

A Streetcar Named Desire Context

A Student Handbook to the Plays of Tennessee Williams provides the essential guide to Williams' most studied and revived dramas. Authored by a team of leading scholars, it offers students a clear analysis and detailed commentary on four of Williams' plays: *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. A consistent framework of analysis ensures that whether readers are wanting a summary of the play, a commentary on the themes or characters, or a discussion of the work in performance, they can readily find what they need to develop their understanding and aid their appreciation of Williams' artistry. A chronology of the writer's life and work helps to situate all his works in context and the introduction reinforces this by providing a clear overview of Williams' writing, its recurrent themes and concerns and how these are intertwined with his life and times. For each play the author provides a summary of the plot, followed by commentary on:

- * The context
- * Themes
- * Characters
- * Structure and language
- * The play in production (both on stage and screen adaptations)

Questions for study, and notes on words and phrases in the text are also supplied to aid the reader. The wealth of authoritative and clear commentary on each play, together with further questions that encourage comparison across Williams' work and related plays by other leading writers, ensures that this is the clearest and fullest guide to Williams' greatest plays.

Seminar paper from the year 2009 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,3, University of Wuppertal, course: American Literature, language: English, abstract: 1. In the play "A Streetcar Named Desire", written by Tennessee Williams, the

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protagonist Blanche DuBois comes to New Orleans to visit her sister Stella, who is married to the Pole Stanley Kowalski. Blanche's life has collapsed after the suicide of her husband Allan and the loss of the family estate Belle Reve. Blanche is not able to have a sexual relationship anymore and cannot understand the sexual connection between Stella and Stanley. She begins a romance with Mitch, one of Stanley's friends, but only with the aim of marrying him. But when he gets to know that she had affairs with strangers and with one of her students in the past, he is not willing to marry her anymore. At the end of the play, Blanche is raped by Stanley which leads to Blanche's final psychic collapse.

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Williams wrote: "This is a play about love in its purest terms."

It is also Williams's robust and persuasive plea for

endurance and resistance in the face of human suffering. The

earthy widow Maxine Faulk is proprietress of a rundown hotel at the edge of a Mexican cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean

where the defrocked Rev. Shannon, his tour group of ladies from a West Texas women's college, the self-described New

England spinster Hannah Jelkes and her ninety-seven-year-old grandfather, Jonathan Coffin ("the world's oldest living

and practicing poet"), a family of grotesque Nazi vacationers, and an iguana tied by its throat to the veranda, all find

themselves assembled for a rainy and turbulent night. This is

the first trade paperback edition of *The Night of the Iguana*

and comes with an Introduction by award-winning playwright

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Doug Wright, the author's original Foreword, the short story "The Night of the Iguana" which was the germ for the play, plus an essay by noted Tennessee Williams scholar, Kenneth Holditch. "I'm tired of conducting services in praise and worship of a senile delinquent—yeah, that's what I said, I shouted! All your Western theologies, the whole mythology of them, are based on the concept of God as a senile delinquent and, by God, I will not and cannot continue to conduct services in praise and worship of this...this...this angry, petulant old man." —The Rev. T. Lawrence Shannon, from *The Night of the Iguana*

In the middle of tending to the everyday business at her vintage-clothing shop and sidestepping her married boyfriend's attempts at commitment, Iris Lockhart receives a stunning phone call: Her great-aunt Esme, whom she never knew existed, is being released from Cauldstone Hospital—where she has been locked away for more than sixty-one years. Iris's grandmother Kitty always claimed to be an only child. But Esme's papers prove she is Kitty's sister, and Iris can see the shadow of her dead father in Esme's face. Esme has been labeled harmless—sane enough to coexist with the rest of the world. But she's still basically a stranger, a family member never mentioned by the family, and one who is sure to bring life-altering secrets with her when she leaves the ward. If Iris takes her in, what dangerous truths might she inherit? A gothic, intricate tale of family secrets, lost lives, and the freedom brought by truth, *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* will haunt you long past its final page.

Nicholas Grene explores the subject of domestic spaces in modern drama through close readings of nine major plays. Enable students to achieve their best grade in AS/A-level English Literature with this year-round course companion; designed to instil in-depth textual understanding as students

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read, analyse and revise *A Streetcar Named Desire* throughout the course. This Study and Revise guide: - Increases students' knowledge of *A Streetcar Named Desire* as they progress through the detailed commentary and contextual information written by experienced teachers and examiners - Develops understanding of characterisation, themes, form, structure and language, equipping students with a rich bank of textual examples to enhance their coursework and exam responses - Builds critical and analytical skills through challenging, thought-provoking questions and tasks that encourage students to form their own personal responses to the text - Extends learning and prepares students for higher-level study by introducing critical viewpoints, comparative references to other literary works and suggestions for independent research - Helps students maximise their exam potential using clear explanations of the Assessment Objectives, sample student answers and examiner insights - Improves students' extended writing techniques through targeted advice on planning and structuring a successful essay

A Streetcar Named Desire shows a turbulent confrontation between traditional values in the American South - an old-world graciousness and beauty running decoratively to seed - set against the rough-edged, aggressive materialism of the new world. Through the vividly characterised figures of Southern belle Blanche Dubois, seeking refuge from physical ugliness in decayed gentility, and her brutal brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski, Tennessee Williams dramatises his sense of the South's past as still active and often destructive in modern America. This revised edition features a new production history of

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the play that considers both stage and screen presentations, an updated bibliography and extensive notes on the language of the play.

Commentary and notes by Patricia Hern and Michael Hooper.

Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1, Technical University of Braunschweig, course: Proseminar, language: English, abstract: This paper deals with the symbolism in A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams. In this context, I will take a closer look at the different forms of symbolism. One major part of this paper is the meaning of the different characters in the play. Blanche, Stella and Stanley are the most important characters. Therefore I will analyze their symbolic function regarding to their character in general, their names and colors. Not only the characters carry a symbolic meaning, but also the different places mentioned in the play. The city of New Orleans is the larger setting of the action. I will analyze the meaning of the Elysian Fields, of Belle Reve and of New Orleans in general.

Diploma Thesis from the year 2002 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: B (2), University of Vienna (Institute for Anglistics/American Studies), 213 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Tennessee Williams is one of America's greatest playwrights whose talents of creating tension and atmosphere went beyond the

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metier of theatre and were convincing in the field of motion pictures, too. Elia Kazan, the successful theatre and film director, particularly admired the artist's gift of evoking emotions. In this thesis, however, I shall not attempt at evaluating Williams's total works. Rather, my object is a comparative analysis of select plays by Tennessee Williams and of their film adaptations: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947, 1951), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955, 1958), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959, 1962). Special attention has been given to examining the social differences in the plays and films. By focussing on the methods of characterisation employed I shall investigate more or less typical class representations in the two different media. I shall work out the social politics of the playwright, theatre and film directors, and - as far as possible - the actors' and actresses' contributions to the dramatic contents. The multitude of interpretations and variations usually gives proof to the value of artistic works. The methods applied in this thesis are literary research and film studies. As a matter of course, I analysed the plays on their written basis, which raises the general question to what extent the perceptions by the audience and the reader differ. 'The readers of a play must use their imagination to flesh out the characters, and to place them in an appropriate setting' (Sambrook, 6). Williams gives very precise and evocative stage directions, which help the reader to imagine the

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situations in many details. Meaning is often conveyed by poetic images. By employing figurative language he tries to 'paint a word picture or convey Presents a collection of ten critical essays on Williams's play "A Streetcar Named Desire" arranged in chronological order of publication.

Nine-year-old Meena can't wait to grow up and break free from her parents. But, as the daughter of the only Punjabi family in the mining village of Tollington, her struggle for independence is different from most.

In a terrifyingly short time, a male college instructor and his female student descend from a discussion of her grades into a modern reprise of the Inquisition. Innocuous remarks suddenly turn damning. Socratic dialogue gives way to heated assault. And the relationship between a somewhat fatuous teacher and his seemingly hapless pupil turns into a fiendishly accurate X ray of the mechanisms of power, censorship, and abuse.

Fifteen distinguished scholars contribute original essays that analyze A Streetcar Named Desire from various critical or cultural stances, methods, or modalities. Represented are the theories of Lacan and Foucault and the tenets of Marxism; the approaches of Feminism, Reader Response Criticism, Deconstructionism, Chaos and Anti-Chaos Theory, Translation Theory, Formalism, Mythology, Perception Theory, and Gender Theory; and the

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perceptions of Popular Culture, Film History and Theory, Southern Letters, and assorted cultural and regional studies. Viewing the play through multifaceted lenses, the essayists open up the script and expand our awareness of the problems and possibility offered by this great modern classic. Everything you need to know about WJEC Eduqas' A-Level English Literature paper on The Duchess of Malfi and A Streetcar Named Desire in one approachable and engaging study guide. Includes tips on how to meet each of the assessment objectives, detailed discussions of key themes, advice on how to write a good essay and a full exemplar answer. Whilst other textbooks give you a general overview of a course or subject, Notable guides focus closely on a specific exam board, taking you through their requirements and demands, so that you know exactly how to achieve the very best grade possible. For more information, visit us at www.notableguides.co.uk.

This film score handbook provides a detailed analysis of Alex North's astounding score for Elia Kazan's 1951 adaptation of A Streetcar Named Desire. Beginning with a review of North's musical training and film scoring techniques, the book then uses approaches from both musicology and film studies to present a comprehensive exploration of the film's (self-)censorship and its impact on North's music, most notably in the film's infamous staircase scene.

THE STORY: Kerr, in the NY Herald-Tribune, describes: This, says Mr. Williams through the most sympathetic voice among

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his characters, 'is a true story about the time and the world we live in.' He has made it seem true--or at least curiously and su

Introduced shortly after the United States declared its independence, poker's growth and development has paralleled that of America itself. As a gambling game with mass appeal, poker has been played by presidents and peasants, at kitchen tables and final tables, for matchsticks and millions. First came the hands, then came the stories – some true, some pure bluffs, and many in between. In *Poker & Pop Culture: Telling the Story of America's Favorite Card Game*, Martin Harris shares these stories while chronicling poker's progress from 19th-century steamboats and saloons to 21st-century virtual tables online, including: Poker on the Mississippi Poker in the Movies Poker in the Old West Poker on the Newsstand Poker in the Civil War Poker in Literature Poker on the Bookshelf Poker in Music Poker in the White House Poker on Television Poker During Wartime Poker on the Computer From Mark Twain to "Dogs Playing Poker" to W.C. Fields to John Wayne to *A Streetcar Named Desire* to the Cold War to Kenny Rogers to ESPN to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and beyond, *Poker & Pop Culture* provides a comprehensive survey of cultural productions in which poker is of thematic importance, showing how the game's portrayal in the mainstream has increased poker's relevance to American history and shaped the way we think about the game and its significance.

A comprehensive study guide offering in-depth explanation, essay, and test prep for selected works by Tennessee Williams, whose creative endeavors earned him two Pulitzer Prizes. Titles in this study guide include *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. As an author of southern gothic and memory literature, Williams had a significant impact on theater and has been established as one of

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America's most successful playwrights. Moreover, he brought symbolism and poetic language to the stage as his writing evolved. This Bright Notes Study Guide explores the context and history of Williams' classic work, helping students to thoroughly explore the reasons they have stood the literary test of time. Each Bright Notes Study Guide contains: - Introductions to the Author and the Work - Character Summaries - Plot Guides - Section and Chapter Overviews - Test Essay and Study Q&As The Bright Notes Study Guide series offers an in-depth tour of more than 275 classic works of literature, exploring characters, critical commentary, historical background, plots, and themes. This set of study guides encourages readers to dig deeper in their understanding by including essay questions and answers as well as topics for further research.

A true modern classic from one of the twentieth century's most significant writers, *Long Day's Journey into Night* is an intensely autobiographical, magnificently tragic portrait of the author's own family - a play so acutely personal that he insisted it was not published until after his death. One single day in the Tyrone's Connecticut home. James Tyrone Snr is a miser, a talented actor who even squanders his talent in an undemanding role; eldest son Jamie is an affable, whoremongering alcoholic and confirmed ne'er-do well; youngest son Edmund is poetic, sensitive, suffering from a respiratory condition and deep-seated disillusionment; and their mother Mary, living in a haze of self-delusion and morphine addiction. Existing together under this roof, and the profound weight of the past, they subtly tear one another apart, shred by shred. 'Set in 1912, the year of O'Neill's own attempted suicide, it is an attempt to understand himself and those to whom he was irrevocably tied by fate and by love. It is the finest and most powerful play to have come out of America' Christopher Bigsby Eugene O'Neill's play *Long*

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Day's Journey into Night was written in 1939-41, and first published in 1956 (after O'Neill's death in 1953). It was first performed at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, in February 1956, and had its first American production at Helen Hayes Theater, New York, in November that year. It won the Tony Award for Best Play, and O'Neill was posthumously awarded the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. This edition includes a full introduction, biographical sketch and chronology.

Rewritten and redesigned in full-colour, A4 format, this new York Notes for GCSE edition of An Inspector Calls will help your students achieve the best possible grade. Written by GCSE examiners to give all students an expert understanding of the text and the exam, it includes:

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- * A wealth of useful content including key quotes, checklists, study tips and short activities that will help students revise efficiently and remember everything they need to write the best answers.
- * The widest coverage with in-depth analysis of character, themes, language, context and style, all helping students to succeed in the exam by demonstrating how well they understand the text.

A Streetcar Named Desire. This updated edition is ideal to support students when studying and revising for the new A level English Literature exams.

The Pulitzer Prize and Drama Critics Circle Award winning play. A Streetcar Named Desire is the tale of a catastrophic confrontation between fantasy and reality, embodied in the characters of Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski. Fading southern belle Blanche DuBois is adrift in the modern world. When she arrives to stay with her sister Stella in a crowded, boisterous corner of New Orleans, her delusions of grandeur

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bring her into conflict with Stella's crude, brutish husband Stanley Kowalski. Eventually their violent collision course causes Blanche's fragile sense of identity to crumble, threatening to destroy her sanity and her one chance of happiness.

Abstract: The partnership between Tennessee Williams and Jo Mielziner has been studied to reexamine the success of Williams's plays. Although there has been extensive scholarship on the works of Tennessee Williams, less attention has been paid to the performance aspect, in particular the design aspect of the productions. However, it is significant that the most successful plays of Williams emerged from his collaboration with Jo Mielziner, whose simultaneous set design and creative lighting effects not only contributed to bring out the drama within the plays, but also became classics in the history of theatre design. The partnership between Williams and Mielziner is more intriguing when viewed within the context of the following factors: Williams's symbolic description of light in his plays, Mielziner's design career as one of the pioneers of modern lighting design in America, the development in the lighting industry since the end of the nineteenth century, and the history and experimenting with dramaturgical light in the theatre that dates back to the end of nineteenth century. Although the partnership between a playwright and a designer is not a new phenomenon in the theatre history, the collaboration between Williams and Mielziner is unique in that with Williams's visual sensibility and Mielziner's fascination with the kinetic scenery and his understanding of literature, they both transcended their designated roles and merged their art on a higher level. In other words, Williams dramatized the image of light with his language, while Mielziner used his design not only to visualize the image of light but also to create spatial and temporal order on the stage that dramatized the literature. A

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detailed study of their early works, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* has been carried out in this context to demonstrate the meaning of light in the theatre of Tennessee Williams and Jo Mielziner.

Written by experienced A-level examiners and teachers who know exactly what students need to succeed, and edited by a chief examiner, Philip Allan Literature Guides (for A-level) are invaluable study companions with exam-specific advice to help you to get the grade you need. This full colour guide includes: - detailed scene summaries and sections on themes, characters, form, structure, language and contexts - a dedicated 'Working with the text' section on how to write about texts for coursework and controlled assessment and how to revise for exams - Taking it further boxes on related books, film adaptations and websites - Pause for thought boxes to get you thinking more widely about the text - Task boxes to test yourself on transformation, analysis, research and comparison activities - Top 10 quotes PLUS FREE REVISION RESOURCES at

www.philipallan.co.uk/literatureguidesonline, including a glossary of literary terms and concepts, revision advice, sample essays with student answers and examiners comments, interactive questions, revision podcasts, flash cards and spider diagrams, links to unmissable websites, and answers to tasks set in the guide.

Bachelor Thesis from the year 2017 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, RWTH Aachen University (Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Romanistik der RWTH Aachen), language: English, abstract: The goal of the paper is to identify features relating to homosexual identity, based on a characterization of Williams's female characters. Among other studies, Tennessee Williams's work has commonly been researched from a gay study perspective by literary scholars and queer

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theorists. The motive for that was mostly Williams's own homosexuality and the stigma that surrounded the issue around the time he published his most famous pieces. He has written plays which explicitly involve the topic of homosexuality, as the eminent *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, but most of his work does not embrace homosexuality precisely. Nevertheless, on the grounds that literary studies is fairly limitless, for literature provides many different fields for analyses, it is possible to involve literary pieces into the field of gay studies, even though it initially does not specify the matter. The arguably most interesting element in Tennessee Williams's drama are his characters, many of whom seem to share similar characteristics as struggling individuals. Analyzing the fictional characters with regard to gay writing could help find a possible pattern, draw conclusions about the influence of Williams's personality, and thus, support the assumption that homosexuality is integrated in his plays. Gender is also fundamental for an approach based on sexuality. Taking that into consideration, below, the focus will be on Williams's female characters, especially on the protagonists Laura Wingfield from *The Glass Menagerie* and Blanche DuBois from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. These women are not necessarily gay themselves; in the plays, there is no clear evidence about them being sexually or romantically attracted to the same sex. Instead, sexuality is a broad concept with more meanings attached to it, which will further be discussed in the third chapter.

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They had entertained a good deal during the winter; much of the time had also been passed in New Orleans in various forms of mild dissipation. She was looking forward to a period of unbroken rest, now, and undisturbed *tete-a-tete* with her husband, when he informed her that Gouvernail was coming up to stay a week or two. This was a man she had heard

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much of but never seen. He had been her husband's college friend; was now a journalist, and in no sense a society man or "a man about town," which were, perhaps, some of the reasons she had never met him. But she had unconsciously formed an image of him in her mind. She pictured him tall, slim, cynical; with eye-glasses, and his hands in his pockets; and she did not like him. Gouvernail was slim enough, but he wasn't very tall nor very cynical; neither did he wear eyeglasses nor carry his hands in his pockets. And she rather liked him when he first presented himself. But why she liked him she could not explain satisfactorily to herself when she partly attempted to do so. She could discover in him none of those brilliant and promising traits which Gaston, her husband, had often assured her that he possessed. On the contrary, he sat rather mute and receptive before her chatty eagerness to make him feel at home and in face of Gaston's frank and wordy hospitality. His manner was as courteous toward her as the most exacting woman could require; but he made no direct appeal to her approval or even esteem.

Gentlemen Callers provides a fascinating look at America's greatest twentieth-century playwright and perhaps the most-performed, even today. Michael Paller looks at Tennessee Williams's plays from the 1940s through the 1960s against the backdrop of the playwright's life story, providing fresh details. Through this lens Paller examines the evolution of mid-twentieth-century America's acknowledgment and acceptance of homosexuality. From the early one-act *Auto-da-Fé* and *The Glass Menagerie* through *Camino Real*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Garden District* and the late *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, Paller's book investigates how Williams's earliest critics marginalized or ignored his gay characters and why, beginning in the 1970s, many gay liberationists reviled them. Lively, blunt, and provocative, this book will appeal to anyone who loves Williams, Broadway, and the theater.

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Born out of the journals the playwright kept at the time, Tennessee Williams's *Vieux Carré* is not emotion recollected in tranquility, but emotion re-created with all the pain, compassion, and wry humor of the playwright's own 1938-39 sojourn in the New Orleans French Quarter vividly intact. The drama takes its form from the shifting scenes of memory, and Williams's surrogate self invites us to focus, in turn, on the various inhabitants or his dilapidated rooming house in the Vieux Carré: the comically desperate landlady, Mrs. Wire; Jane, a properly brought-up young woman from New York making at last grab at pleasure with Tye, the vulgar but appealing strip-joint barker; two decayed gentlewomen politely starving in the garret; and the dying painter Nightingale, who tries to teach the young writer something about love--both of the body and of the heart. This is a play about the education of the artist, and education in loneliness and despair, in giving and not giving, but most of all in seeing, hearing, feeling, and learning that "writers are shameless spies," who pay dearly for their knowledge and who cannot forget. Building on two decades of Williams scholarship since *Vieux Carré* was originally published, Robert Bray, editor of *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, has provided a new introduction for this edition, giving the most authoritative account yet of its background and genesis.

A Study Guide for Tennessee Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire," excerpted from Gale's acclaimed *Novels for Students*. This concise study guide includes plot summary; character analysis; author biography; study questions; historical context; suggestions for further reading; and much more. For any literature project, trust *Novels for Students* for all of your research needs.

"A Reader's Companion to Tennessee Williams's 'A Streetcar Named Desire'" is designed to assist the student as well as the scholar in studying this venerable American play. The

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book includes an introduction to "Streetcar" and Williams's work in general; a listing of all Williams's plays and screenplays, in addition to a chronology of his writing of "Streetcar"; a timeline of significant historical and cultural events surrounding the writing and production of the play; a description of the characters in "Streetcar" and a synopsis of its action; explanatory notes to accompany any reading of the play; an essay on the biographical context, bibliographic history, chief theatrical productions, and film-and-television versions of "A Streetcar Named Desire"; production reviews of the play and the film of "Streetcar"; a survey of criticism on "Streetcar"; and production credits of the original 1947 production of the play and of its 1951 film version. In short, "A Reader's Companion to Tennessee Williams's 'A Streetcar Named Desire'" is an indispensable guide to the socio-political, biographical, and artistic context of what is probably the greatest American drama written to date.

Seminar paper from the year 1999 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 2 (B), Ruhr-University of Bochum (English Seminar), course: Hauptseminar: Modern American Drama, 14 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: In this written paper I am going to deal with the topic of soft people in Tennessee Williams' dramas. First I will give a general introduction to the quality of soft people. It will be explained what kind of characters are described with this term. A general characterization of them, of the other characters and the general idea and image of the world which is created in Williams' dramas will be given. Afterwards the results will be specified at the examples of four characters belonging to the category of soft people. At the end of this paper I will give a personal evaluation of the conception of the soft people.

Seminar paper from the year 2010 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0,

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University of Wuppertal, course: Selected American Plays, language: English, abstract: In this paper I want to pay special attention to what I titled “the two faces of Blanche DuBois”: she pretends to be innocent and good while she actually has a very striking past implying death, unhappy sexual relationships and alcoholic abuse, which she wants to hide from other people and which causes her to be on a desperate quest for somebody who sees her as something special and who unconditionally loves and protects her. In my analysis of Blanche DuBois I am going to observe her outer appearance, her behavior concerning men and I am going to discuss the meaning of different themes in the play such as bathing, light or alcohol.

Bachelor Thesis from the year 2003 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7 (A-), University of Bayreuth (Faculty for Language and Literature Sciences), 28 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Tennessee Williams has often been called the American national poet of the perverse and a dirty writer because a recurrent theme in his work is sexual deviation, such as nymphomania, promiscuity, rape, impotence, homosexuality, profligacy, frigidity, cannibalism, and castration (Bauer-Briski 11). This statement clearly suggests the controversy with which Tennessee Williams' dramas were perceived by the public and the critics. It is well known that conflicts on these issues can be found in many of his plays. This raises the question as to what extent these conflicts are related to specific gender roles and their subordinate themes. Williams once said that he has never written about anything he has not experienced first hand, thus most of the conflict issues can be considered to be autobiographical to a certain extent. As Williams' childhood was restricted to a rather reclusive life due to diphtheria, which forced him to spend almost his entire childhood at home with his family, the experiences with his

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mother, father and sister shaped not only his character, but also the themes in his plays. His upbringing was characterised by Puritanism which was of vital importance in his family. His mother later became the model for his antiquated Southern Belles and overprotective mothers in the plays. His boisterous father was perceived as a frightening and alien male presence by him, his sister and his mother. He later became the model for the same type of harsh, brutal characters in his plays, such as Big Daddy and Stanley Kowalski (Falk 155 f). Yet, not only his Puritan upbringing shaped his life, but also the fact that he grew up in the South of the United States, in the Mississippi Delta, and the region's heat, its storms, floods, the division into social classes, the colourful imagery and rhythms of the language were to shape his setting and dialogue (Tischler 2). The uniqueness of the South along with its cultural and social characteristics is embodied in many of his plays, and the social roles appointed to the people living there offers an extensive basis of analysis for not only gender roles, but also the related conflicts. In addition to this, Williams was known as being homosexual and leading a very promiscuous life, especially with men much younger than him (Bauer-Briski 11).

The very title of *Sweet Bird of Youth* is one of ironic pity. The two chief characters--a raddled has-been actress from Hollywood, seeking to forget her present in drugs and sex, and her still handsome masseur-gigolo, who has brought her to his hometown in the South, believing that through her money and faded glamor his gaudy illusions may yet come true--are the reverse side of the American dream of youth. Yet as they work out their fate amid violence and horror, there is nevertheless a note of compassion for the damned. Maggie the Cat fights for the lives of her damaged and drinking husband Brick, herself, and their unborn children in

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the revised version of Williams' acclaimed dramatization of Big Daddy's birthday and deathday party and family gathering. Few figures in film and theater history tower like Elia Kazan. Born in 1909 to Greek parents in Istanbul, Turkey, he arrived in America with incomparable vision and drive, and by the 1950s he was the most important and influential director in the nation, simultaneously dominating both theater and film. His productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman* reshaped the values of the stage. His films -- most notably *On the Waterfront* -- brought a new realism and a new intensity of performance to the movies. Kazan's career spanned times of enormous change in his adopted country, and his work affiliated him with many of America's great artistic moments and figures, from New York City's Group Theatre of the 1930s to the rebellious forefront of 1950s Hollywood; from Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy to Marlon Brando and James Dean. Ebulient and secretive, bold and self-doubting, beloved yet reviled for "naming names" before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Kazan was an individual as complex and fascinating as any he directed. He has long deserved a biography as shrewd and sympathetic as this one. In the electrifying *Elia Kazan*, noted film historian and critic Richard Schickel illuminates much more than a single astonishing life and life's work: He pays discerning tribute to the power of theater and film, and casts a new light on six crucial decades of American history.

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