Practitioner's Corner

Psychodrama and Theater: If J. L. Moreno and Tennessee Williams Were to Meet

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to examine the split between psychodrama and theater by looking at two prominent creators in these fields: Jacob Levy Moreno and Tennessee Williams. Surveying their chronology revealed interesting common milestones, and reading about their ideas and guiding principles in their work suggests a deep understanding of their counterpart, in spite of the marked differences between them. Moreno's psychodramas are never pre-planned, while Williams' plays are performed by actors who follow a pre-written text. As a psychiatrist, Moreno developed the theory that spontaneity is a precursor to creativity. Thus, he created structured techniques to enhance spontaneity in groups, which were the settings for the enactments. In theater plays, Williams was a spontaneous force who was praised for his creativity as a poetic playwright. His actors followed his own creativity. Sources of creativity are also mentioned, even though these emerged from differing physical, emotional and cultural places. It seems important to trace Moreno's and Williams' development into becoming giant creators. That includes sources of inspiration and dealing with significant challenges throughout their lives. This article is written by a psychodramatist for the psychodrama community, with the hope that learning about Tennessee Williams and reading his poems, plays and books will enhance our own work. Their ideas about creativity and about its roles in life are surprisingly similar, as if they are meeting in these pages, posthumously.

KEYWORDS: Jacob Levy Moreno; poetic playwrighting; Tennessee Williams; therapeutic theater

With gratitude to Thomas Keith, for the inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a rift between performance theater and psychodrama, although classical Greek theater was an early source of influence in the development of psychodrama. Some of the differences are stark: in theater, the directors and actors follow a written play. In psychodrama, nothing is pre-scripted and the

director, upon listening to the narrative of the protagonists and getting their consent, suggests relevant scenes and enacts them without delay. As a method of group psychotherapy, psychodrama helps group members enter the realm of their own truth, aiming toward healing. Other methods of group psychotherapy have similar goals, but the means are primarily by talking. If talking may be equated with writing prose, psychodrama is the equivalent of playwrighting, and more: staging the drama and acting in various roles. All this is done in the moment, knowing that spontaneity fuels the co-creative process. Participants in psychodrama do not have to be professional actors; role training to play various roles is done on the spot, and the goal is not about performance, but rather in service of helping protagonists deal with issues and resolve inter-personal or intra-psychic conflicts. When the protagonists are chosen sociometrically (by the group), they represent an identification by the majority of the group and thus receive the support needed to play out their problems or concerns.

Practitioners of drama therapy—another method related to psychodrama—are more closely aligned with performance theater than are psychodramatists. Drama therapists are required to train in improvisational theater and the dramatic arts. They also utilize theatrical media, like masks or puppets, and engage in story-telling and story dramatization. Conducting sessions with prepared texts is not foreign for them (Landy, 1993, 1994).

The similarities and the differences between theater and psychodrama are examined in this article by looking at the life and work of two creative geniuses in their respective fields: Jacob Levi Moreno and Tennessee Williams. They never met (Moreno, J. D., 2025), but there are some parallels in their approach to life and to their pioneering endeavors. A great deal has been written by psychodramatists about the life of Moreno, as it shaped his creations (Moreno, J. D., 2014; Moreno, J. L. & Moreno, Z. T., 1959; Moreno, J. L., 1972; Moreno, J. L., 1994; Moreno, J. L., 2011; Blatner, 2000; Marineau, 2014; Dayton, 1994; Dayton, 2015; Gershoni, 2003; Gershoni, 2024; Gershoni, 2025; Giacomucci, 2021). Similarly, volumes were published about and by Williams, although nothing seems to have been presented in connective ways between them. The main focus here is on common threads in the oeuvre of Williams, including ideas and techniques that are often utilized in psychodrama. Both Moreno and Williams were visionaries, self-made men, whose work broke the mold of what had been known in their respective fields. This article is geared toward psychodramatists, who are familiar with the history of J. L. Moreno. Therefore, more details about the life of Tennessee Williams are offered, as well as many quotes of his unusual, artistic and rich writing.

Moreno, who created the Theatre of Spontaneity in Vienna in 1921, later called it Impromptu Theater and Therapeutic Theater. He studied the history of theater in ancient societies through modern times (Moreno, 1994, pp. 33–46; Moreno, J. D., 2014), but his preference was to work in spontaneous action; he concluded that:

> Impromptu is not a substitute for the theatre, but an independent art form. (…) Actions, related to the spontaneity drama, were the

> reservoir from which "great" poets drew. The impromptu play is indeed more closely related to the poet than to the theatre… (p. 33)

Both Moreno and Williams engaged in poetry, and published books of poetry (Moreno, 1941) Williams (1964).

PARALLEL MILESTONES

Jacob Levy Moreno was born Jacob Moreno Levy in Bucharest, Romania in 1889.

Tennessee Williams was born Thomas (Tom) Lanier Williams, in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi, USA.

- Both had a rich imagination, expressed already in childhood in story-telling and play. Tom, at age three, was under the spell of his caretaker, Ozzie, who told him and his sister, Rose, imaginary tales. At that time, in a family gathering around the fire, the adults were telling adventure stories. When they goaded Tom to tell one himself, he obliged and talked about being lost in the woods, surrounded by fierce animals. Suddenly he stopped: "it's getting scary; I scared myself" (Leverich, 1995, p. 40).

When Jacob Moreno was four and a half, he gathered a group of children in the basement of his home. When one child suggested they play God and angels, Jacob took on the role of God, stacking chairs on top of a table, while the other children circled the table, flapping their imaginary wings. Sitting on top, he also tried to fly and ended on the floor with a broken arm (Marineau, 2014). Other common milestones:

- Two years prior to playing God, Moreno contracted rickets (a bone disease), almost died but was saved by a gypsy healer. Williams, at age five, almost died of diphtheria—a disease affecting the upper respiratory tract—and was bed-ridden for a year.
- Both experienced family relocations: When Moreno was five years old, his family moved to Vienna, Austria, then to Chemnitz, Germany, and later returned to Vienna. The Williams family moved in 1913 to Tennessee, where Tom's maternal grandfather Reverend Dakin was the head of a local church. A year later, Tom's father, Cornelius, took a job as a travelling salesman for the International Shoe Company, based in St. Louis. Prior to that, he worked as a salesman for the Gulfport Telephone and Telegraph Company. The relocations were due to their fathers' respective jobs as salesmen. Both were often absent from their homes and were reputed to have had affairs with other women (Moreno, J. D. 2014), (Leverich. 1995).
- Both changed their birth names. Jacob Levy, as a teenager, adopted his father's middle name. This was significant not only as an act of rebellion against his father, who abandoned the family, but also by taking on the "Moreno", he viewed himself as a leader in his own family, whose origin was Sephardic Jewish. Morénu, in Hebrew, means "our teacher." The young Moreno always aspired to be a leader in whatever group that he was affiliated with. In Williams'

case, he adopted the name Tennessee in 1939. Having graduated from the University of Iowa, he submitted plays with that name, honoring the legacy of his grandfather Dakin, whose ancestors were from Tennessee. Williams, too, exhibited traits of a leader. Already in high school, while writing for the school's newspaper, he was described an independent thinker who wrote original articles and did not follow the writing of others, neither in substance nor in style.

- *The Living Newspaper.* In 1921, Moreno started presenting enactments of the Living Newspaper, staging current events with the participation of the audience. Williams, as a student in the Dramatics Department of the University of Iowa, wrote weekly scripts for the Living Newspaper. One of the first such tasks was a mock trial of the Ku Klux Klan, in which Williams played a role.
- Financial help from family members. On some occasions, when Moreno ran out of money, his brother William helped him. This was pronounced when he immigrated to New York and later when he started leading open sessions in a small theater at Carnegie Hall. Williams submitted poems and short stories for publications at a young age. Later, working in odd jobs, he experienced long periods of barely scraping by. His grandparents, and at times his mother, would send him money.
- Both Moreno and Williams had the gift of forming relationships and networking, i.e., sociometric intelligence (Gershoni, 2025).
- Both had a special affinity for the outsiders, the most vulnerable and outcast in society.

Other parallels between Moreno and Williams are noted in the text about their work, guiding values and ideas.

For Williams, in 1939 there was the first break from the hand-to-mouth existence. He received a telegram that his series of one-act plays *American Blues* won a special prize of one hundred dollars by The Group Theater. Molly Day Thatcher, who was the wife of Director Elia Kazan, recommended the play. She also introduced him to Audrey Wood, who became his agent. Soon afterward, he started receiving other awards and won contracts to produce his plays and, later, also his film scripts.

The greatest turning point in Williams' career occurred in 1944, when his play *The Glass Menagerie* premiered in Chicago to rave reviews. A year later, it moved to Broadway, the pinnacle of the theater world, and to this day it is taught and played all over the world.

PIONEERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS

Psychodramatists have an extensive body of work about J. L. Moreno. He was a pioneer in the field of psychotherapy and did not follow prevailing thoughts emerging from psychoanalysis (Marineau, 2014; Gershoni, 2024, & 2025). He experimented with his own ideas, put them into action, and was a trailblazer in group psychotherapy, psychodrama, sociometry, family therapy and systemic thought. Moreno was also the first mental health professional who explored ideas

about creativity and developed techniques to enhance creativity in work and everyday life (Blatner, 2000). For Moreno, creativity was an essential element of mental health and well-being.

Tennessee Williams, considered by many the greatest American playwright of the 20th century, revolutionized theater. As playwright Arthur Miller (Williams, T., 2004a) wrote:

> No play in the modern theatre has captured the imagination and heart of the American public as Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. As Williams' first popular success, it launched the brilliant (…) career of our pre-eminent lyric playwright. (Williams, T. 1999, Back cover).

Acknowledged by Williams, this play is a depiction of his own family in St. Louis in the 1930's during the Great Depression. Some details are altered, and the names of the characters—except for Tom—are changed as well. His mother, Edwina, is named Amanda Wingfield. Described as a faded southern belle whose husband left her with her son, Tom, and her daughter, Laura (Rose in real life), Amanda is both intrusive, domineering and an anxious mother, who hopes to match her daughter with an eligible "gentleman caller." Laura, lame and painfully shy, evades her mother's schemes and reality by retreating to a world of make-believe. The narrator, Tom, is the sole support of the family on his meagre monthly income of sixty-five dollars. Eager to get out, he eventually leaves home to become a writer but is forever haunted by the memory of Laura, who sinks further into isolation and mental illness. In this cramped apartment, the three members of this family seem to search for ways out, to function freely, without success.

Miller (2004b) viewed *Glass Menagerie* as a triumph of fragility, and thus was at odds with what had been common in American theater. If past playwrighting focused on structure and a thematic problem, this play had no structure; its lyricism was its structure. The lines are fluent, idiomatic and rhythmically composed, poetic and soulful. Robert Bray (Williams, T., 1999, pp. vii–xv), the founding director of the Tennessee Williams Scholar Conference, examines the enduring prominence of *The Glass Menagerie* as it became a new force in theater globally. He attributes it to the romantic lyricism, which also transcends cultural differences. This play has been translated into many languages, and its lyricism is viewed as a language of the soul.

THE UNENDING CREATIVE PROCESS OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

Williams was known to revise his plays and change them up until and during rehearsals. Some of the changes were suggested by directors, like Elia Kazan, who collaborated with him on some of the best-known productions in the theater and in films. Some were initiated by Williams, as he was looking for precision in the written words to depict the characters being portrayed. In a parallel process to the formulations of Moreno's Canon of Creativity, Williams also saw it as

unending. Gore Vidal, Williams' friend and colleague, writes in the introduction to Williams' collected stories (1985, p. xx):

> Over the decades I watched Tennessee at work in Rome, Paris, Key West, New Haven (…). He worked every morning on whatever was at hand. If there was no play to be finished or a dialogue to be sent round to the theater, he would open a drawer and take out the draft of a story already written and begin to rewrite it. I once caught him in the act of revising a story that had just been published. "Why," I asked, "rewrite what's already in print?" He looked at me vaguely and said, "Well, obviously it's not finished." And went back to his typing.

In the introduction to the play *Cat on A Hot Tin Roof*, playwright Edward Albee (Williams, 2004, pp. 7–9) writes about the many versions of that play. Those changes made the play more structurally sound and forward moving, and also more commercially viable, even if Williams initially objected to them. Similarly, *The Glass Menagerie* was written in 1943 as a short story *Portrait of a Girl in Glass* (Williams, 1985, pp. 111–119). Almost simultaneously, it was transformed into a one-act comedy *The Pretty Trap* (Keith, T., Ed., 2011, pp. 141–166). The next incarnation was a screenplay named *A Gentleman Caller*, which was rejected by MGM studio, and Williams changed it to *The Glass Menagerie.*

The short stories served as Warm-Ups toward the final versions. The various modifications and changes took place up until performance time and are a tribute to Williams' rich imagination and creativity. It comes close to presenting work in the moment, being spontaneous. He drew inspiration from people near him and situations that he observed.

> "People have said and said and said that my work is too personal: and I have persistently countered that charge with my assertion that all true work of an artist must be personal, whether directly or obliquely, it must and it does reflect the emotional climates of its creator. (Williams, T. 2006. p. 188).

On other occasions, Williams acknowledged that he saw himself in every person that he created in his plays, male or female. Identification with them was both difficult and even exhausting, but equally therapeutic. In essence, it seems that he was writing his own dramas, as reflected in his article *The World I Live In* (Williams, T., 2004a, pp. 181–184). In it, Williams interviews himself. This interview has the quality of monodrama or autodrama, where the protagonist plays all roles, whether in the presence of a group or individually, in the therapist's office. It begins with the "agreement" with himself to be frank and then proceeds to ask difficult questions of himself, as if he is talking to his alter-ego. Williams acknowledges in this interview that writing has been a kind of psychotherapy for him.

ARTISTIC INCLINATIONS & EXPLORATION OF THE SELF

In junior high school, Williams chose elective classes in Latin and art, emulating his maternal grandfather, who was a gifted orator knowledgeable in the "Classics." Already then, writing for the school newspaper, Tom Williams showed creative promise. He wrote stories based on his own life and from his own fertile imagination.

That tendency was already evident earlier:

> From early childhood, when he would close his eyes and see pictures, Tom displayed an extraordinary visual imagination not only in his storytelling—a tiny landscape done when he was five prefigured what would become a lifelong interest in painting. (Leverich, 1995 p. 65).

Like with painting, structuring the roles of characters in his plays, they are always multidimensional. For example, he describes the role of Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*:

> A great woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. Her characterization must be carefully created, not copied from type. She is not paranoic, but her life is paranoia. There is much to admire in Amanda, and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at. Certainly, she has endurance and a kind of heroism, and though her foolishness makes her unwittingly cruel at times, there is tenderness in her slight person. (Williams, T. 1999, p. xviii)

Activating the imagination and visualizing dramas and scenes are essentially what psychodrama directors do as they listen to the narrative of protagonists. Then, as the dramas are enacted, group members play various roles, and the working assumption is that we are all role-players in life.

As carefully crafted are the role descriptions, such is also the case when Williams writes about himself and those who were close to him. The uncompromising honesty with which he describes his relationship with his family members and with his long-time lover, Frank Merlo, is uncanny. With the latter, he paints a picture filled with love, affection, mutual care, and also jealousy, quarrels, regrets and more. After being together for fifteen years, they separated following a fight. Merlo left him in Key West and moved to New York. A few years later—in 1963—he died of lung cancer. In spite of quarrels and the tumultuous intimate relationship, he wrote in grieving the loss:

> It is difficult to write about a profound, virtually clinical depression, because when you are in that state, everything is observed through a dark glass which not only shadows but distorts all that is seen. It's also hazardous to write about it, since the germ of it still lingers

> in your system and it could be activated by thinking back on it. (Williams, T. 2006. p. 202)

Preoccupation—and at times obsession—with death accompanied Williams throughout his life. Especially pronounced was the fear of suffocation, perhaps related to the childhood affliction with diphtheria. He also feared that what occurred with Rose, who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, would be his lot in life.

SCENE SETTING AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Scene setting is an important technique at the beginning of each enactment in psychodrama. Its purpose is to invite the audience and the participants into the scene that is about to be created and to set the tone, the pace and the mood. In *The Glass Menagerie*, the reader is introduced by the narrator, Tom, who also narrates the end of the play. The playwright Terrence McNally (Keith, 2011) observes that the narration is in an extraordinary poetic language that provides the frame to the play and the rich language in it. This is a language that evokes emotions—and possible identification of the audience with the characters. In the following quotes, the narrator sets the scene and also goes beyond mere presentation: he offers an inner soliloquy as if doubling for himself (Williams, 1999, pp. 4 & 5):

> Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

The narrator then describes the social and time context, infused with poetic language:

> To begin with, I turn back the time. I reverse back to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they failed their eyes, and so they had their fingers forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.
>
> In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis…

The narrator then goes on to introduce the characters in this play: his family. The context is quite depressing: a crowded apartment with a fire escape, to which the narrator resorts to be with his own thoughts and away from his mother, while his sister sinks deeply into her own make-believe world. Their father has vanished sixteen years prior to the time of the play, and the family is supported by Tom's paltry income. He works as a clerk in the warehouse of the

shoe company, a job that he abhors and is about to leave. Mother has tried to help her daughter learn some business skills, but all efforts have failed. She sees the only hope in introducing her to a "gentleman caller" who may marry her and thus provide some sense of security. Asking Tom if he can find a suitable man to introduce to Laura, she talks to a co-worker at the warehouse and invites him to dinner at their home. Amanda feverishly puts a great deal of effort into decorating the home, preparing dinner and wearing a beautiful dress, and makes sure that Laura looks her best as well.

The stage directions are also an integral part of the scene setting. Williams details those with utmost care: the clothes they wear, how they move, the dim lighting and music to match the downcast mood.

THE USE OF INANIMATE OBJECTS

The preface to his collected stories (1985, p. vii) is a short story titled "*The Man in the Overstuffed Chair*." It focuses on his father, Cornelius Williams, vividly describing how abusive and rageful he had been, except after drinking:

> He always enters the house as though he were entering it with the intention of tearing it down from inside. That is how he always enters it except, when after midnight and liquor has put out the fire in his nerves. Then he enters the house in a strikingly different manner, almost guiltily, coughing a little, sighing louder than he coughs, and sometimes talking to himself as someone talks to someone after a long, fierce argument has exhausted the anger between them but not settled the problem…

This reads as if it also is part of the stage direction for the person who is to play his father, with the poetic nuances that Williams has become so famous for. He then Focuses on (p. x):

> (…) This overstuffed chair, I don't remember just when we got it. I suspect it was in the furnished apartment that we took when we first came to Saint Louis. To take the apartment we had to buy the furniture that was in it, and through this circumstance we acquired a number of pieces of furniture that would be intriguing to set designers of films about lower-middle-class life. Some of these pieces have been gradually weeded out through successive changes of address, but my father was never willing to part with the overstuffed chair. It really doesn't look like it could be removed. Too fat to get through the doorway. Its color was originally blue, plain blue, but time has altered the blue to something sadder than blue, as if it has absorbed in its fabric and stuffing all the sorrows and anxieties of our family life and these emotions had become its stuffing and its pigmentation. (...) It doesn't really seem like a chair, though. It seems more like a fat, silent person, not silent by choice but simply unable to

> speak because if it spoke it would not get through a sentence without bursting into a self-pitying wail…

In psychodrama, it is common to assign group members to play roles of inanimate objects, and their emotional connection to the protagonist and vice versa.

When Williams failed the ROTC (pre-military) test in college, his father forced him to return home and work as a clerk at the warehouse of the International Shoe Company, where his father had been promoted to manager. Williams viewed this as punishment and the warehouse as a prison, where he had to type sale slips and labels for shoe boxes, while his heart's desire was to write poetry and short stories. A keen observer of his surroundings, he created characters and even used their names (Stanley Kowalski was one such name of a co-worker at the warehouse). Although Williams was denigrated by his father and felt estranged from him, he learned to forgive him. With the passage of time, he began to think that his father may have been just as miserable working for the shoe company as he was. More insight also emerged from his description of the overstuffed chair.

> The best of my work, and the impulse to work, was a gift from the man in the overstuffed chair, and now I feel a very deep kinship to him. I almost feel as if I am sitting in the overstuffed chair where he sat, exiled from those I should love and those who ought to love me. For love I make characters in plays. To the world I give suspicion and resentment, mostly. I am not cold. I am never deliberately cruel. But after my morning's work, I have little to give but indifference to people. I try to excuse myself with the pretense that my work justifies this lack of caring much for almost everything else. Sometimes I crack through the emotional block. I touch, I embrace, I hold tight to a necessary companion. But the breakthrough is not long lasting. Morning returns, and only work matters again. (1985, p. xv).

This is an example of the therapeutic value of an enactment which began with an overstuffed empty chair. The personification and lyric language give depth to the process which Williams had undergone. His ability to pointedly recount years of abuse by his father, expressing his own feelings and moving on to developing different ways of relating to him with acceptance and empathy. Moreover, Williams cites the awful years when the family was terrorized by his father as a gift: an important source of his creativity as a writer.

SADNESS, GRIEF AND LAUGHTER

In his *Memoirs* (2006) and in many letters to his agent, Audry Wood, and publisher, James Laughlin, Williams confirmed that for the most part the characters in his stories and plays have been outsiders, vulnerable and at odds with

themselves and others. It parallels Moreno's work from his days as a student in Vienna and later, upon moving to New York (Marineau, 2014; Blatner, 2000; Gershoni, 2024). However, it is noteworthy that both of them also had a sense of humor and a wish to have fun in life. Even as Williams depicted his own family as poor, struggling under the abuse of their drunken father, where his sister turned inward and he found refuge in writing, there is a surprise in a little-known version of *The Glass Menagerie*. This is a one-act play, *The Pretty Trap* (Keith, T., Ed., 2011, pp. 141–166). This story is presented as a comedy and is actually a treatment of the third act, according to the editor, Thomas Keith (pp. 278–279). This is a funny play, dotted with jokes, e.g., when Tom introduces the gentleman caller (Jim) to his sister, Laura, Jim says: "I didn't know you have a sister. She looks like you—except she is pretty."

Another example of a comedy is the play *The Rose Tattoo* (Williams, 2011). It is a story of a pregnant woman whose husband is murdered and she loses her baby. Williams turned this story into a hilarious comedy, albeit with empathy for the characters. For the film version of this play, Williams wrote the major role for the great Italian actress Anna Magnani, who won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1956.

Moreno was a charitable man, and these tendencies found sharper focus through his association with Chaim Kellmer, a fellow student in Vienna. Kellmer came from a Jewish Hasidic family, and together they founded the House of Encounters, helping refugees and poor people with various concrete services and counselling. For Williams, the empathy and concern for the downtrodden had different roots.

Williams identified with many characters that he wrote about in his short stories and plays and considered himself like a gypsy, a fugitive from life who is not comfortable in one place for too long. Since childhood, he was emotionally abused by his father, who derided him for being effeminate and sensitive and later for choosing writing as a profession. He disliked the fact that his son did not take an interest in sports and called him "Miss Nancy." Cornelius favored his youngest son, Dakin, and often insulted Tom and his sister Rose. In school, Williams was taunted and bullied by peers. As an adult, Williams never denied that he was gay but knew to be cautious; during the 1930s through the early 70s, homosexuality was considered illegal and also a mental disorder. Some of his plays contain comments alluding to homosexuality (Paller, M., 2005; Lahr, 2014). It is important to note that Moreno, who was a psychiatrist and actively practicing in New York since 1926, did not pathologize homosexuality. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Moreno accepted gays and lesbians and treated them with respect and dignity (Gershoni, 2003, Moreno, R. 2003).

During the years before becoming successful and financially self-reliant, Williams was poor, wandering between places and working odd jobs. Those included waiting tables and, most poignantly, on a pigeon farm near Los Angeles, cleaning squabs while dreaming of writing movie scripts. Even at the most desperate times, he would often find companions in his journeys, have fun and not lose his sense of humor.

> The sort of life I had had prior to this popular success was one that required endurance, a life of clawing and scratching along the sheer surface and holding on tight with raw fingers in every inch of rock higher than the one caught hold of before, but it was a good life because it was the sort of life for which the human organism is created. (Williams, T. 1999. *The Catastrophe of Success*. pp. 99–105).

Until the end of his life, Williams did not stop writing poetry, stories, and plays. He also was a prodigious letter-writer. The volumes of those letters—to his mother, grandparents, and colleagues—suggest that he wrote daily. Most notable are his letters to his agent, Audrey Wood (Devlin & Tischler, 2000) and his publisher, James Laughlin (Fox & Keith, 2018). The letters were so revealing of his emotional states that writing appears to have helped him receive support that sustained him through tough times. He wrote about his insecurity, about doubting himself, and even about the torturous process while writing about the vulnerabilities of others, with whom he identified. They recognized his extraordinary talents and encouraged him every step of the arduous way. Williams also was able to keep his sense of humor active. Here are a few examples:

- P. 204: *memoirs* (2006), to the reader:

  "Please don't misunderstand me--unless I misunderstand myself"

- P. 137 (Fox & Keith 2018):

  In a Letter written from Key West, Florida:
  "Life here is as dull as paradise must be."

P. 249: *memoirs (2006)*. Re: Incarnation:

- "I am certainly aware of the attractions in this Far Eastern way of reconciling one's self to the end of being one's self, but I am too Occidental a creature to follow it through without an opium pipe."

INNER SOLILOQUY AND METAPHYSICAL OBJECTS

Williams considered himself, first and foremost, a poet. Art, in general, often evokes deep emotions when words and interactions are not enough. Williams' poetic language served a similar purpose in his writing of poetry, short stories, and plays. He sought to reveal the inner lives of the characters in his plays, their wishes, their cries for help, and desires for soulful connections.

In psychodrama we look for metaphors, symbols or certain expressions to move from talk to action. In *The Glass Menagerie*, in scene five, Tom leaves the dense and oppressive apartment, and sits on the fire escape facing the dark alley. Amanda (mother) approaches him and she asks what are you looking at? He responds: the moon. And then:

> Amanda: What do you wish for?
> Tom: That's a secret.
> Amanda: A secret, huh? I won't tell mine either. I will be just as mysterious as you. (Williams, 1999, p. 40).

The moon becomes the force to which people express their wishes and their muted cries for help. Later in that scene, Amanda takes her daughter, Laura, and tells her to ask the moon for happiness! good fortune!

The dinner does not go as well as planned. After conversations between all the characters in various constellations, the gentleman (Jim) announces that he has to leave. They are all stunned, but he says that he has to meet his girlfriend, Betty, with whom he is steady. Laura then goes to her room, not daring to look at her mother, who is upset and dismayed, blaming Tom for the disastrous evening.

When Tom says that he didn't know that Jim was engaged to marry,

> Amanda: You don't know things anywhere! You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions! (p. 95)

When she pours out her anger at him for the effort, the preparations and the expense, Tom says that he is leaving, going to the movies (his usual refuge).

> Amanda: Just go, go--to the moon, you selfish dreamer!

He then goes to the fire escape, looks at the moon, and offers his last inner soliloquy:

> I didn't go to the moon, I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places. Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe box. I left St. Louis. I descended the steps of this fire escape for the last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what I lost in space. I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unaware, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was a piece of transparent glass. Perhaps I am walking alone at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow. Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes. Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I'm more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candle out!

> (Image: Laura bends over the candles).
> For nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura—and so goodbye…. (p.97).

A FINAL NOTE ON LIFE'S END

> Any artist dies two deaths…not only his own physical being but that of his creative power, it dies with him. (Williams, 2006; p.242)

Moreno viewed creativity as a vital force, essential for mental health and survival. His magnum opus *Who Shall Survive* (1975) stated this very clearly, and he devoted a great deal of energy to exploring the nature of creativity. In the winter and spring of 1974, there was a flu epidemic from which he collapsed. This was followed by a series of strokes; he became disoriented and depressed. Unable to complete his own autobiography, he recognized that he would never be totally creative again, and he expressed the wish to end his life. He stopped eating and drank only water (Marineau, 2014). His son, Jonathan D. Moreno (1995), recounts the agonizing decisions that he and his mother, Zerka, had to make. They ultimately chose to honor his wish to die at home and kept him comfortable and pain-free, to the extent possible.

Tennessee Williams' death followed a long and gradual deterioration of his physical and mental health and, with it, his diminishing creative abilities. He became addicted to alcohol and, against all medical advice, even combined it with drugs. His long mourning process over the death of his only long-term lover, Frank Merlo, left him depressed and fearful of dying. In the ensuing years, Williams saw many failures and was subjected to harsh reviews by theater critics who had idolized him before. Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson, as well as other actors, boldly accused the critics of "killing him" (see link to a YouTube video *A Wounded Genius*). In 1969, Williams thought he had had a heart attack, but it turned out to be a mental health crisis. His brother Dakin tried to help him, first by conversion to Catholicism, but that was short-lived. When his situation worsened, Dakin checked him into a psychiatric hospital in St. Louis. When discharged after three months, all the minor gains evaporated. Williams became more restless and started showing signs of paranoid thinking. In 1971, he abruptly fired his agent who propelled his career into greatness and grew more erratic with others. He continued to write, but the glory days were over. In January 1983, he wrote a letter to be read on February 25 at the National Arts Club, honoring his publisher and long-time friend, James Laughlin (fox & Keith 2018, p. 373):

> (…) By nature, I was meant more for the quieter and purer world of poetry than for the theatre into which necessity drew me.
> And now as time for reckoning seems near, I know that it is the poetry that distinguishes the writing when it is distinguished, that

> of the plays and of the stories, yes, that is what I had primarily to offer you.
> I am in no position to assess the value of this offering but I do trust that James Laughlin is able to view it without regret.
> If he can, I cannot imagine a more rewarding accolade.

On February 25, 1983, Williams was found dead in his bedroom at the Hotel Elysée in New York. It seems clear that he knew that the end was coming. On the night before, he invited his friend John Ueker to be with him. John called Williams' doctor, who cautioned about mixing alcohol with seconals. Another friend, Vassilis Voglis, was expected to join them the next morning to take Williams to a local hospital. Williams resisted this idea. In the morning, he was found dead with a wine bottle next to him and a cap of the pills stuck in his mouth. The coroner ruled that the death was caused by asphyxiation, an end of his physical life that he dreaded the most (Liverich, 1995).

Jacob Levy. Moreno is buried in Vienna. The epitaph on his tombstone reads: "Here lies the man who brought joy and laughter to psychiatry."

Tennessee Williams is interred in St. Louis, Missouri. The inscription on is tombstone is the ending line in his play *Camino Real*: "The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks."

SUMMARY

In their finest moments, psychodramatic enactments end with poetic language and artistic expressions, the level of which depends on the speakers' abilities and spontaneity. The various techniques serve to deepen the output and bring to life a whole range of muted or repressed emotions. That is part of the healing in psychodrama and has therapeutic value for the playwright. Williams, the most celebrated playwright in modern times, has been recognized by many awards for his poetic language and aesthetic skills, essentially doing what psychodrama techniques aim for. When narrators' reflections may be viewed as soliloquy, bolstered by doubling, it results in a deep representation of their inner lives. As psychodrama draws much from the arts, it seems that reading and seeing Williams' many plays may be an invaluable source of inspiration to elevate our work.

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