

ABSTRACT

Crises in the Plays of Tennessee Williams

This study explores the personal, social, sexual and psychological crises in the major plays of Tennessee Williams. Most of his plays are predominantly subjective in nature and various parallels can be drawn between his personal life and those of his protagonists. This study does not concentrate on the traditional approaches analyzing the autobiographical elements in his plays as a lot has been written in this regard. It concentrates on how the painful events of personal life and the suffering of humanity surrounding him affected Williams' sensitive nature and shaped his creative sensibilities. It explores how Williams and his protagonists recreate themselves when alienation and marginality overpower them. By drawing raw material from his personal life, Williams in fact proceeds from the personal to the general and probes into the universal human experience, and here he finds restlessness, chaos and anarchy because of the self-destructive and discordant human behavior. When the role of societal forces and instinctual forces is analyzed in his plays they seem to be marred by decay and decline because of this discord. This study spotlights how Williams and his fictive figures react to the bleak situation of human life as it is the least focused point in his plays. Most of his protagonists are rootless and fragile wanderers, maladjusted to the crushing realities of life. By employing the power of imagination they invent a fictive world of illusions, memories and dreams and do not desist from the act of inventing even when they find themselves in no-man's land. When their imagination fails to transcend the cruel constraints of the real world, alcohol, drugs and sexuality are the other tools of evasion for the protagonists as well as for their creator. They yearn for some savior when all weapons fail to control the uncontrollable, but their efforts yield no fruit. The points raised in this study may contribute to and extend the scope of the study, leaving at the same time room for further extensive study on these points. The flow of discussion here in this study moves as follows, Chapter 1 concentrates on the effects of the horrific age upon the plays of Williams. Chapter 2 focuses on how Williams becomes an actor in his own plays. Chapter 3 portrays the anxiety of the romantic souls entrapped in a soulless world. Chapter 4 highlights how sexuality leads to degeneration instead of regeneration. Time is presented as a destroyer of human hopes in chapter 5. Chapter 6 explores how the waiting for some savior continues. The purpose of including these points is to highlight the fact that Williams' world is marked by regression, death and decay because of his pessimistic vision about life.