has been working in his father's old ranch and has already got a wife and child. The situation makes Deannie understand the lines of the Wordsworth poem she had read when she was a student: the passing of time and the inevitability of loss – be it time, memories, or lovers. Wordsworth's poem also might have inspired another southern poet who wrote about loss – Elizabeth Bishop in *One Art*. In the poem, Elizabeth Bishop approaches the fugacity of things, the fact that things, people, memories, and even feelings are not meant to last.

> The art of losing isn't hard to master;
> so many things seem filled with the intent
> to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Several authors have portrayed the South and its decadent charm, but none as Tennessee Williams did. He had marked inside himself the feeling of loss and was also aware of the fragility of the world, which he faced with regret and melancholy. "He saw growing up as a process of losing innocence and joy" (TISCHLER, 1997, p. 160). Thus, the discovery of sexuality, so present in his work, represents the end of innocence and purity, which can be related to his bucolic view of the South, a lost Eden.

The archetype of the poet has turned into an obsessive figure for Williams, representing the character that loses his dignity, his sense of honor, and is unable to fit in the modern world longing for the past. The protagonists representing his internal anguish towards the reality of the modern world would be portrayed as owners of an unbearable wild freedom which does not fit in the limited urban society. Their sensitiveness is intense and often impossible to be expressed. They are represented by oppressed writers (like Tom Wingfield, from *The Glass Menagerie*), wandering musicians (like Val Xavier, from *Orpheus Descending*), decadent Southern belles (like Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*), unsuccessful actors (like Chance Wayne in *Sweet Bird of Youth*) and unfulfilled poets (like Sebastian Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*). "Williams's hero is the lonely stranger who bears a mark setting him apart from other men – a special hunger, an unsatisfied need" (TISCHLER, 1997, p. 155). The compassion that he feels for his marginalized characters shows the compassion that he feels for the whole humankind. He does not portray his characters as good or evil, but as people who are susceptible to some kind of tragedy.

Thomas Lanier Williams, later Tennessee Williams, was born in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911. He lived with his grandparents, his father and mother and his sister Rose

Isabel, two years older than him. In his early childhood he lived in the Episcopal rectory of different Southern towns, as his grandfather was a Reverend. His father, Cornelius Coffin, was a traveling salesman often absent from home, and his mother, Edwina Dakin Williams, was a religious, artistic and a smooth woman. At the age of five he was diagnosed with diphtheria which left him invalid for two years. Then his mother started encouraging him to make up stories and he won his first typewriter at the age of eleven. In 1918 his father was promoted to branch manager in St. Louis, Missouri, and the family moved. Thomas had great problems in adapting to city life and would also have some nostalgia for his early childhood and southern countryside life. His brother, Dakin, was born in 1919, when Thomas was 8 years old. He had always had a much closer relation to his sister Rose, who was later diagnosed with schizophrenia and institutionalized in mental hospitals, even suffering prefrontal lobotomy, which debilitated her for the rest of her life. Much of the inspiration for his work came from his dysfunctional family. His close relation to his sister was crucial to the construction of several of his characters, such as Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945). "Tom and Rose were like Siamese twins at the heart. Tom would always bear the guilt of the one who survived" (HALE, 1997, p. 17).

He started writing poems and short stories, especially for the school newspaper and some local magazines. At the age of sixteen, he won his first prize from the magazine *Smart Set* for his answer to the question "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?". In 1928, one of his short stories was published in the magazine *Weird Tales*. He started college at the University of Missouri in 1929, but three years later his father forced him to quit university and compelled him to start working at the International Shoe Company. He felt miserable and unfulfilled. He spent his nights writing and was able to publish the story "Stella for Star", which won the first prize in an amateur contest. He left the company and started college again at the University of Iowa, where he graduated with a BA degree in English in 1938. In this period he wrote several short plays which later he would develop into his masterpieces. "In these early plays he was trying out pieces of a puzzle which would find their place in a finished picture later on" (HALE, 1997, p. 17). From 1939 on he lived in several places in the Midwest and South, including New Orleans, in the French Quarter, which would be inspirational for the creation of his most memorable play, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). In the same year he met Audrey Wood, who would be his agent for thirty two years, and was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation grant. By this period he had already adopted the name "Tennessee".

The 1940s were years of abundant creation, and two of his most successful plays were written and produced then, *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). Also in 1947 he met Frank Merlo, who became his lover in a long relationship, which only ended with the latter's death of cancer in 1963. The 1950s include powerful and controversial plays: *The Rose Tattoo* (1950), *Camino Real* (1953), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Garden District* (1958) – which includes *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Something Unspoken* – and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959). The 1950s bibliography also contains the script for the film *Baby Doll* (1956). Moreover, by this time a great number of his plays were being adapted to the motion picture. Actually, Tennessee Williams's importance is not restricted to the theatre; he exerted major influence in the development of the film industry in the United States in the twentieth century. According to R. Barton Palmer "it is hard to imagine the course of the fifties and early sixties cinematic history without his plays as source material; and if we could imagine such a history, it would be quite different from the one that actually played out on the screen" (PALMER, 1997, p. 205). Although the 1950s were a productive period, Williams started suffering from depression and in 1956 he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. After that he started psychoanalysis, but with the death of Frank Merlo he entered a period of depression which would lead him to addiction in amphetamines and barbiturates. The 1960s were hard times for Williams both in his personal and professional lives. *The Night of the Iguana* (1961) won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and is his most significant work from the period, which includes the plays *Period of Adjustment* (1960) and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (1963). In September 1969, Williams entered the Barnes Hospital in St. Louis for psychiatric care. In the 1970s, *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* (1971), *Small Craft Warnings* (1972), and *Vieux Carré* (1977) were premiered. It is possible to say that in the 1970s Williams was in fact being recognized as a major influence in the American Drama by the number of essays, books and studies published about him and his work. In the 1980s he released his latest major plays: *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980), and *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1981). In 1983, Tennessee Williams died in the Hotel Elysee in New York City from choking on a cap from a medicine bottle.

The significance of Tennessee Williams's work is immeasurable for the American imaginary. He "[…] succeeded in expanding the boundaries of theatricality itself, combining a lyricism and experimentalism that revolutionized American Drama after World War II" (ROUDANÉ, 1997, p. 1). Besides creating new plastic forms of expression on stage, he also allowed his women characters to articulate their sexuality and eroticism, showing the

protagonists in their complexity, and giving to the audience a more mature form of drama. In conclusion, he was able to understand and express the nuances of his time and place. He was able to grasp the ultimate loneliness of Hopper's figures, and the alienation of Pollock's paintings, as well as understand fully and completely the condition of the postwar Sartrean man enslaved by his unlimited freedom. As Williams says through the voice of Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending*: "[…] we're under a life-long sentence to solitary confinement inside our own lovely skins for as long as we live on this earth!" (WILLIAMS, 2001, p. 284).

4.3 TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND EXPRESSIONISM

Trying to set Tennessee Williams's plays in a box with a label is an excruciatingly impossible task. Some scholars consider his work naturalist, others symbolist, others realist. The core truth is that fitting his theatre in a vessel, like those we see in drugstore shelves, is the same as weaken his powerful work. The true art is the one which is unclassifiable. Maybe the best definition for Tennessee Williams's theatre is the one suggested by E. Martin Browne in 1958: "Mr. Williams is a poetic realist, or rather perhaps a realistic poet" (WILLIAMS, 2001, p. 7).

For the purpose of this thesis, Tennessee Williams's work will be analyzed through the light of Expressionism, extensively discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The choice of the topic above does not in any way erase other possibilities of analysis, because his work is so rich that it allows several different perspectives. Williams himself has created a nomination for his theatre, which he called *plastic theatre* or *sculptural drama*: "something more organic than words, something closer to being an action" (WILLIAMS, 1983, p. ix). What he meant by plastic was involving all the devices of theatre – such as lighting, sounds, music, visual effects, setting, etc. – in order to enhance the dramatic performance and involve the audience in an aura of catharsis. By promoting equal value to non-literary elements of stage production and to literary text, he brought about a new form of writing, producing and performing the theatre, expanding the boundaries of the stage and widening its visual range. In the production notes of *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) he explains the concept of *plastic theatre*:

> Being a "memory play", *The Glass Menagerie* can be presented with unusual freedom of convention. Because of its considerable delicate or tenuous material, atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a particularly important part.

> Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. The straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters who speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.
> These remarks are not meant as a preface only to this particular play. They have to do with a conception of new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions if the theatre is to resume vitality as a part of our culture (WILLIAMS, 1977, p. 229).

He would never again discuss his concept of plastic theatre. However, it seems clear that what he was demanding was a theatre based not only on words, not simply literary, but a "theatrical" theatre without pledge to realism. That is precisely where the relation of Tennessee Williams's work with Expressionism lies: the stylization on stage, the powerful meaning of symbolic devices, the imaginative use of lighting, the emotional influence of music and sound cues provide the audience, visually and emotionally, an almost ritualistic experience. In a Williams's journal entry in 1942, three years before the premiere of *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams describes without naming what would become his *plastic theatre*:

> He describes stylized, dance-like movement and stresses simplicity and restraint in acting and design and all the elements of the staging. In fact, though he does not use the word, he describes a theatre that is, by definition, expressionistic—where the emotions of the play are rendered visually or aurally on the stage—an artistic style he specifically names in the *Glass Menagerie* note (KRAMER, 2002).

The concept of *plastic* might have come from the definition of *plastic space* by the American painter Hans Hoffman, with whom Williams had taken an art course in the 1940s. The definition of *plastic*, then, means that space "is not inert but alive, and that unoccupied space is not just empty but as significant to the work as the occupied space" (KRAMER, 2002). Therefore, what Williams wanted was to turn what served as "background" in realist theatre into meaningful and dynamic spaces. Moreover, another source for the concept of *plastic theatre* accounts on Williams's chance to immerse in Eugene O'Neill's universe when he was a young drama student in the 1930s. In his studies about Williams's *Sculptural Drama*, Kramer (2002) mentions several occasions in which Williams had contact with the work of the American Expressionist playwright:

> In [1928], a touring production of *Strange Interlude* came to St. Louis, and the 16-year-old Williams wrote his grandfather, describing some of the unusual aspects of the play—which, ironically, he had not seen (Devlin and Tischler 25-26). Later, at both the University of Missouri (1929-32) and Washington University (1936-37), Williams was surrounded by O'Neill. Course readings at Missouri included heavy doses of O'Neill's one-acts and the student theatre, the Missouri Workshop, presented O'Neill's decidedly expressionistic play *The Hairy Ape* in 1930. When *Mourning Becomes Electra* opened in New York in October 1931, the Columbia, Missouri, campus buzzed with discussion of the startling new work, spurred by unprecedented press attention, including a *Time* cover (Leverich 113, 122). During Williams's time at Washington University, he wrote a term paper, "Some Representative Plays of O'Neill and a Discussion of His Art," which focused on some of the unconventional elements of the plays. It is also certain that Williams was among the many in his class who were rapt when O'Neill's Nobel Prize, the first for an American dramatist, was announced in 1936 (Leverich 183, 188). Exposed as he was to O'Neill's works and techniques at this early stage in his theatrical education, it is unimaginable that Williams would not absorb many of the older writer's ideas about non-realistic theatre (KRAMER, 2002).

In addition, Williams believed that the script should be written in order to produce theatrical images, in other words, the playwright should also take part in the production and design of the play. For him, the script should contain not only the verbal elements of a play but also non-verbal cues which would contribute to the theatrical experience. Hence, the three dimensional stage, constructed scenery, was an essential addition for the play’s atmosphere. What Williams wanted was “a truly multi-dimensional theatre, integrating all the arts of the stage to create its effects. He did not want language to be the principal medium of his theatre, merely supported by a picture-frame set and enhanced by music and lighting effects” (KRAMER, 2002).

Nevertheless, one should not be deceived by Williams’s worry of non-verbal elements. Language is vital to his plays and his poetic lyricism is his hallmark. Also this characteristic, the poetic eloquence – be it in words, gestures or silences – is another expressionistic aspect. “It is a style of speech designed to draw attention to itself, to distort, to deceive. Detached from the reality of experience, it is a mask which conceals a truth which the characters cannot articulate” (BIGSBY, 2001, p. 35). Williams’s use of speech, though powerful, sometimes disguises the protagonist’s true nature functioning as a camouflage, thus requiring other clues to unmask the characters. These clues are generally given in forms of symbols throughout the play.

The setting carries a metaphorical force, usually related to constrained or confined spaces, promoting the clash of forces between the characters, like the small flat of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the bedroom of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the tea room of *Something Unspoken*, and the primitive garden of *Suddenly Last Summer*. Also, the setting symbols function as expressions of the protagonist’s mood and personality. For

instance, Blanche's vulnerability is expressed by the lamp light, Sebastian's wildness is represented by his garden with cannibal plants, Baby Doll's innocence is portrayed by the cradle, Laura's fragility is conveyed by her glass collection, and Val's instinctive nature is suggested by his snake-skin jacket.

Furthermore, Williams's work deals extensively with the issue of dissolved values. Unable to live in a materialist cold world, where the future holds numb conformity, his characters try to suspend time, holding back to a glorious past. Their attempt to flee from reality throws them into a world of imagination. In *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura hangs on to her glass collection, a safe world in which she does not feel vulnerable. Her mother, Amanda, likewise Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, tries desperately to freeze time. Brick, from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, waits for the "click" to set him apart from reality. Lady, from *Orpheus Descending*, wants to recreate her father's wine garden. According to Bigsby (2001, p. 42), his characters tended to "theatricalise their world in order to be able to survive in it".

Besides, in agreement with Expressionism, Williams's plays follow the *Stationendramen* pattern. They always reflect the need for purification. The protagonists follow stages in order to exorcise their guilt. This aspect can also be justified by his puritan background and the fact that he suffered great influence from his grandfather who was a reverend. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Sebastian, who is actually an absent character but, paradoxically, the protagonist of the play, is sacrificed in order to exorcise his individual as well as metaphysical guilt. Blanche's symbolic path to get to Stella and Stanley's home denotes her stages along the play: "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!" (WILLIAMS, 1975, p. 15). Williams always proposed a road for redemption to his characters, but they are rarely gifted with a happy ending. Blanche ends up in a mental house; Tom is forever guilty for leaving his dependent mother and sister behind; and Sebastian is cannibalistically eaten by children.

The greatest parallel of Williams's work and Expressionism is the use of devices to unveil the characters' unconsciousness, consequently exposing their vulnerability to reality and their constant attempt to flee from it. Williams's characters are "compulsive fictionalizers" (BIGSBY, 2001, p.43), always building a world of fantasy around them. Their incompetence and unwillingness to deal with reality distort their perception, which is only identified by the audience. By focusing on the protagonist's point of view, and using the aid of lighting, sound, music, colors and image projections, he discloses the character's mind to the audience. Although he clearly takes sides when it comes to his characters, he does not

portray eminently good or evil characters. Instead he shows the clash of forces, as if human beings were bound to collide. He opposes mother and son in *The Glass Menagerie*, and male and female in *A Streetcar Named Desire* in order to illustrate much deeper themes: the struggle for survival and the fear of loneliness, as if running into one another were the only way to feel alive. Consequently, in his battlefield there are no winners, everyone loses.

For the purpose of this work, three plays by Tennessee Williams will be analyzed besides *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947): *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), *Orpheus Descending* (1957) *and Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), as well as their filmic versions. Under the light of Expressionism, the intention is to find expressionist aspects in Williams's work, his plays and their respective adaptations for the motion picture. The analyses on style will focus mainly on the *stationendramen* pattern, or the stations drama, where the protagonist's journey into spiritual awakening is the main focus of the play, therefore centering the dramatic action in the protagonist. Thus, the focusing in the protagonist's point of view enhancing his/her subjectivity will lead to the use of expressionist devices in terms of structure, such as lighting (the *chiaroscuro* technique), sound cues, and stage symbols as well as setting. All these aspects cited above are powerful characteristics in Williams's works. In terms of theme, his recurrent topics will be evaluated relating them to expressionist subjects. The dichotomy between mechanized world and mythic world, which repeats the vanguard idea to turn to the roots, to the primitive side of the human mind, to a more sensorial theatre that touches the audience deeply, will be approached also searching for elements of primitivism. The dichotomy between death and desire and male and female forces, present in expressionist works like *Murderer Hope of Women* by Kokoschka, and madness as a subversive force that shakes the established patriarchal order will also be analyzed.

4.3.1 The Glass Menagerie

The Glass Menagerie (1945)[29] is undoubtedly Tennessee Williams's most autobiographical play. Considered by Williams himself a "memory play" he presents the narrator and one of the characters as Tom, certainly not coincidently, his birth name. The play starts with Tom dressed as a merchant sailor, in front of the Wingfield apartment, close to the

[29] *The Glass Menagerie* was premiered in Chicago in 1944 and it won the prestigious New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1945.

fire-escape. It starts as if Tom were revisiting his past. For this reason, expressionist devices are used to emphasize the narrator's subjectivity. It is important to highlight that the play is about Tom's reminiscences of the past.

The screen device, where images and text would be projected, was not used in the first performance of the play, but Williams decided to keep it in the script to be used in further productions. The slides with images or titles would accentuate certain aspects of each scene, enhancing emotional appeal and contributing to the structural pace of the play. For example, when Amanda talks about her past as a Southern belle, the legend 'OU SONT LES NEIGES' appears on screen, which means "Where are the snows", a reference to François Villon's poem *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*. The original refrain is *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan!*, or *Oh Where are the snows of yesteryear!*, which is a clear allusion to Amanda's idyllic past.

The music, a recurrent tune that reminds soft circus music, theme for the character Laura, expresses "the surface vivacity of life with the underlying strain of immutable and inexpressively sorrow" (p. 231), which also represents Tom's feelings towards Laura. The tune invokes Williams's recurrent theme of lost innocence and sorrow for wasted time.

Also, Williams makes sure to emphasize the lighting, which is not realistic. In order to boost the atmosphere of memory, the stage is dim and "shafts of light are focused on selected areas or actors, sometimes in contradistinction to what is the apparent centre." (p. 231) The light upon Laura is different from the others, carrying an immaculate aura, similar to the ones "used in early religious portrays". (p. 231) For instance, in scene one, when Amanda is talking about her gentlemen callers, the spotlight focuses on her face (p. 238), or, in the same scene, when Laura avoids her mother's comments about gentlemen callers: "A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face [Laura's] against the faded tapestry of the curtains". (p. 239) In scene 7, as the curtain rises, the audience can see Laura huddled on the sofa and light plays the role of the narrator, setting the mood for Laura's character: "The new floor lamp with its shade of rose-colored silk gives a soft, becoming light to her face, bringing out the fragile, unearthly prettiness which usually escapes attention." (p. 288) Moreover, the father's photograph is also brought to life by means of lighting. In scene 4, when Tom asks "You know it don't take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed-up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?", the father's photographs is lighted up: "As if in answer, the father's grinning photograph lights up" (p. 255).

It is important to notice that the father's photograph plays a relevant role in Tom's reminiscences. He even mentions that his father would be a fifth character in the play (p. 235).

Therefore the presence of this "larger-than-life-size photograph" cannot be reduced. This blown-up photograph of a handsome man smiling endlessly is Tom's unconscious image of his father. The photograph is placed in the living room as a reminder of his absence, thus its large size: the empty space which he left is definitely huge and irreplaceable. In addition, its blown-up form indicates his distorted image of fatherhood.

The architectural construction of the play's setting is innovative and symbolic. The tenement's walls are transparent, and reveal the interior of the Wingfield apartment. The transparent walls make it possible for the playwright to set the characters in a claustrophobic atmosphere provoked by the confined and small space of the apartment. They also function symbolically to suggest fragility and delicacy as though it were a glass house. The fire-escape is another symbolic element which represents Tom's feeling of being trapped, and which equally functions as a reminder of an emergency way-out.

Williams gives Tom unlimited poetic license: "The narrator is an undistinguished convention to the play. He takes whatever license with dramatic convention is convenient to his purpose." (p. 234) Tom, the narrator, depicts the background of the play in his initial monologue, setting it in the thirties, "when the huge middle-class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind" (p. 234). In his notes, Williams also sets the Wingfield family in the fraction of American society which "avoid fluidity and differentiation [...] and exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism" (p. 235). This is the reason why Tom feels out of place in a conformist society. As a poet, his hunger for adventure sets him apart from conventional individuals, such as Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller.

The Glass Menagerie (1944) is a nostalgic play about regret. In a sense, it is Tom's self justification for the decision that he had made in the past. By telling the story, he tries to purify himself from the guilt for leaving his dependent mother and sister behind.

Tom works in a warehouse but dreams of being a writer. He leads an unfulfilled and unhappy life because he is not able to accomplish his dreams due to the responsibility he has towards his mother and sister. He works the whole day at the warehouse and at night, when he is not writing, he goes to the movies in order to search for adventure. Some scholars relate Tom's search for adventure as a suggestive characteristic of his homosexuality. However, if this was Williams's intention, it is not clear in the play. The point which Williams patently tries to make is that Tom's life bores him. He is a creature who does not fit in the conventional society, a recurrent aspect in Williams's protagonists.

Laura is a fragile human being, breakable and weak. She is crippled in one of her legs and is an extremely shy girl. Because of that, she hides herself in a world of illusion, spending

her time listening to her father's phonograph records and polishing her glass collection.[30] Laura is incapable of leading a normal life. Constantly monitored by her mother and considering herself as an imperfect young woman, she cannot communicate and does not have any friends. Her mother's attempt to socialize her and prepare her for the working life by enrolling her in a business college results in fiasco. Laura gets so nervous in her first typing lesson that she pukes in the classroom and, ashamed, never goes back to school again, spending her afternoons walking around town, pretending she would go to class, to avoid facing her mother. Laura is a creature always afraid of something, a human being at the verge of a breakdown.

Amanda, the mother, is caring but she has a neurotic personality and tends to suffocate her children by overprotecting them. She has raised her children alone, abandoned as she had been by her husband. The only reminder of him is the already mentioned blown-up photograph of his face hanging on the wall. She is definitely a fibrous woman but unwilling to bear the reality that she faces, thus always trying to set a world of illusion around her. Having been a Southern belle, she frequently boasts about her glorious past:

> One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain – your mother received – seventeen! – gentleman callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house (p. 237)

Now, after being abandoned by the gentleman with whom she had fallen in love but left her in a bad financial situation, she worries about her future and her daughter's, who, she recognizes, is unfit for the working life. She knows there is only one way to survive: Laura needs to get married. Therefore, she struggles to convince Tom to bring a gentleman caller to court Laura.

Amanda and Tom have a stormy relationship. She does not understand Tom's hunger for adventure and his lack of commitment to his work and his family. She questions why he spends the nights at the movies and despises his drinking. Tom is the breadwinner, but according to her, he does not accomplish the task well, being reckless towards his job:

> I think that you've been doing things that you're ashamed of. That's why you act like this. I don't believe you go every night to the movies. Nobody goes to the movies night after night. People don't go to the movies at nearly midnight, and movies don't let out at two a.m. Come in stumbling. Muttering to yourself like a

[30] It is clear that the figure of Laura is inspired by Williams's sister who suffered a lobotomy, and the whole play is a recycling of his relationship with her, with whom he was very close, and possibly an attempt to purify the guilt for not having prevented the operation which left her in a vegetative state.

> maniac! You get three hours sleep and then go to work. Oh, I can picture the way you're doing down there. Moping, doping, because you're in no condition! […] What right have you got to jeopardize your job? Jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we'd manage if you were – (p. 251).

Amanda also mentions that Tom might be doing something of which he would be ashamed, which could be seen as a reference to his homosexuality. Williams does not state Tom's homosexuality, but the fact that he is always going to the movies also reflects his escape from reality, into a world of illusion, where he can forget his situation and be anything he wants. Through Tom's perspective, Amanda's overprotective and controlling attitude restricts his freedom and makes him feel suffocated. This is the main reason why he wants to escape and run away to try a different kind of life. He is not running away from his sister or mother. He is running away from the responsibility they place over his shoulders. He feels asphyxiated by the dependency they have of him. And Amanda makes sure to state their dependency very clear by saying that he is responsible for them, and that he may leave after Laura gets married:

> Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose on my face! It's terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! – Then left! Good-bye! And me with the bag to hold. I saw the letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here blindfolded! Very well then. Then *do* it! But not till there's somebody to take your place! (p. 261).

Amanda's relationship with Laura is also equally contradictory. Although tender and overprotective on the surface, Tom's perspective shows that Amanda blames Laura for not having the same extroverted personality that she has, and tortures her daughter with her gentlemen callers' stories, making her feel unloved. That is probably not Amanda's intention, her flourished and exaggerated talk shows that she wants to cheer her daughter up, but the play is presented from Tom's perspective and he sees his mother as cruel and malicious:

> Amanda: […] Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!
> Laura: It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain… [Tom utters another groan. Laura glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little.] Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid. (p. 240).

Amanda also plays the role of the martyr when she finds out that Laura had dropped business school in scene two. One more time she sees all her hopes and dreams

buried in the ground, and blames Laura for their lack of perspective. This aspect can be noticed by the use of the pronoun “we” in her monologue:

> So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won’t have a business career – we’ve given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion! [laughs wearily] What is there left but dependency all our lives? […] (p. 245).

Superficially, regret is what *The Glass Menagerie* is about. Tom regrets his choices because obviously, at the beginning of the play, when he appears dressed as a merchant sailor, it is clear that his expectations and dreams were not fulfilled. Leaving his family did not make him follow his dream of becoming a writer because he was forever haunted by the image of his fragile sister. At the end of the play he says: “Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind, but I am more faithful then I intended to be!” (p. 313) Laura is seen by Tom as a sacred being, innocent and fragile. She seems transported from an ancient time: she is a mythic creature like her glass unicorn.

However, according to Bigsby (1997), the core theme of the play lies in the fictionalization of life:

> The theatrical metaphor, indeed, is central, with Tom as author of a metadrama in which he self-consciously stages his memories as a play in which he performs as narrator. But if he is the primary author, he acknowledges the centrality of Amanda as director, designer, and lighting technician of the drama which has been his life and the life of his tortured sister (BIGSBY, 1997, p. 39).

In scene seven, when the gentleman caller, Jim O’Connor, arrives, the stage is set and proper for acting. The house has been redecorated: a new floor lamp to set up proper lighting, a paper lantern to disguise imperfections in the ceiling, white curtains and chintz cover to set the mood. Laura is costumed by Amanda, her hair is changed and she is wearing powder puffs, as Amanda calls “Gay Deceivers”. Amanda puts on her old girlish dress and performs one more time the southern belle character, unfortunately worn out by time. Laura proves herself unable to play the role that was given to her, while Amanda performs masterly. Even Jim is used to acting at school performances and now studies public speaking, a way to be prepared to the public stage. “The real proves so relentless and unforgiving that it has to be transformed, restaged, so that it becomes tolerable to those who lack the qualities required for survival” (BIGSBY, 1997, p. 41). The fictionalization of life denotes the expressionist dichotomy of mechanized world versus mythic world. The three characters are trying, in a

way, to deny this mechanized and materialist world turning to a mythic world of illusion represented by Laura's glass collection, Tom's escapes to the movies and magic shows, and Amanda's Southern belle dress, which she still keeps in her closet. Fictionalization of reality or bringing "truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion", as Tom states in the beginning of the play is, for Williams, the only way to endure life.

The Glass Menagerie had three versions for the motion picture. The 1950 version[31], directed by Irving Rapper, which did not accomplish Williams's expectations because of a final touch added against his will at the end of the film which gave the story an upbeat ending. The 1973 television version directed by Anthony Harvey[32] seems to follow a more hysterical tone, setting Amanda and Tom in a battle field. At last, Paul Newman's 1987 version of the play is considered the best so far.[33] The first noticeable difference between the 1973 and the 1986 versions is the tone. John Malkovich and Joanne Woodward are able to portray Tom and Amanda in a wasted relationship between mother and son without being obvious. Tom is portrayed as immature, instead of being depicted as a furious young man – both are possible readings of Tom's character. Amanda is performed with all the ambiguity that belongs to the character, the caring mother and the chatterbox controlling witch. Laura's character focuses more on her shyness than on her limping, showing the true nature of her problems; and Jim O'Connor functions well as young man caught in an awkward situation.

Although this version has a sensitive approach over the drama of these hopeless characters, it lacks the references to Williams's plastic theatre. The film starts with Tom coming back to the tenement apartment where he used to live with his family. The place is derelict and seems to have been burned up. The setting shift from memory to present, or vice versa, works through the colors in lighting: from the dark bluish present to the yellowish remembrances of the past. However, the setting is rather realistic. There are no transparent walls; the only element of transparency present in the film is provided by the sheer curtains dividing the living room and the dining room. The focus on Tom's subjectivity is not very much used as an element in the film, except for the fact that he is the narrator of the story.

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[31] *The Glass Menagerie* (1950) has in its cast Jane Wyman as Laura, Kirk Douglas as Jim, Gertrude Lawrence as Amanda, and Arthur Kennedy as Tom.

[32] *The Glass Menagerie* (1973) had Katherine Hepburn as Amanda, Sam Waterstone as Tom, Joanna Miles as Laura and Michael Moriarty as Jim. It won six Emmy Awards in 1974 and the Directors' Guild of America Award in the same year.

33 *The Glass Menagerie* (1987) has in its cast Joanne Woodward as Amanda, John Malkovich as Tom, Karen Allen as Laura and James Naughton as Jim. It won the 1987 Golden Palm for Paul Newman, a Golden Globe and a Grammy for Henry Mancini, Best Female Lead for Joanne Woodward and Best Female Supporting Actress for Karen Allen in the Independent Spirit Award, and Best Foreign Actor for John Malkovich and Best Foreign Actress for Karen Allen in the Saint Jordi Awards in Barcelona.

Laura's subjectivity is portrayed in the scene when she realizes that her gentleman caller is her former high school sweetheart, then the camera revolves around her, showing her confusion and anguish. Light and shadow effects are also not explored much, except when Laura and Jim are talking in the living room. However, a recurrent element in the film is the neon light by the marquee of the building which suggests an atmosphere of dream and the temptation of the outsider world upon Tom. Although the film has flaws in terms of structure, because it could have carried some of the items above to a deeper level, the masterly performances of the actors makes this version the most intimate and perceptive of Williams's autobiographical play.

4.3.2 Orpheus Descending

In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a hero venerated by poets and musicians because of his music and singing. It is said that he could charm birds, wild beasts and make the rocks and trees dance. In the mythic story, Orpheus was married to Eurydice who was killed by a snake bite. Desperate because of the loss of his love, he played and sang such sad songs that made the Gods cry. Touched by Orpheus's grief, they advise him to travel to the underworld, home of Hades and Persephone, and try to rescue his beloved wife. Orpheus fearlessly starts his journey downwards with his powerful lyre, and even in the underworld, his musical instrument proves its value. The Gods of the underworld agree to let Eurydice go back to the upper world if Orpheus goes ahead of her and never looks back to check if she is following him. He sets off but when he gets to the surface, anxious to meet Eurydice, he turns back to see her, thus making her vanish forever. This myth served as background for Williams's *Orpheus Descending* (1957), a rewrite of an earlier play called *Battle of Angels* (1940).

Williams's underworld is set in a small Southern town, strongly rooted with patriarchal values, moralism and racism, which is noticed from the start by the way Beulah refers to Lady's father, calling him "The Wop", which is a pejorative word for Italian. "People just called him The Wop, nobody knew his name, just called him 'The Wop', ha ha ha…" (p. 248) When Lady was eighteen years old and in love with David Cutrere, her father had a wine garden which was a sort of meeting point for young couples. Unfortunately, The Wop made one big mistake: he sold liquor to Blacks and this provoked the rage of The Mystic Crew, a sort of Klu Klux Klan, which set the wine garden on fire and the Wop burned with it.

Lady lost her father, her lover left her, and she aborted the child that she was bearing in secret. She ended up marrying Jabe, who was actually involved in the fire. She did not know that but never loved her husband, living an unhappy life. She found herself trapped in Jabe's dry goods store which symbolizes the materialistic world in opposition to her father's Dionysian wine garden. When Jabe gets sick, she finally feels that she can recover her lost innocence and attempts to make of the old confectionery a rebirth of her father's wine garden, decorating it colorfully, in an effort to bring back the lost Eden.

Williams's Orpheus is Val Xavier, a free spirited young man who wanders from town to town with his guitar, singing the blues and wearing a snakeskin jacket. His guitar, full of signatures of great Black musicians, represents Orpheus's lyre challenging the racism inherent in this society. His snakeskin jacket represents his wildness, his animal instinct, and also his camouflage, his protection. Like the transparent little bird that has to sleep in the skies, Val has to live free, a sort of freedom that is unattainable, because as he himself says, we are not free from ourselves: "We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life!" (p. 283). His first entrance on stage is preceded by the Choctaw cry given by the Conjure Man, a primitive sound to which he seems to be connected. The Conjure Man embodies the wildness of the country, as Carol Cutrere says: "This country used to be wild, the men and women used to be wild and there was a wild sort of sweetness in their hearts, for each other, but now it's sick with neon, it's broken out sick, with neon, like most other places…" (p. 334). Again Williams is approaching the issue of the lost South and therefore the loss of innocence. Val's desire of not being corrupted, "be one of those birds […] and never be – corrupted!" (p. 279); and Lady's declaration to David, "the wine garden of my father, those wine drinking nights when you had something better than anything you've had since!" (p. 298), are the dramatization of lost purity. Both of them, Val and Lady, feel contaminated by a corrupted modernized world. Therefore, mythic primitivism is portrayed as a reply to the materialistic and patriarchal world. Val's snakeskin jacket, the presence of the Conjure man and the Chocktaw cry, and the story of the transparent birds that fly perpetually are references to a lost wilderness, or lost innocence, forbidden by the laws of the modern world.

Although Val is seen as the wild figure in the play, especially because of his strong sexual aura, he rejects this position. He retreats every time that a woman flirts with him. Lady only gets what she wants from him because she goes and gets it herself. He is a "relatively passive character" (CLUM, 1997, p. 139). He wants to break free from his past bohemian life,

from a materialistic world where people can be bought and sold, and he also wants to break free from women's desire.

By making Val the Orpheus in the underworld Williams brings back his recurrent theme of death and desire. These two basic human drives are present in the play especially in the characters of Val and Jabe. Desire, the life drive, is represented by Val's strong sexual energy, while death is represented by Jabe's patriarchal destructive power. In a way, Jabe is Hades, the God of the underworld who rules over the community. Val is Orpheus, an alien permitted to enter the underworld in order to save Eurydice, represented by Lady. However, Lady is both Eurydice and Persephone. As Persephone, she was kidnapped by Hades and chained to him by the vows of marriage when she was lost and fatherless. As Eurydice, she died metaphorically on the day her father's wine garden was burned because she lost all her reason to live; she is in the underworld waiting for someone to rescue her. However, according to Williams's point of view, unrestricted desire leads to death. Val's ability to burn a woman down, or his unusual body temperature, two degrees higher than most humans, reflect his creational force. However, the fire that warms is also the fire that burns: fire, which is also a symbol for hell, had ruined Lady's father wine garden and would destroy Val.

Vee is another character that portrays the primitive, or the wild. She is Sheriff's Talbot's wife, and has always had visions. When she started to produce primitive oil paintings, she brought meaning to her life. The first picture which she brings to the store portrays the Holy Ghost ascending. Would it be a prediction of Val's destiny? Vee and Val understand each other like only two artists can do. He tells her: "And so you began to paint your visions. Without no plan, no training, you started to paint as if God touched your fingers […] You made some beauty out of this dark country with these two, soft, woman hands…" (p. 302). They build a strong bond between them, seeming to identify with each other in a much deeper level. Therefore, she also foresees Val's destruction when she has a vision of Christ ascending to the skies, which strikes her blind.

However, the only true rebellious and free creature in the play is Carol Cutrere, David's younger sister. The punk girl, who is forbidden to enter the town because of her behavior and delinquency, is the actual little transparent bird that lives life on the wing. Val tells her: "Well, then, fly away, little bird, fly away before you – get broke" (p. 294). Although Carol is extremely wild, she is fragile, but she has a sort of fragility that does not need to be protected. Being aware of her fragility is also her strength. She is the one who tries to warn Val about the danger of staying in a city where he is unwelcomed and unwanted. The sound of dogs barking is the annunciation of catastrophe. Carol finishes the play wearing

Val's snakeskin jacket, thus denoting that she will follow his steps: "Wild things leave things behind them, they leave clean skins, and white bones behind them, and these are tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind…" (p. 347).

The action takes place during Easter, with the final scene reaching Sunday's resurrection.

> Characteristically, Williams mixes pagan mythology and Christian. This Orpheus is killed on Easter eve. Val is Christ, Dionysius, and Eros combined, the spiritual principle and the sexual principle, or rather the sexual principle made spiritual, seeking an impossible freedom (CLUM, 1997, 138).

The clear reference to the Christian ritual of Easter and the mythological tale underlying the play contribute to create a story in which the protagonist follows a spiritual path, reminding the structure of *stationendramen*, recurrent in expressionist plays. The episodic presentation of Val's spiritual progress leads him to death by fire – spiritual passion is represented by fire. Allegorically, he is both Christ in the Stations of the Cross and Orpheus descending to hell. As Christ, Val had a mission to accomplish: bring life to this town and to Lady, gifting her with a child. The triumph of his mission is precisely what kills him. By bringing life and light to these women – Lady, Vee, and Carol – he emancipates them from oppressive male characters, who only bring death and destruction. "Val, the disseminator of Black culture through his music, the rebel who will not conform to patriarchal order, threatens the social order by bringing life and a measure of autonomy to the women" (CLUM, 1997, p. 138). Williams uses the opposition of Val's primitive nature and the townsmen patriarchal and moralist values to discuss the clash of forces between old and new values in several layers of analysis. Wild is how the country used to be, as Carol affirms. She is a woman who tries to break free from these patriarchal values established by the institutionalized voices of men. Unlike Carol, Lady and Vee seem to be impotent to face the negative and destructive force imposed by Jabe and Talbott, respectively. Hence, Val's character functions as a savior to these women. As Lady says in the last scene, she had been waiting for someone to take her out of this hell, and Val did it. He accomplishes his task but he cannot walk out immune. In this primordial male world, any attempt to challenge the conventional order is dealt with violence. Therefore, the stud must be sacrificed for the sake of restoring the patriarchal order.

The film version of *Orpheus Descending*, directed by Sidney Lumet, was released in 1960 under the title *The Fugitive Kind*[34], a reference to Carol's last line: "Wild things leave things behind them, they leave clean skins, and white bones behind them, and these are tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind…" (p. 347). In the film, the image of the cage is constant, a reference to Val's story of the invisible birds that had to sleep on their wing, and his pursue for unrestricted freedom. The film starts with Val (Marlon Brando) leaving a cell to be taken to court. In this first scene, Val is characterized as an outsider, an individual who does not fit in the conventional values of society. Leaving jail, in New Orleans, he heads to the countryside. He is hit by a thunderstorm and has to stop in a small town. He knocks at a door where the lights are on to find a place to sleep, and Vee (Maureen Stapleton) answers the door. She is at home alone painting and offers him the prison cell to sleep in. The next day, Vee takes him to the dry goods store, where he finds a job with Lady (Anna Magnani). The upstairs of the store looks like a white pigeon's cage. The film portrays the idea of confinement strongly, if you consider the facts that Vee lives above the jail, always in contact with the cells, and that Lady lives in a pigeon's cage, details which denote these women captivity in unfulfilled lives. It also reminds us of the play's most famous lines: "We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life!" (p. 283).

The film is in black-and-white, which was probably not a random choice of the director with the cinematographer, Boris Kaufmann. Most likely, the preference for black-and-white color is an attempt to enhance the gothic atmosphere of this Southern town where the story is set. Also, shafts of light, the expressionist *chiaroscuro* technique, are used over the actors, especially in monologues, in order to show the characters' subjectivity. For instance, when Val is telling the story of the little bird and when Lady is talking about her pregnancy.

Some differences between the play and the film can be pointed out. Vee's character and her relation to Val are reduced in the film version. Therefore, their spiritual bond and understanding due to the fact that both are artists is not clear in the cinematic version. On the other hand, it focuses on Carol's (Joanne Woodward) love for Val. She tries to save him by warning him that he is in a dangerous situation not because she cares about him as her equal,

34 *The Fugitive Kind* (1960) won two awards at the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain, Best Actress for Joanne Woodward and Direction for Sidney Lumet.

as a wild creature, but because she is in love with him. Overall, the film seems to suppress the mythic quality of the play, thus losing much of its background content.[35]

4.3.3 Suddenly Last Summer

Suddenly Last Summer was presented together with *Something Unspoken* under the title *Garden District* (1958). These two plays dramatize the issue of homosexuality on stage. *Something Unspoken*, a dialogue of two women, approaches a lesbian relationship and deals with the unspoken – lesbianism underneath the surface. In counterpoint, *Suddenly Last Summer* approaches the danger of bringing up the issue of homosexuality. However, the main character is not present on stage, but is brought to life by Violet and Catharine's memories. Other plays also present homosexual characters who are absent in the dramatic performance: Allan Grey, Blanche's dead husband in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), and Skipper, Brick's best friend in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1950). Both suffer tragic deaths, as if homosexuality were an unbearable burden. Allan kills himself when Blanche rudely tells him that she knows everything about his homosexual relationship with an older man. And Skipper drinks to death when he realizes that he is in love with his best friend, Brick. These invisible homosexuals denote Williams's difficulty to deal with the issue in the 1950s theatre. As a homosexual himself, he always presents a discussion about homosexuality, even if between the lines or behind the curtains. However, "these homosexuals in Williams's plays and stories always die a grotesque death, not so much as the expected punishment for their proscripted desire, but as the victim of rejection by those closest to him" (CLUM, 1997, p. 130).

Unlike these other characters, Sebastian Venable does not kill himself, but is devoured by a crowd of starving children. If he does not kill himself, he accepts his death because he feels guilty for his uncontrolled desire. Being devoured by these children is a way to purify himself: a clearly Christian reference to the issue of expiation. The play is also full of references to the idea of God. Sebastian, an illuminated poet, according to his mother, is looking for God. When they travel to the Enchanted Islands, Sebastian watches a scene that would change his life forever: baby turtles being devoured by sea birds. This natural but

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35 In 1990 a version for television was made under the title *Orpheus Descending*. This version, directed by Peter Hall, had Vanessa Redgrave playing Lady, Kevin Anderson as Val, and Ann Twomey as Carol.

terrifying scene would make Sebastian define God as cruel. This report of the massacre at the Encantadas is an indication of the play's theme and suggests Sebastian's fate.

The savage aspect of the play is presented from the beginning with Sebastian's garden. Carnivorous plants, birds' cries and sibilant hissings are heard when the curtain opens. Williams describes: "There are massive tree flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents, and birds, all of savage nature…" (p. 113). Sebastian's garden can be related to Claire's greenhouse in *The Verge*. Like Claire, Sebastian searches for a creational force. As a poet, he is a creator, though his creational drive leads him to defy the destructive forces of life, understanding that life and death are concomitant elements. He believes that he had seen God at the Encantadas because he understands the cruel facet of God as necessary. That is the reason why he accepts his destiny of being eaten by a "flock of featherless little black sparrows" (p. 158).

Violet Venable starts the play presenting Sebastian's garden to Doctor Cukrowicz, whom she calls Doctor Sugar. Her intention is to bring her niece Catharine and hear from her mouth the hideous story that she has been telling at the sanatorium since she got back from *Cabeza de Lobo*, where she and Sebastian had stayed. She wants Doctor Sugar to testify that Catharine is crazy and therefore perform a lobotomy[36] on her, stopping her from babbling the awful truth. Doctor Sugar realizes that he is being bribed, because if he accepts her offer, his hospital will receive a generous amount of money from the Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation. He decides to listen to Catharine's story first. Doctor Sugar functions as a plot device and is present to mediate Violet and Catharine's versions of Sebastian's death.

Mrs. Venable sees her son as an illuminated creature, a poet of great inspiration. Her love for him is so great that she even let her husband die alone in order to stay with Sebastian in one of their annual trips. She clearly tends to overestimate her son, a fact which denotes a veiled incestuous relationship in which, even though not realizing it, she served as bait for Sebastian's sexual adventures: "I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people" (p. 122). When she starts getting old and unattractive, he decides not to take her in his next trip; and chooses Catharine, his beautiful cousin, as his companion. Violet, distressed by her son's coldness, has a stroke and her face gets temporarily deformed. So far, Sebastian had not been in any trouble because Violet always took him to the upper class circles and made sure that he would not go too far. Unlike Violet, Catharine is just a girl,

[36] Williams is again bringing the memory of his sister's fate to the stage.

emotionally shaken by a relationship with a married man, and does not have any power over her cousin. Not having his mother around to control him, even if unconsciously, Sebastian proceeds to his downfall and Violet blames Catharine for his death.

Sebastian is described to Doctor Sugar and to the audience through the perspective of Mrs. Venable and Catharine. Thus, their points of view are doubtful. In Violet's version of Sebastian, he is a poet, an artist, even a work of art himself as she says "the work of a poet is the life of a poet" (p. 114). Therefore, the same way as all artists are portrayed in Williams's work, he is misunderstood and displaced in his own time, belonging in a much more ancient world. Violet declares that Sebastian had "an attitude toward life that's hardly been known in the world since the great Renaissance princes were crowded out of their palaces and gardens by successful shopkeepers!" (p. 123). Her remark about princes and palaces suggests the expressionist denial of the modernized and mechanized world, and the search for restoration of a mythic world, represented in the play by primitivism and evidently illustrated in Sebastian's savage garden. Violet brings up the issue of aristocracy against proletarian values. Sebastian belongs to this antique aristocratic world, while Catharine and her relatives belong to the modern working world of buying and selling. Violet herself is the Southern belle and the loss of her son, not only physically but the loss of the idea which she had of him, reflects the loss of purity. Her attempt to mutilate Catharine's mind by forcing her to undergo a lobotomy is an evidence of her desire to erase the truth and go back to the past, to her world of illusion, the perfect world that she had created with her son.

Catharine, on the other hand, is extremely down to earth, being unable *not* to tell the truth, no matter how painful it may be. Catharine is the voice of truth, and Williams makes it very clear by showing Doctor Sugar injecting a substance in her arm that would make it impossible for her to lie, being forced to tell the truth. Therefore, the aspect of madness, which in Expressionism is perceived as a subversive force, is also present in the play, as her description of Sebastian's death unveils his unconventional behavior.

Along her story-telling, the lighting is used as an expressionist device, focusing mainly on Catharine, showing the protagonist's inner state of mind. Besides that, light and the color white also function as elements of truth in Sebastian's grotesque death: "the white blazing days in Cabeza de Lobo", "Sebastian was white as the weather", his "spotless white silk Shantung suit and a white silk tie and a white panama and white shoes, white – white lizard skin – pumps!" In Catharine's version of Sebastian, she portrays him as openly homosexual. He would talk about people as if they were "items on a menu":

> Cousin Sebastian said he was famished for blonds, he was fed-up with the dark ones and was famished for blonds. All the travel brochures he picked up were advertisements of blond northern countries. I think he'd already booked us to – Copenhagen or – Stockholm. – Fed up with dark ones, famished for light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if they were – items on a menu. – 'That one's delicious-looking, that one is appetizing,' or 'that one is *not* appetizing' – I think because he was really nearly half-starved from living on pills and salads… (p. 130).

Furthermore, while reporting Sebastian's tragic death, she makes several imagetic references to birds, which practically reconstruct the scene in the Encantadas and Sebastian's concept of God. She refers to the children as "the flock of black plucked birds" that screamed and "seemed to fly in the air" (p. 158). Then Sebastian is metaphorically portrayed as the baby turtle struggling to reach the sea, while the terrifying black boys fly over him to devour him mercilessly. The savage aspect of the play functions as the inner truth about sexual desire which is devastatingly animalistic. Williams seems to point out the fact that if you surrender to uncontrolled desire, you might not be able to cope with it. Consequently, Sebastian is sacrificed for his inability to deal with what comes after overwhelming desire: Christian guilt. *Suddenly Last Summer* was based in an earlier play called *Desire and the Black Masseur* (1946). This play clearly portrays the issue of homosexuality and masochism, and establishes death as the fulfillment of desire (CLUM, 1997). Therefore, Sebastian might have played the role of the victim, but a willing victim. In Williams's plays there are no victims, no matter how awful the violence that they might suffer is.

The 1959 film version[37], directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, with screenplay by Gore Vidal and Tennessee Williams, was extremely powerful, even being censored by the Hollywood Production Code because of the explicit references to homosexuality. That is the reason why Sebastian does not have a face and a voice and his homosexuality is just inferred in the film and not shown. Although it was a filming strategy to obey the Production Code, it turned out as a rich element in the film and in agreement with the play, as Sebastian is also absent on stage.

The high point of the film is the transition of the script from play to motion picture. The screenplay was very successful in its choices of setting. It explores mainly Sebastian's garden and Lyon's View, the mental institution. Actually the film opens with the image of a wall, Lyon's View wall, which denotes the inescapable feeling of confinement. This imprisonment can be interpreted as concrete and physical or as psychological, an introduction

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[37] *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) ran for three Academy Awards nominations, it won Elizabeth Taylor a Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture Actress, and a Golden Laurel for Top Female Dramatic Performance.

to Catharine's struggle to defend her sanity and get rid of the operation. Sebastian's *garçonière* is also explored in order to enhance his presence in the scene. We can see primitive masks, paintings and sculptures of male nudes, antique musical instruments, and a skeleton by the entrance door– the same that we will see at the top of the hill in *Cabeza de Lobo* when he dies. Several references to predation are made throughout the film, and the Venus Flytrap, the carnivorous plant, symbolizes the cruel facet of love, as the name of the plant is a reference to the mythological god of love.

Catharine's character seems to be accompanied by expressionist devices that increase the aura of subjectivity. She is often seen in a place where there is the opposition of light and shadow and though shafts of light are not pointed at her, when she starts telling her remembrances, the camera closes up on her face. Besides that, when she tries to remember what had happened on that awful day in *Cabeza de Lobo*, she hears the music that the boys were playing. Also, while Catharine is telling the story of Sebastian's death under the effect of the drug, the screen is gradually divided between interpolated images of Catharine's face and her memories; they fade in and out showing the instability of her memory.

There are some differences in the film version, as compared to the stage. The major one is the end. When Catharine finishes telling her story, Violet, who had been quietly touching Sebastian's blank pocket book, suddenly goes mad and assumes Dr. Sugar is her dead son, Sebastian. Her attitude evidences her final escape from reality, denying and ignoring Catharine's report on Sebastian's death. Catharine heads to the garden and there remains gazing at the plants until Dr. Sugar calls her and she answers in the third person: "Ms. Catharine is here", which suggests her inability to cope with the situation. Apparently, the film's end shows more veracity to Catharine's story than in the play, in which characters and audience reach the end of the performance questioning the truth about Sebastian's death.[38]

[38] Another version of Tennessee Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer* was released in 1993. This television version was directed by Richard Eyre and has Maggie Smith in the role of Violet Venable, Robert Lowe as Doctor Cukrowicz, and Natasha Richardson as Catherine.

4.4 A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

A Streetcar Named Desire[39], by Tennessee Williams, is not only a landmark in American dramaturgy but also in the history of Hollywood film industry. It is of major importance to the American cultural consciousness, to the point that it is already part of the American imaginary.

> Only a handful of works in the history of American drama have entered into and become the property of the public imagination in this way, so that a reference or an allusion to them will prompt an almost instantaneous nod of recognition on the part of the audiences and readers (ADLER, 1990, p. 7).

A Streetcar Named Desire innovated the theatrical form, breaking the boundaries of realistic drama and using stage symbols and scenic images, as well as the approach of unspeakable polemic issues, such as sexuality. As for the Hollywood film industry, Tennessee Williams's influence in the development of this enterprise is undeniable. According to Palmer (1997, p. 205), "it is hard to imagine the course of fifties and early sixties cinematic history without his plays as source material". *A Streetcar Named Desire* inaugurated a new kind of Hollywood film that soon would abandon a series of censoring codes used by the industry to morally regulate itself. Moreover, it is the first film to explore and eroticize the male body, leaving the female body in the background. Palmer (1997, p. 216) considers *A Streetcar Named Desire* "the first Hollywood production in a new genre: the adult art film".

According to Londré (1997, p. 45) *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the play that "catapulted Williams to the front rank of American dramatists". Londré (1997, p.45) affirms that "*A Streetcar Named Desire* might be read as a compendium of [Tennessee Williams's] characteristic dramaturgy, verbal and visual language and thematic preoccupation". Some of these elements are the lyricism in the dialogues, the focus on psychologically wounded characters that are marginalized by society, the attempt to escape from reality and from an uncomprehending world, the endless search for purity, and the sheer feeling of loneliness.

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[39] *A Streetcar Named Desire* was premiered at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in New York, on December 3rd 1947, directed by Elia Kazan. Its starring cast was formed by Kim Hunter, as Stella Kowalski; Jessica Tandy, as Blanche DuBois; and Marlon Brando, as Stanley Kowalski. It was performed 855 times and it won all the three major awards: the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Donaldson Award. In 1951, *A Streetcar Named Desire* was adapted to the cinema, having as its director again Elia Kazan and Vivien Leigh performing Blanche DuBois. The film won four Oscars in 1952: Best Actor in a Supporting Role for Karl Malden; Best Actress in a Leading Role for Vivien Leigh; Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Kim Hunter; and Best Art Direction for Richard Day and George James Hopkins.

Also, the expressionistic devices used as scenic elements such as sound cues, lighting, and stage symbols serve the purpose to enhance the aura of subjectivity, focusing mainly the protagonist's inner world. These elements serve to Tennessee Williams's concept of *plastic theatre*, which he had already put into practice with *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) four years earlier.

After the great success of his previous play, *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams tasted success for the first time and it did not feel good. Four days before the opening of the play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, on November 30th 1947, Williams wrote an essay for The New York Times, where he opened his heart and talked about success. He wrote:

> I sat down and looked about me and was suddenly very depressed, I thought to myself, this is just a period of adjustment. Tomorrow morning I will wake up in this first-class hotel suite above the discreet hum of an East Side boulevard and I will appreciate its elegance and luxuriate in its comforts and know that I have arrived at our American plan of Olympus (WILLIAMS, 1975, Introduction).

After this "period of adjustment", he packed to Mexico and dedicated himself to the creation of a new work called at the time *The Poker Night*, which later became *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He concluded then that "It is only in his work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, for the actual world is less intense than the world of his invention and consequently his life, without recourse to violent disorder, does not seem very substantial" (WILLIAMS, 1975, Introduction).

A Streetcar Named Desire ended up being extraordinarily appropriate to the atmosphere of the postwar world. "All the characters are trying to build lives for themselves in the changing postwar period" (LONDRÉ, 1997, p.48). Although the play is historically situated in the immediate postwar years, the issues involved are now as up to date as fifty years ago. Williams's great accomplishment was to deal with several ambiguities of the human nature represented in the struggle between Blanche and Stanley. Moreover, he mingled objectivity and subjectivity in different levels of reality and approached personal and social perspective. In addition, this was his first major play to put sexuality under the spotlight, handling desire both as a destructive and redeeming force.

4.4.1 The play

The setting is the exterior and interior of a "two-storey corner building" (p. 13), which are lighted according to the movements of the characters. It is set in the city of New Orleans, in the French Quarter, on a street called Elysian Fields, more specifically "between the L & N tracks and the river" (p. 13), in which people and goods were transported to the west's promised land. Although the area is poor, with an atmosphere of decay, it has a "raffish charm" (p. 13), typical of New Orleans. The blue piano, which plays along the performance, expresses the bohemian aura of the place and the black influence in this region. It is an evening in May, and the lighting over the stage is blue, "almost turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay" (p. 13). A white and a black woman are sitting on the steps of the building, talking cheerfully. The presence of these two women on stage reinforces the aura of freedom and tolerance among races motivated by the postwar years. It is a lively atmosphere and earthly lyric.

The four main characters are presented in the first scene setting up their mood and the tone of the play. Stanley opens scene 1, entering with Mitch and carrying his bowling jacket and a package of meat. He bellows for Stella to come out and get the butcher's package, which he throws at her. Firstly, she protests but then she is thrilled by his manly attitude. The men go bowling and Stella goes after them to watch her husband play. As soon as they leave, Blanche arrives: her "moth-like" figure contrasts with the setting and says much about her attitude throughout the play. Her first line not only describes her journey to her sister's house but will also have future reverberations: "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields!" (p. 15). Blanche is clearly nervous and out of balance, spilling information and drinking liquor anxiously. She mentions her looks and asks for compliments, attitude which will be recurrent. Stella, in turn, waits on Blanche and seems submissive to her, and even embarrassed by Blanche's eloquent talk. Then, finally, Blanche mentions the loss of Belle Reve, the Southern plantation that belonged to their family, and accuses Stella of being absent and not having endured with her the horrors of all the deaths. Stella runs to the bathroom, crying. Alone in the room, Blanche meets Stanley, who "with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens", sizes her as a female prey.

The clash of forces between them starts in scene 2. Stanley sees Blanche as an intruder and is annoyed by her affectation and superior attitude. For him, a woman has to "lay her

cards on the table" (p. 40). However, Blanche thinks that "a woman's charm is fifty percent illusion" (p. 41). If Stanley is straightforward and questioning her over the loss of Belle Reve, Blanche tries to swindle and allure. At the end of scene 2, Blanche finds out that Stella is going to have a baby.

Scene 3, under the title of "Poker Night", recreates Van Gogh's *The Night Café* (1888), with primary colors and a coarse atmosphere.[40] Stanley and his friends – Mitch, Steve and Pablo – are playing poker when Stella and Blanche arrive from their night out. Blanche immediately recognizes Mitch's "sensitive look" and creates a bond with him, as both had lost someone they loved. Stanley gets irritated by all the noise, which makes Stella cut out the poker game. He hits her, and when he realizes what he had done, he gets desperate and performs one of the most memorable scenes of the American theatre: he goes outside and cries for Stella, who descends the stairs, thus making Blanche dumbfounded.

In scene 4, the next morning, Blanche urges to take her sister and herself off this "desperate situation", but she does not realize that Stella is not in a situation from which she wants to get out of. Unnoticed, Stanley hears her criticize his inhuman qualities, but when he appears Stella comes running to his arms.

In scene 5, having been researching about Blanche's past, Stanley mentions Laurel and the Hotel Flamingo, which makes Blanche admit to Stella that she "wasn't so good the last two years or so, after Belle Reve had started to slip through my fingers" (p. 79), but she defends herself by saying that "when people are soft – soft people have got to shimmer and glow – they've got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a – paper lantern over the light…" (p. 79). While waiting for Mitch for a night out, Blanche flirts with a young boy who comes to collect for the local newspaper. This scene anticipates and gives veracity to the accusation of pedophilia against her from the school in which she used to work.

Scene 6 brings Blanche and Mitch's encounter, where she tells him about her husband's death and his homosexuality, and how she felt guilty for his suicide. The *Varsouviana* is heard; it is the music that plays in her mind every time that she feels in danger or remembers the loss of Alan, and following the tune, the gunshot. Mitch, moved by her story, reaches out his hand for her.

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[40] In 1948 Thomas Hart Benton recreated scene 3 from A Streetcar Named Desire in one of his most-famous paintings: The Poker Night (1948). Blanche can be seen sensually dressed with a transparent gown combing her hair under the light and Stanley is portrayed as if ready to attack her, while Stella hides behind Blanche in a crouching position and Mitch covers his face with his arm.

Scene 7 takes place during Blanche's birthday party. She happily waits in vain for Mitch, because Stanley had told him the truth about her past. He also tells Stella, who is shocked with his cruelty.

In scene 8, Stanley, Stella and Blanche are sitting at the table "celebrating" Blanche's birthday. There is a vacant chair which was supposed to be for Mitch. Stella comments on his pig-like manners, which infuriates him, and heated by Blanche's remark of his origins (she calls him a Polack), he throws a return ticket to Laurel at her face. Stella feels that her baby is about to come and Stanley takes her to hospital.

In scene 9, Blanche is at home alone and has been drinking. The *Varsouviana* is heard. Mitch shows up, also drunk, and tries to kiss her and grab her. In a last attempt to turn things over, Blanche is honest and tells the truth:

> Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims. [She pours herself another drink] Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan – intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with. …I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection – here and there, in the most – unlikely places – even, at last, in a seventeen year-old boy but – somebody wrote the superintendent about it – 'This woman is morally unfit for her position!' (p. 118).

A Mexican woman is seen outside selling flowers for the dead, an image that may be real only in Blanche's mind, and she collapses when Mitch tells her that she "is not clean enough to bring in the house with [his] mother" (p.121).

Scene 10 takes place later the same night. Blanche is wearing a white satin evening gown "murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers" (p. 122). Stanley returns from hospital carrying a pack of beer and saying that Stella would stay at the hospital because the baby would not come until the next morning. He asks her about her dress, and Blanche lies about a wealthy admirer who would have called her to go on a trip. When she calls him a swine, it leads him to destroy her world of make-believe, and Blanche sinks into sheer desperation. Reflections appear on the wall around her and inhuman voices are heard representing her inner state of mind. Through the walls that have become transparent a prostitute is chased by a drunkard. As Stanley approaches her and provokes her, jungle sounds can be heard. She tries to run away but she cannot. When Stanley considers interfering, she breaks a bottle and clutches its broken top towards his face. He seems to get thrilled by this and says "So you want some rough-house! All right, let's have some rough-house" (p. 130) and then catching her wrist he finally says "We've had this date with each other from the

beginning!" (p. 130). Blanche succumbs, and falls on her knees, moaning. He lifts her from the ground (repeating the same gesture from scene 3 with Stella) and carries her to bed.

Scene 11 repeats the same atmosphere of the poker night. And the sky is colored turquoise like in scene 1. The men are sitting at the table playing poker. While Blanche bathes, Stella organizes her trunk. Blanche leaves the bathroom and puts on a Della Robia blue jacket, "the blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures" (p. 135). She is unaware of what is coming for her. She tries to perform, to play her cheerful role of Southern belle, but is shaken by the sound of Stanley's voice. She hears the *Varsouviana* and drums sound very softly. In her dream world, Blanche is expecting her admirer of old times. But those who arrive are the Doctor and the Matron from the state sanatorium. The voice of the Matron echoes in her mind, she is scared and tries to escape. The Doctor approaches and takes off his hat. Blanche asks the Doctor to tell the Matron let go of her. He helps Blanche to stand up, she looks blindly at him and says while they pass through the poker table "Whoever you are – I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (p. 142). Stella cries for Blanche, but the latter does not turn back. Eunice places the baby, who is wrapped in a light blue blanket, in Stella's arms, she accepts him sobbing "with inhuman abandon" (p. 142). Stanley approaches her and sensually sooths her down – "He kneels beside her and his finger finds the opening of her blouse" (p. 142). The blue piano keeps on playing.

The play, divided into eleven scenes, has the structure of a *stationendramen*, in which the episodic scenes develop Blanche's spiritual journey into madness. The seasons also denote this structure. The play starts in May, the height of spring, from scenes 1 to 4, which denotes a will of rebirth and redemption. Spring is the season during which the flowers bloom indicating Blanche's spiritual renewal. Then, scenes 5 and 6 take place in summer, and mainly focus on Blanche's fruitful relationship with Mitch. From scene 7 to the end of the play, it is fall, which symbolizes Blanche's decline. The play also indicates a cyclic atmosphere; because it ends with the same turquoise sky lighting with which it had started. Blanche's reference to her means of transportation to get to the French Quarter also traces her downfall trajectory. She got a streetcar named Desire which led her to one named Cemetery. Those streetcars took her to Elysian Fields, where Stella and Stanley live. In Greek mythology, the Elysium was part of the underworld and was the resting place of heroic and virtuous souls, in other words, the Greek idea of paradise. Therefore, the play structures the episodic scenes according to Blanche's trajectory centering on her personal ruin.

The subjective aspect of the play creates a fruitful field for expressionist devices. Williams employs several strategies to accentuate Blanche's state of mind. The polka tune,

the *Varsouviana*, which plays every time she remembers Allan, as well as the gunshot that ceases the tune, suggest Blanche's traumatic vision of a romantic relationship and imply the inner motive of her mental state. Her unstable condition originates visions that are probably only seen by her, as the Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead in scene 9. Shadows, vivid reflections on the wall and inhuman voices, jungle sounds and drums increase with Blanche's decline, reaching its climax in the rape scene. The more Blanche feels trapped in the present situation and guilty because of her past actions, the more emphatic is the use of these elements. The play

> […]is most expressionist precisely at those moments when the audience shares with Blanche an internal perception that is not apparent to the other characters.[…] The viewer sees and hears along with Blanche such disturbing and disorienting images and sounds as the screeching of the cat, the glare of the locomotive lights, the music of the *Varsouviana* polka and the gunshot noise that silences it, the menacing reflections and shadows that appear on the walls, and the inhuman voices and echoes that help replicate her mental state at the end of the play (ADLER, 1990, p. 29).

Lighting is another important expressionist device used in the play. Blanche's avoidance of light, when she puts on a paper lantern in the light bulb, suggests her fear of truth. Obsessed by the idea of aging and becoming an old spinster without anyone to protect her, she evades light to disguise her age. When she is finally unmasked by Mitch, he tears the paper lantern apart. Terrified, she cries out as if wounded by his action. The same happens when Stanley grasps the lantern to hand in to her in the last scene when she is leavening to the sanatorium. There is also a game of lights throughout the play, involving the interior and exterior of the building and the apartment, which also indicates the internal and external approaches of the play, respectively the inner world of Blanche's downfall and the Southern decay of elegance and charm. Moreover, in the rape scene, one of the apartment walls turns transparent, by means of lighting, to expose the performance of the prostitute and the drunkard, thus suggesting Blanche's emotional state.

The opposition of Blanche and Stanley as two magnetic forces that repel and attract at the same time repeat the gender dichotomy of the German expressionist play *Murderer Hope of Women* (1909), by Oskar Kokoschka. As in the German play, *Streetcar Named Desire* deals with the fear and desire of the female principle, whose sexuality shakes the established patriarchal order. Although not as archetypical as Kokoschka's play, Williams also presents recognizable patterns for Blanche and Stanley. The convergent point between the two plays is the polarization of desire and death, or, in other words, the life drive and the death drive.

Therefore, Stanley might represent the life drive, with his sense of sexuality free and animal-like, "Since earliest manhood the center of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence, dependently, but with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens" (p. 29). In Williams's description of Stanley he says that his "Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes" (p. 29). On the other hand, Blanche might represent the death drive. Described as a moth (p. 15), a noctural creature, her fragility and gentility immediately contrast to Stanley's lively aggressiveness. Blanche is a "moth in a world of mammoth figures"[41], delicate and fragile, a ghostly "apparition in white" (ADLER, 1990, p. 31).

The play portrays Blanche and Stanley's struggle for dominance. His aggressiveness towards her can be justified as a reaction to her superior attitude. The only way which he knows how to dominate is through sexual desire and violence. He invades Blanche's privacy, violating her trunk, her love letters, and her paper lantern. He is deliberately cruel when he gives her a ticket to go back to Laurel on the day of her birthday; and he also destroys all her chances of a redeeming relationship with Mitch. Finally, Stanley brutally attacks her intimacy, raping her in the absence of his wife. The rape scene is very significant for the play, because it contrasts with the birth of the baby. "A generative sexuality that resulted in the birth of the child is thus contrasted with the purely abusive attack on Blanche that is destructive rather than procreative" (ADLER, 1990, p.58). Blanche and Stanley's opposition is the central theme of the play:

> Tennessee Williams intended a balance of power between Blanche and Stanley, to show that both are complex figures whose wants and behaviors must be understood in the context of what is at stake for them. The action proceeds through clashes of these two opposite to the inevitable showdown by which one wins and the other loses. And yet, Scene 11 hints that the nominal winner, Stanley, has also lost, in that the relationships that he values most – those with his wife Stella and his best friend Mitch – will never again be quite the same. Williams's characters, though often wrong headed, are not agents of evil intent, but victims of their own limited perceptions (LONDRÉ, 1997, p. 50).

Also, Blanche and Stanley's antagonism is depicted in a social level. They represent a clash of worlds – the North and the South – Blanche represents the traditionalist South while Stanley represents the modern and industrialized North with which Blanche cannot deal. He seems to have no past, he is plain; Blanche is a "result of a process" (BIGSBY, 2001, p. 50),

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[41] From Tennessee Williams's poem "Lament for the Moths": "strength to enter the heavy world again, /for delicates were the moths and badly wanted/ here in a world by mammoth figures haunted!" (ADLER, 1990, p.41)

and therefore she tries to freeze time, living in the past, transforming her experience into myth to avoid the painful idea of death. While she used to live in Belle Reve watching all the deaths of her beloved ones, she ran away from home to have encounters with strangers. In scene 9, she mentions the soldiers that used to call her: "[…] sometimes I slipped outside to answer their calls. … Later the paddy-wagon would gather them up like daisies… the long way home…" (p. 120). After the death of Allan, unable to find love again as truthful as she had found when she was a young girl, the only thing that would comfort her would be the encounters with strangers to run away from death that peeped through the white columns of Belle Reve. Hence, Blanche's fall is also the South's ruin. She says that the plantation in the South had been lost because of her "improvident grandfathers and fathers and uncles and brothers exchanged the land for their epic fornication" (p. 43). Blanche's reference to the loss of Belle Reve is a clear reference to the decay of the traditional South of which she is a representative and is also depraved and in need for protection, whereas Stanley, the brute, represents the mechanized North, ready to take the most of any situation or anyone. She also relates the loss of Belle Reve to "epic fornication", to sex and desire. Therefore, desire can only lead to destruction. Belle Reve's story, or the course of the story of the South, remounts Blanche's life story as an individual.

Therefore, Blanche and Stanley's clash of forces represent the smashing of an old culture and the emergence of a new one. Williams affirms that

> […] the South had a way of life that I am just old enough to remember – a culture that had grace, elegance…an inbred culture… not a society based on money, as in the North. I write out of regret for that…I write about the South because I think the war between romanticism and the hostility to it is very sharp there (BIGSBY, 2001, p. 51).

Undoubtedly, Williams takes Blanche's side in this battle against the barbarian and vulgar North. When she mentions Stanley's "ape-like" and "subhuman" condition, a "survivor of the stone age" (p. 72), and her final appeal to Stella "Don't hang back with the brutes!" (p. 72), it is Williams saying that the materialistic and mechanized North will crack the mythic and lyric world of the traditional South, thus destroying the fruitful world of art and illusion. Blanche and Stanley's conflict of gender and class, even though with different nuances, remind us of the expressionist play *The Hairy Ape* (1922), by Eugene O'Neill, in which Mildred, a young aristocrat, faces Yank, a brutish worker. Their clash of forces also represents the conflict between the aristocratic world of fake elegance, and the new mechanized world of materialism.

Blanche's point of view is emphasized through symbols and effects because she is Tennessee Williams's voice trying to communicate with the world. As Tom from *The Glass Menagerie*, Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending* and Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*, Blanche is the artist, the illusionist, the poet. Williams's protagonists are usually the outsiders, misunderstood creatures that live in the margins of society. Therefore, she is a fictionalizer, just like the other protagonists cited above. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is Blanche's personal show. She performs and "puts on her act" throughout the play to protect her moth-like figure in the face of the mammoth creatures. She is victimized by Stanley, but she is not a victim. She is manipulative – she directs, designs and performs her own act. Again, the theatricalization of life, also performed by Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and Violet Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*, suggests the characters' attempt to fly away from reality, which is unbearably hard on them. For Williams art was a way to freeze time, and abstract oneself from the process of deterioration and decay.

His characters "having run out of time and space [...] seek to shore up their lives with fragments of the past, invented or recalled, and elaborate fictions which confer on them a significance they could otherwise never aspire to" (BIGSBY, 2001, p. 43). Williams's protagonists search endlessly for the age of innocence, a time in the past when they were not corrupted, hence Blanche's clash with a modern world with which she cannot cope with. Her reinforcement of traditional values represents her attempt to turn back the clock and grasp the past. It is the expressionist search for the primitive, the inner truth, the ancient world of myths, which can only be achieved by the roles Blanche desperately performs.

Blanche is not cut off for this time, she belongs to an ancient world of Southern Belles and Rosenkavaliers, and she does not accept her sexuality as natural and humanlike. When Stella asks her if she had never ridden on a streetcar named desire (it is an obviously metaphorical question), she says: "It brought me here – where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be…" (p. 70). On the other hand, she might also fear for her well-being, because Stanley's attitude towards women is that of a predator. She actually fears for her sanity, because she feels that she is in danger in this place, where the rules are different from the world from which she comes, and she cannot understand the condition in which Stella had put herself into.

Nevertheless, Blanche is caught in a trap made by herself. The tragic flaw lies in her choice of not admitting a new form of living, embracing tradition as her one and only truth. Her inability to deal with carnal desire and spiritual gentility puts her on a track of destruction. She is entangled in her pack of lies, which she created for herself in order to flee

from the reality which she cannot handle. Thus, her world of illusion that protects her from the crudity of life is also her death sentence because it leads her to the utter inability of establishing social relations. Blanche's vanity as well as her pride – because she thinks of herself as a special being – disconnect her from an earthly possibility of life. When she has a chance to have a redeeming relationship with Mitch, she colors it and adorns it with unnecessary chivalry. Afraid of losing her last and only chance of being a respectful woman, she plays the role of the puritan Southern belle, which later is unmasked by Stanley. Haunted by the past and with no perspective of a positive future, Blanche collapses into madness.

The confining setting of the play also raises Blanche's feeling of entrapment. The lack of privacy is a recurrent topic in Williams's plays. After having left the vast world of the plantation, Blanche faces a two-room apartment, divided by curtains, which she has to share with her oppressor. The bathroom becomes her refuge. It is the place where she runs to whenever she feels in danger, like in scene 8, when Stanley gives her the ticket back to Laurel, or in scene 11, when she is running away from the Matron. Besides that, her endless hot baths also represent an attempt to purify herself from the guilt she feels for not having understood Allan and having provoked his suicide.

If Blanche is trapped, Stella is enslaved by her husband's sexual magnetism. Though Stella has a practical nature and a down-to-earth approach to life, she is blind, even narcotized by the sexual desire that she feels for Stanley. Thus, Stanley's relationship with Stella and the world is hedonistic; he is solely concerned with his selfish pleasure. He is the utmost egotistic and is just interested in his own pleasure and comfort. As he says, "Everyman is a king!" (p. 107) His animal-like power is only accommodated through the sexual act. This is the way which he finds to level Blanche with him. However, having a close approach, Stanley is no more than a spoiled child, he screams and shouts when things are not the way he wants. He throws the radio out of the window during the poker game because he was losing it. And first and foremost, he resents losing Stella's attention to Blanche, hence, the source of Stanley and Blanche's struggle – the competition for Stella's attention. Yet, though Stella remains with Stanley, this battle of sexes does not seem to have a winner. The last scene portrays what should be a depiction of the Holy Family[42], but this bond is broken by Stanley's rape of Blanche. Their marriage is stained by Stanley's unforgivable sin of deliberate cruelty. Blanche, in her turn, ends the play redeemed, in a Della Robia jacket looking like a Madonna, sanctified by madness.

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[42] The *Holy Family* consists of the Child Jesus, Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

The question that Williams proposes for the end of the play is whether things are going to be the same, as they used to be; if the colored lights are going to be restored at the Kowalskis. Apparently, desire has won. Stella remains with Stanley. But now that she has her baby to take care of, the indication is that the newborn will take hold of most of her life. If their sexual relationship had been shaken by Blanche's arrival, it might not be restored because of the baby's presence. Besides that, Stella and Stanley's relationship might never be the same after what he did with Blanche. Although Stella chooses to believe him, the passion veil that covered Stanley's image under Stella's eyes is taken off, and she may finally see her husband as someone as crude as he is.

4.4.2 The film

According to Gerald Mast (1982), the relation of literature and cinema is inevitable. Film, just like literature, devotes itself to the art of telling stories, imitating human actions, revealing problems, and urging solutions. However, cinema was seen as a minor art for a considerable length of time. Sergei M. Eisenstein was one of the first filmmakers and theorists to defend "the legitimacy of film as an art on the basis of its parallel with literary processes and literary works" (MAST, 1982, p. 279). According to Mast (1982), the discussion of the legitimacy of films as an art is due to the fact that cinema is a "new art", a "new art" that was invented in 1895. Consequently, "inevitably a new art must be compared to and judged by the standards of the existing arts" (MAST, 1982, p. 279).

Most of the discussion about the relation of literature and films revolves around the issue of faithfulness to the original text when adapting a literary work to the motion picture. The impossibility of remaining faithful to the original text comes not only from the fact that an adaptation involves interpretation, which involves subjectivity, but also a transition to a completely different medium. Mast (1982) states that

> Although the filming of a literary work has been called 'adaptation' by some and 'translation' by others, both terms imply (indeed demand) a respect for the original text as the fixed foot of a compass around which the film version must revolve. If one terms the film work as an 'interpretation' of the original text […], the burden for artists becomes the wholeness and integrity of their artistic interpretations, not their loyalty to the original. Further, critics who claim that a film violates the integrity of the original material can only mean that the film violates either their

> own interpretation of the original or the general consensus regarding interpretation of the original work (MAST, 1982, p. 280).

Moreover, citing Foucault in his book *The Order of Discourse*, “new is not in what is said, but in the happening around it”[43] (FOUCAULT, 2003, p. 26). Therefore, adaptations taking place in different social historical moments will imply different discourses, resulting in different interpretations. Also, it is important to highlight that a literary work as well as a cinematographic work is made by someone with the purpose to reach a great number of people. Just as the author of a literary work, filmmakers “manipulate the signifying system according to its convention” (MAST, 1982, p. 298). Consequently, literary or cinematographic language means power, not only because it is made “formally and by few to the many” (MAST, 1982, p. 298), but also because it creates different senses according to the industry’s – publishers or studios – will.

The analysis of the filmic version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* does not lie in its faithfulness to the original script. However, having the same director of the first stage production, Elia Kazan, and Tennessee Williams involved deeply in the project made a difference in the final outcome of the film. *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the first play by Tennessee Williams to be successfully adapted to the motion picture. Before that, *The Glass Menagerie* was adapted to the cinema by Irving Rapper, but his interpretation did not fulfill Williams’s expectation. In fact, Williams was not part of the project and was disappointed by the upbeat ending that the director gave to his nostalgic play.

Tennessee Williams definitely influenced the making of a new form of films. Up to his era, Hollywood films were attached to nineteenth century melodrama, “emphasizing traditional American optimism and solidly bourgeois values” (PALMER, 1997, p. 208). Although film producers were eager to make more “arty” and adult films, they were prevented by the barrier of the protocols of the Production Code, a censorship office that established a series of regulations avoiding inappropriate content to the masses, according to the puritan ideology. During the forties, the studios were concerned with not offending the nation’s ideological values, especially because they were allowed, by the government, to produce and exhibit films as long as they were in agreement with the upbeat mood with which the government wanted to fill the mind of the civilians. After the war, with the advent of television and middle class moving to suburban areas, the film industry went through a series of financial difficulties. What seemed to be a key entertainment element in American society

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[43] “o novo não está no que é dito, mas no acontecimento de sua volta”. [Translation by the author]

fell apart when television became affordable. "Thousands of movie theatres around the country closed their doors forever as it appeared that Americans after forty years had finally wearied of their fascinations with the motion picture" (PALMER, 1997, p. 210). Hollywood needed a different element to attract the audiences to the cinema. Therefore, with television taking the place of films as mass communication, the Production Code unfastened the belt for motion pictures, and finally film producers were able to make "art films", and not just futile entertainment. *A Streetcar Named Desire* was potentially attractive to filmgoers, though some of its content was considered inappropriate by the Production Code. However, as it was an independent production and very close in form and content to *Film Noir*, popular films at the time, the producers did not have much trouble passing through censorship, though some arrangements had to be made. "*Streetcar's* downbeat conclusion, in other words, would be acceptable to filmgoers used to similar portrayals of feminine misadventure. […] *A Streetcar Named Desire* was just similar enough to the Film Noir to be easily marketable" (PALMER, 1997, p. 216). Yet, some adjustments had to be made: Blanche's young husband's homosexuality was censored and her sexual desire for young boys had to be downplayed. Her infamous sexual history had to be suggested by nuances, but it did not compromise the work or Williams's view. The great battle over the film version occurred because of the rape scene, which the Production Code insisted on extinguishing. Kazan and Williams were able to keep it by means of a change in the last scene of the film, which may suggest that also the rapist would be punished at the end. When Stanley tries to console Stella, she angrily tells him to never touch her again. Then, when he cries for her, the same guttural cry from the poker night, she gets her baby and runs upstairs, to Eunice's, saying that she will never go back in again. Stella might not leave her husband, but the scene indicates that their bond is forever broken. Another difference is Mitch's reaction at the end. He does feel guilty for having humiliated Blanche, but also blames Stanley for her mental state. He punches Stanley and says "You did this to her!"

Definitely, the 1951 film version softens the play's sexuality very much, but it did not prevent the public to understand the deepness of the theme. The fact that they decided to keep practically the same cast, with the exception of Vivien Leigh in the role of Blanche instead of Jessica Tandy, minimized the changes in the script. Moreover, the soundtrack had great influence in the aura of sensuality that permeates the film. The music reminds us of jazz, but it is, in fact, a blending of jazz and classical music. Alex North, the composer responsible for the musical scores, was able to grasp the atmosphere of sensuality and decay from the French Quarter and reflects it in his music, especially in the introduction notes that open the film.

Those introduction notes served as base for the rest of the score, which served as a musical statement for the characters' psychological state, especially Blanche's.

Also, another element that kept the sensual aura present in the film was Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh's acting relation. Due to the star system[44], Vivien Leigh, who had performed Scarlet O'Hara, the ultimate Southern belle, in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), was chosen for the role of Blanche instead of the little known Jessica Tandy. Vivien Leigh had already performed Blanche in the English theatre, directed by her husband, Laurence Olivier. It is needless to say that Marlon Brando emanated sensuality through his pores, while Vivien Leigh, though portraying Blanche's affected manners, was a much more sexualized actress than Jessica Tandy, thus portraying Blanche as so, and not as the fragile moth which Williams intended. If Blanche as performed by Vivien Leigh is more sexually aggressive, Stanley as performed by Marlon Brando is more aggressively tender. His ambivalence of tenderness, vulnerability and violence, creates a character with whom the audience identifies. He is not the villain, entirely evil. He is a plain man, "common" as Blanche calls him. Afraid of showing his vulnerabilities, as his dependence on Stella, he acts aggressively. Violence is the way which he knows to communicate with the world. He is actually very close to the model of working-class male in the 1950s, which might even have provoked an acceptance of Stanley's violent actions. The truth is that, both in the play and the film, Williams draws back the spotlight from the female body, commonly portrayed by the *femme fatales* in Film Noirs, towards the eroticized male body. Blanche still is the *femme fatale* – she victimizes men with her sensuality and she is punished for her degenerate desires –, but her body is not emphasized. "The most important aspect of Williams's vision is that his male characters are less the bearers of sexual desire – the traditional male role in American theatre and film – and more its object, thereby assuming what is conventionally a female position" (PALMER, 1997, p. 220).

A Streetcar named Desire is close to Film Noir because of Blanche's transgressive femininity. In the postwar years, feminine sexual promiscuity was very close related to the breakdown of traditional family values, the absence of fathers, or the absence of a paternal role. When Blanche is talking about the loss of Belle Reve, she mentions that Stella left the place in the country right after their father's death. Stella left and was able to find a substitute for this paternal role in Stanley, which regulated her conduct and reaffirmed "the conformity to traditional norm of femininity" (CHOPRA-GANT, 2006, p.76). Blanche, on the other hand,

[44] Star system is a Hollywood device by which the studio creates personas for the actors and actresses (the lady, the *femme fatale*, the hero, the villain, etc.), thus making it easy for the public to recognize the pattern.

stayed in the South to face the deaths of the family, apparently without the presence of any male figure. Also, the suicide of her teenage husband had a major impact on her vision of sexuality. Blanche finds in sexual desire an opponent to death, but her carnal aspirations clash with her morality. Her condition as a single woman would not allow her to free her sexual desires. Actually sexual liberation for women, outside the conformity of marriage, was conquered mildly just after the 1960s. Consequently, Blanche got entangled by this conflict of moral values and the absence of a paternal role. She ended up disguising her sexual energy with exaggerated femininity, preaching old Southern traditional values, and playing the Southern belle. Desperately, Blanche searched for a male partner that would replace her moral values. Mitch would be her last chance of having a satisfying romantic relationship; he would, then, restore the patriarchal order. Still, her hope is aborted by Stanley. Stanley, in turn, also feels threatened in his manhood by Blanche's transgressive attitude. Blanche's escape from reality through her affected manners, her sophisticated language and her body movements, defies the patriarchal values of this place into which she sees herself trapped. Stanley tries to impose the patriarchal values by violating her, mentally and, finally, physically. In the film, Blanche, of course, is punished for her degenerate desire, and so is Stanley, for we do not know what the development of his relationship with Stella will be.

Film Noir is also reference to some of the shooting aspects of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Greatly influenced by German expressionist films from the 1920s, Film Noir repeats patterns of lighting, sound and structure, which reminds us of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927), and etc. Hollywood as well as Broadway were very much influenced by these films and by the filmmakers who moved to the United States, as it was already discussed in Chapter 2.

Although Marlon Brando's brilliant interpretation of Stanley might charm the audience, the play is still about Blanche's journey "into the broken world". The film is able to show Blanche's subjective point of view clearly. The film starts with the image of a locomotive approaching the station and Blanche coming out of the fog looking lost and distracted by all the confusion and people. A newly-married couple passes by without her noticing. She stops at a corner to look around; she stands by a young marine boy who offers help. Her first line recreates again her journey from desire to death.

During the first half of the play, while Blanche is still in control of the situation, the lighting is dim, focusing on the *chiaroscuro* style. Always with lanterns, candles, or matches reflecting her face gently. After Blanche's abortive birthday party, the apartment falls into complete darkness to counterpoint with Mitch humiliating her under the blinding light. With

the lights on, she finally "lays her cards on the table" and in a last attempt to win Mitch over, tells the whole truth about her past and her "encounters with strangers" including the seventeen-year old boy with whom she had fallen in love. After that she is seen, costumed like a princess, in the dark, until Stanley's arrival from hospital. From then on, the light will be on and this fact represents the moment of truth between both of them. In the rape scene, Blanche's instability and fear is shown through the jungle sounds of drums, and her mind state is stressed by the musical score. The rape scene is suppressed and it is suggested by the shattered mirror.

The *Varsouviana*, as well as the gunshot that ceases the polka, are also present in the film showing her remembrances of Allan and his tragic death. Other sound cues function as expressionist devices to show Blanche's psychological state. The screeching cat, when Blanche and Stanley first meet each other can be a representation of Stanley and Blanche's relationship, denoting sexual desire and fear at the same time. The church bells, which Blanche says are the only clean things in the Quarter, are the sign of purity which she looks for. The echoes of Stanley's and the Matron's voice that she hears in her mind when the Doctor comes to take her to the mental house denote her unstable mental state. All these devices cited above are apparent to the audience but not to the other characters, thus showing the director's will to demonstrate Blanche's feeling to the spectator and attempting to maintain the same expressionist tone of the play. Also, in the last scene, transparent curtains can be seen framing the camera. At this moment, Blanche is in evidence, while the other characters are portrayed behind the transparent curtains, thus indicating that the curtains are about to close and suggesting Blanche's final act as a performer.

The 1951 film version, directed by Elia Kazan, was not the sole adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. There is also the 1984 version made for television directed by John Erman[45], the 1995 television version directed by Glenn Jordan[46], and also the 1998 opera version composed and conducted by André Prévin. [47] After sixty-two years of its premiere, the play is still performed in several stages throughout the world. *A Streetcar Named Desire's* success is timeless and its importance to contemporary theatre, immeasurable.

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[45] The 1984 version won several awards, including a Golden Globe for Ann-Margret and four Emmy Awards for its production. It had Ann-Margret as Blanche, Treat Williams as Stanley Kowalski, Beverly D'Angelo as Stella, and Randy Quaid as Mitch.
[46] This version has Jessica Lange, Golden Globe winner for Best Performance by an Actress, plays the role of Blanche; Alec Baldwin performs Stanley; Diane Lane plays Stella, and John Goodman performs Mitch.
[47] Libretto by Philip Littell, and directed by Kirk Browning.

5 CONCLUSION

When starting a process of research, one is never absolutely sure where it will lead them to. As I began my research in the undergraduate course, I can say that the tracks of my thesis led me to a very different place from the one I had imagined to end up. Since I started this process, the only element that remained permanent was the primary source, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams. However, I believe that the changes and even the exceeding time I took to finish my work were necessary to its maturation. We might even say that a thesis is never finished, as well as any other written text because when a text is "thrown" into the world, new meanings are created and a number of other texts derive from it. Moreover, the involving topic of Expressionism in literature is fascinating and its development continual. However, all of us, researchers or students, are pressed for time, and thus this thesis must come to a conclusion point.

The importance of researching the influence of Expressionism in the American theatre lies in the fact that there is very little material written on the subject, focusing mainly in the 1920s and 1930s productions. When it comes to Tennessee Williams, the task becomes even more strenuous, summing up to short paragraphs on the topic. Therefore, in this thesis, most of the relations made about Expressionism and Tennessee Williams's plays are original. The scarce material also explains the historical journey presented in the thesis. The lack of sources made me feel insecure about the topic, thus encouraging me to create a timeline for the avant-garde movement, from its origins in Germany to its outcome in the United States. However, analyzing the German theatre of the beginning of the twentieth century proved to be a complicated assignment because of the difficulty in finding primary sources, the German plays, in English, Portuguese or Spanish.

The idea of connecting the different arts – painting, literature, theatre and cinema – seemed evident and promoted an enriching experience. By observing the narrator's "eye" that permeates an expressionist painting, novel, film or play, several assumptions on the importance of the narrator can be made. In the present thesis, subjectivity is examined in all these instances. The twentieth century is undoubtedly marked by its focus on multiple perspectives, thus multiple subjectivities: promoted by the advent of the new technologies invented at the end of the 19th century that became popularly used as household appliances and office devices in the beginning of the 20th century, thus changing massively the way that people related to each other in terms of communication, a task that involves subjective

comprehension. Therefore, the protagonist's struggle to adapt in a mechanized world that he or she does not understand – represented by verbal disarticulation, in the case of *The Adding Machine* and *Machinal*; and verborragic speech in the case of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* – is the reflect of a feeling of spiritual disharmony hanging on an era.

Furthermore, in Williams's plays, as well as in other works here discussed which contained expressionist elements, the erotic struggle for dominance is recurrent, recreating the gender antagonism of Oskar Kokoschka's *Murderer Hope of Women* (1909), and has its great example in the dichotomy between Blanche and Stanley. Moreover, the conflict between death instinct and desire instinct, personified mythologically by Eros and Thanatos, is also present in most expressionist plays, and is one of the aspects through which the approximation of Williams and Expressionism may be identified.

Needless to say that Tennessee Williams influenced a whole new generation of writers and readers, as well as filmmakers and film goers, since his plays adapted to the cinema were essential to the development of Hollywood industry. Therefore, the influence of Expressionism remains, as proved by the permanence of Film Noir characteristics in productions such as *Bound* (1996), *L.A. Confidential* (1997), *The man who wasn't there* (2001), *Sin City* (2005), *Black Dahlia* (2006), and *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006).

As for the theatre, Tennessee Williams's importance for the American stage is huge. Not only he influenced his contemporaries, such as Arthur Miller, but also opened new perspectives for the next generations of writers. His lyric point of view of wounded and marginalized characters is his trademark, but underneath the surface, what is most touching about his work is the fearless approach in which he deals with the sheer loneliness inherent to all his protagonists. The greatness of Tennessee Williams's work lies in his honest but lyric vision of reality. Unlike a magician that turns illusion into reality, he brings "truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion".

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