

University of Pardubice

Faculty of Philosophy and Arts

Old South Myth in American Drama

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## Podklad pro zadání DIPLOMOVÉ práce studenta

Jméno a příjmení: Bc. Markéta Čtvrtečková  
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Téma práce: Mýtus starého Jihu ve vybraných amerických divadelních hrách  
Téma práce anglicky: Old South Myth in American Drama  
Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Michal Kleprlík, Ph.D.  
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### Zásady pro vypracování:

Diplomantka se ve své práci zaměří na tradiční a hodnotový řád amerického Jihu, konkrétně na úskalí spojená s transformací tohoto specifického regionu. V teoretické části podrobně osvětlí pojmy (a vvoj těchto pojmů) jako například old (antebellum) south myth, new (post-reconstruction) south, southern belle či lost cause. V praktické části se pak zaměří na vyobrazení hodnot a vlastností starého Jihu ve hrách *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) T. Williama a *The Little Foxe* (1939) L. Hellmanové. Cílem práce bude porovnat, jak vjše zmíněné hry v jižanském kontextu reflektují střet mezi tradicí a modernitou.

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 30. 11. 2021

Markéta Čtvrtečková

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## **Annotation**

Topic: Old South Myth in American Drama

The diploma thesis deals with the topic of the Civil War and the Old South Myth in American Drama. The work explains terms old (antebellum) south myth, new (post-reconstruction) south, southern belle and lost cause. An inseparable part of the diploma thesis is the interpretation of these terms in chosen American dramas *The Little Foxes* and *The Glass Menagerie*.

## **Keywords**

American Drama, Civil War, Old South, New South, Lost Cause, Southern Belle

## **Anotace**

Téma: Mýtus starého Jihu ve vybraných amerických divadelních hrách

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem Občanské války a Mýtu Starého Jihu ve vybraných amerických divadelních hrách. Práce vysvětluje pojmy jako Mýtus starého Jihu, Nový Jih, Southern Belle and Lost Cause. Nedílnou součástí práce je interpretace výše zmíněných pojmů v divadelních hrách *Lištičky* a *Skleněný zvěřinec*.

## **Klíčová slova**

Americké divadelní hry, Občanská válka, Starý Jih, Nový Jih, Lost Cause, Southern Belle

## Table of Contents

The nature of historiography	2
American contemporary historiography and literature	3
Historical discourse	4
Causes of the Civil War	4
Southern values and myths	6
Southern Myths and the Northern contribution in their creation	10
The postwar Southern writer	17
Methodology	20
Objectives and research questions	20
Methods used	20
The Glass Menagerie	22
Author - Tennessee Williams	22
Best known works	22
The Glass Menagerie - plot	23
Analysis of the work	27
Absence of patriarchal family	27
Southern Belle and women characters	28
Lost cause and men characters	31
The Little Foxes	35
Author - Lillian Hellman	35
Best known works	35
The little foxes - plot	36
Analysis of the work	40
Patriarchal family	40
Southern Belle and female characters	41
Old and New South	43
Discussion	46
Conclusion	52
Resumé	54
Bibliography	59

## **Introduction**

*“We are not makers of history. We are made by history.”* The quote stated by Martin Luther King, Jr. characterizes the basic essence of understanding the importance of history. Many people believe that history is not important because whatever happened in the past does not concern their generations anymore, nevertheless, the opposite is true. History serves us to know the past and to be able to interpret the present. It allows us to study the evolution of societies in time and space and the knowledge of past helps people not to repeat the same mistakes in the present as well as to shape the future. Apart from being either just one of the main obligatory at schools or a simple subject of personal interest, many of the historical events have always been feeding the popular culture. A large number of movies, TV series, novels and even some dramatic plays take place in the past and does not matter whether they depict reality or fiction. In both cases they often reflect ambiguous feelings - oscillating between the admiration of the ancient glory and the injustice of the cruelty in various historical eras, not to mention a timeless humor and symbolism of the history to be used in our present days.

The title of this diploma thesis is: “Old South Myth in American drama.” Thus a literary-cultural analysis that deals with the depiction of traditional Southern values and their transformations into American contemporary dramatic work with particular emphasis on the Union's point of view. The whole thesis is divided into two main sections, further structured into other chapters and subchapters. The first, theoretical part gives an overview of the basic terminology related to the topic, such as “old (antebellum) South myth”, “new (post-reconstruction) south”, “southern belle” or “lost cause”. In the text I explain these concepts themselves as well as the historical background, I will focus on the nature of historiography or the difference between “history” and “pseudohistory.”

The art archives undoubtedly contain an inexhaustible number of literary works related to the topic therefore it seems important to answer the following question: What was the fundamental criterion for choosing the two analyzed dramatic plays? Although the issue of gender is considered somewhat controversial in today's culture, I considered it beneficial to study both the masculine and the feminine concept. That is why I have chosen one work written by a male author and another by a woman.

Apart from that I tried to emphasize also the impact of different cultural roots. Even though the selected plays therefore represent authors of the Southern origin who write about the South, both of them have also some kind of a bond or relationship with another cultural region. While Lillian Helman was born in New Orleans (Louisiana) into a Jewish family, she had a huge success on Broadway that is why the cultural world often connects her rather with the New York scene. However she also became known to the public through her political activism and open sympathies for communism. Tennessee Williams, originally from Columbus in Mississippi, grew up in a family of English, Welsh and Huguenot ancestry. A frequent absence of his parents and the grandparents' upbringing strongly affected his childhood, as well as the fact that Tennessee's father starved from the alcoholism. As in the case of Lillian Helman, Williams also became famous in New York City.

In the practical part I will first provide some basic information about the two selected dramatic plays, which form the basis of further analysis: *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams (1944) and *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Helman (1939). The further text depicts some of the values, symbols and characteristics of the "Old South" in the works mentioned above and after their analysis the focus is moved to films later made according to literary templates and the comparison of their authors' narrative tendencies. As for the main aim of the thesis, that will be to compare how the two dramatic plays reflect the conflict between tradition and modernity in the Southern context.



## Theoretical part

As I have already stated in the introduction, in this section I am going to concentrate on defining some of the basic terms and circumstances related to the topic thus often occurring throughout the entire study. I consider their explanation absolutely necessary not only for the analysis of the two dramatic plays in question, but also for understanding the results of the following research.

### The nature of historiography

*“The burden of the historian in our time is to reestablish the dignity of historical studies on a basis that will make them consonant with the aims and purposes of the intellectual community at large, that is, we must transform historical studies in such a way as to allow the historian to participate positively in the liberation of the present from the burden of history.”*

Hayden White

Hayden White (who was also a true pioneer in this field) occupies a preeminent place among the authors who have contributed to reinitiate the epistemological debate in history and to renew our conception of historical knowledge. The essence of my diploma thesis is an analysis of two specific concrete historical works, however how can we understand this concept? Hayden White in his publication called “*Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*” states that the historical work is “*a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse.*” According to the author “*Histories combine a certain amount of data, theoretical concepts for explaining these data, and a narrative structure for their presentation as an icon of sets of events presumed to have occurred in times past.*”<sup>1</sup>

In many of his historical essays, Hayden White reflects deeply on the nature and essence of the historiography as a professional genre. He states one fundamental condition, and that is the written form. In practice, this means that history must be recorded exclusively in writing; in the case of oral narratives of past events it is not possible to speak of history or historiography as such. After all, the very etymological origin of the word historiography provides an explanation for such statement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hayden White. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press 1973), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Hayden White. *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957–2007*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press 2010), 9.

Nevertheless, a certain discrepancy in the above and the very meaning of history as the sum of all the unique and unrepeatable events and other phenomena that make up the past of mankind can be found. A huge number of other events or phenomena never mentioned in historical sources happened as well. The lack of their written testimonies is not caused by their non-existence, but due to the fact that many of them got probably lost over many years or were never even recorded. It logically means that the history as a whole cannot be described by written sources therefore it cannot be identified with historiography.<sup>3</sup>

### **American contemporary historiography and literature**

Regardless of the specific motives of historians in referring to the past times, historiographical works in most cases reflect the intellectual atmosphere in a specific period in a specific place, as is the case with American literature. Before the revolution in the 18th century, these were usually religiously motivated texts, as representatives of the clergy formed the epicenter of the intellectual life of New England. The so called “Puritanism of Colonial America” became the main stream of American national life. Theology used to rule everything, the literature included. These were times of cruel religious intolerance: idolatrous Indians massacred, small churches persecuted one by another, in short, theological law meant civil law.<sup>4</sup>

The trend changed around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when writings about the South and the West begun to gain popularity, as evidently related to and motivated by the regional consciousness associated with the American Civil War and “*the most significant American developments had been primarily influenced by an environmental complex associated with concepts of isolation, free land and the frontier.*”<sup>5</sup> For critics, American historiography of that period and literature as such readily presents itself as the reflection of a dominant trait which characterized the original situation of people in the country. Some see it deeply marked by the Puritanism of the founders, others on the contrary by the optimism of a phase of expansion followed by nostalgia for a lost dream. The most popular literary works became books containing various dramatic plots such as political or social scandals, intrigues or even armed conflicts. Their inspiration came mainly from a revolt against social conventions as much as aesthetic principles. The criticism, at least implicitly, of American society, of its uniformity, of

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<sup>3</sup> Petr Čornej. *Historici, historiografie a dějepis*. (Praha: Karolinum 2016), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Richard H. Shryock: *American Historiography: A Critical Analysis and a Program*. (Philadelphie: American Philosophical Society 1943), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Richard H. Shryock: *American Historiography: A Critical Analysis and a Program*. (Philadelphie: American Philosophical Society 1943), 4.

its taboos, was general and made without preaching or insistence.<sup>6</sup> It is neither a surprise nor coincidence that even in this thesis the further analyzed plays can be considered as social dramas with ties to the American South.

## **Historical discourse**

### **1.1.1 Causes of the Civil War**

The Civil War is considered to have been the most cruel, brutal and painful conflict in the course of the American history. At first the people thought it would end after a few weeks, but they proved to suggest mistakenly. It was a long and devastating conflict and until today, countless historical controversies and debates appear about who to blame for its beginning.

The most well-known and often presented to the public as the only reason for the outbreak of the Civil War is **slavery**, with an enduring tradition in the American South. It had existed in the USA since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However the problems leading to a bloody conflict arose two hundred years later. In the northern part of the United States, there were states (**Union**), which under the influence of the Industrial revolution in England started to experience a significant industrial development as well. Slavery made no longer any sense in this wealthy area and the majority of the local population regarded it with suspicion or even disdain. These discontented people founded various abolitionist associations in order to fight for its repeal throughout the whole country. On the other hand there were the Southern states (**Confederate States**) whose economy fundamentally counted on agriculture. On the banks of the Mississippi river, the cultivation of cotton for export had a special importance. The large estates, owned by a few families, fully exploited their slaves and sold their products to the booming British textile industry. The South, afraid of ruining the economy, opposed the application of protectionist policies and chose to defend the slavery.

In the 1818, the state of Missouri wanted to become a part of the Union. Even though it lay more or less in the north of the USA, it still supported the slavery. The representatives of the Union tried to stop the expansion of the slavery to the north therefore they moved the original border line the North and the South from 31° to 36°30' of the latitude. In the 1850's the border was exceeded to confront people who opposed the slavery, for example John Brown who tried to start the revolt of slaves in Virginia. After the acceptance of Minnesota and Oregon into the Union, even more states voted for the abolition of the slavery in the USA. On the other side, in

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<sup>6</sup> Richard H. Shryock: *American Historiography: A Critical Analysis and a Program*. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1943), 1-6.

February 1861 seven states declared their segregation from the Union - South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas - and set their new capital in Montgomery. Between April and June 1861, four more states - Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee - joined the Confederacy. With twenty-three remaining states in the Union, the rupture had been accomplished.<sup>7</sup>

However, behind every armed conflict in human history, we can usually find a series of more circumstances and reasons. In case of the American Civil War, the **economic situation** is often considered another cause. The political environment of The United States had been shaped by the interest of the South in their plantations and in the preservation of slavery, while the North leaned towards trade, navigation and financial interests; on one side the debtor farmers, on the other the creditor capitalists. The recently independent country faced various economic problems such as the debt, interstate commercial conflicts or social upheaval. The new Constitution was based on the following principles of federalism: two chambers, regulation of commerce, ability to impose taxes, to pay debts and to create an army for the defense of the young nation. The different interpretation of the Constitution by both sides served as a justification for the mutual aggressions. Concerning the economic disputes, even though the law guaranteed not to impose export taxes, the North wanted to protect its developing industry by imposing tariffs. Unlike the agricultural South, it did not have to depend on the old metropolis (Britain). This is how the economic polarization was born.<sup>8</sup>

Many sources claim that **Abraham Lincoln**, the 16th American president elected on March 4, 1861, was the third of the main reasons of the Civil War. When Americans voted for a new head of state, the Union almost split due to the slavery problem. A Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, promised to allow the slavery in the South however he opposed its extension to the new territories. Such posture made the majority of the white Southerners consider Lincoln an enemy. The disagreements regarding slavery contributed to the division into two parts of the other major party, the Democrats. However, Lincoln believed that the black and white people should only have the same rights in a social level, not in terms of voting or holding offices. It was his election that encouraged 11 states to leave the Union and to create the independent Confederacy with the new capital in Montgomery. As their leader, they chose Jefferson Davis.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ch. Bishop, I. Drury, T. Gibbons, *1400 dní Válka Severu proti Jihu Den po dni* (Brno: JOTA, 1998), 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Stamp, *The Causes of the Civil War: Revised Edition* (New York: TOUCHSTONE, 1986), 68.

<sup>9</sup> Cole Christian Kingseed, *The American Civil War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 165.

In the following subchapter I am going to explain in more detail some of the Southern values and myths, phenomena related to the topic, which will be very often discussed in the following pages.

### **1.1.2 Southern values and myths**

#### **Old (antebellum) South myth**

The word antebellum has an etymological origin in Latin and can literally be translated as “before the war,” which makes it easier to understand the meaning of the term. The Old (antebellum) South geographically includes eleven states that seceded to constitute the Confederation. This region, essentially rural, can be characterised by the proslavery ideology - the practice of slavery and its corollary, the doctrine of supremacy of the white race, the segregation. The antebellum South era often refers to a period in the American history when the polarization of the society between the abolitionists and supporters of the slavery begun to intensify.<sup>10</sup>

The antebellum Southern identity derives from „*perceived historical injuries, strong attachment to place and kin, and links between militarism and religious faith, and both have produced symbolic material cultures.*“ In some works, the life in the Old South is often idealized in a way it seems to have been almost a paradise – a civilized, aristocratic and wealthy place for people who regarded a love for their families, heritage and cultural roots as the most important value.<sup>11</sup> However such romanticization of the Old South spread only to serve as a relief for a tragically defeated land: „*The experience of the evil and of the tragedy are parts of the Southern experience that are as difficult to reconcile as with the American legend of innocence and social felicity as the experience of poverty and defeat are to reconcile with the legends of abundance and success.*“<sup>12</sup>

The illusion maintained by the Southerners regarding their past could be nowhere better expressed than in the myth of the Antebellum South, a composite picture of an idyllic society

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<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Anxiety of History: The Southern Confrontation with Modernity*. Southern Cultures, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44376398>.

<sup>11</sup> Celeste Ray: *Scottish Heritage Southern Style*. Southern Cultures, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26235571>.

<sup>12</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Burden of Southern History* (New York: Random House, 1977), 21.

with the cotton fields, magnolias and sumptuous white houses with colonnades, great lords and beautiful ladies in crinolines, living in harmony with their numerous slaves.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, an overview of the Old (antebellum) South follows:

- Economy: The fertile land as the only source of wealth, with the slaves working on it.
- Social structure: Aristocratic society, based on the slavery. Only the white people, more or less wealthy, participate in political life.
- Lifestyle: Society of culture, brilliance, good life - at least for the privileged persons. Search for prestige. Rejection of individualism.
- Politics: Defense of the rights of states against the hegemonistic attempts of federal power and defense of the slavery.
- Political philosophy: Capitalism as the exploitation of man is execrable. Slavery which implies duties of the master towards his slave is moral.

### **The New South**

In the Civil War, the South loses in large part because its economy is less powerful than that of the North. The conflict has caused a total devastation of the region: its railways, its plantations, its warehouses, destroyed. Its morale, dejected. Military failure, a failure of a society. In such situation the South depended mainly on cotton and a few other crops with low market prices. Economically, it was in great need of industrialisation. With slavery abolished, African Americans were playing a different role in the New South. The so-called Reconstruction period begins. However it turned out to be an even more dismal time than the civil war, a period of oppression and corruption, of dispossession and subversion, of mistreatment and humiliation.

In the 70s, the situation started to improve. In 1877 the term “New South” appeared, the spirit of which is: it is necessary to enter into competition with the North by doing like it, that means, by developing the secondary and tertiary sectors. Reformers used it to call for a modernisation of society and attitudes, to integrate more fully with the United States, to reject the economy and traditions of the Old South and the slave-based plantation system of the antebellum period. However the people of the North failed to impose liberal values on the South, a stronghold of Christian fundamentalists. The South could not rebuild the pre-war slave world. And the black population could not see their citizenship rights guaranteed. The emergence of the New South

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<sup>13</sup> Jean Roubertol and Jean Chardonnet, *Les Sudistes* (Paris: A. Colin, 1971), 10.

only implied the continued supremacy of whites over blacks, who had little or no political power. Moreover, they had to see the representatives of the slave cause glorified. <sup>14</sup>

## **Southern Belle**

Among the Southern myths, the most persistent one can be considered that of the superiority of the civilization and of the women from the South. Before the War the Southerners used to put them on a pedestal, and to sing of their virtues, their gentleness and their charm. They compared the beauties of the South to the flowers of magnolia, because of their delicacy and their purity, and kept them as far as possible from the realities of life. Churches, newspapers, novels – they all described the Southern beauty in lyrical, mythical terms. <sup>15</sup>

Combative, energetic and rational, but excessive in some of her judgments, the Greek goddess of beauty and love Athena is projected in the figure of so-called Southern belle - beauty as exuberant as the land of the South itself. During and after the Civil War she appears often in Southern dramatic works as a wild and proud woman of the American rural South. Generally an heir to the wealthy landowners, the Southern soil woman reveres the patriarch's law and protects the land her father taught her to love. But the South is a delicate region, a vulnerable to fires, fever and war; and even though the Southern belle must submit to the „fire“ of the conquering North, she would always become the last person to accept the defeat. Merciless to herself and to the enemy, she maintains an irrational passion for Confederation which could only be matched by the intensity of her hatred for the Northerners. <sup>16</sup>

The most paradigmatic example of such lady can be found in *Gone with the Wind* (1939, Victor Fleming) in the famous Scarlett O'Hara. For Scarlett, „*to survive as a woman does mean learning to see sexuality, male power domination, and her traditional gender role as all meaning the same dangerous thing.*“ <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Robert S. Cotterill, *The Old South to the New*. The Journal of Southern History, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2198069>.

<sup>15</sup> Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady, from pedestal to Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady, from pedestal to Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Eliza R. L. McGraw: A "Southern Belle with Her Irish Up": *Scarlett O'Hara and Ethnic Identity*. South Atlantic Review, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3201928>.

## The Lost Cause

Shortly after the end of the Civil War, a term “*the Lost Cause*” appeared. It dates back to 1866 when Edward A. Pollard used it in his book called “The Lost Cause: New Southern History of the Confederates” and shortly after, the people started to use the expression commonly. Since the war ruined everything the Southerners used to know, the term started to be connected with the new way of life which had appeared after the war. The Lost Cause is a regional American literary movement that attempts to reconcile the traditionalist white society of the antebellum South, which they admire, to the defeat of the Confederate states of America in the American Civil War of 1861-1865.

Several concrete interpretations could be mentioned, eg. Gaines Foster defines the Lost Cause movement as “*the postwar writings and activities that perpetuated the memory of the Confederacy.*” Foster also mentions that the Southerners mainly used various rituals and ceremonies in order to honor the achievements of their war veterans.<sup>18</sup>

Senator E. W. Carmack (Tennessee) has given another interesting point of view of The Lost Cause concept, explaining: “*The Confederate Soldiers were our kinfolk and our heroes. We testify to the country our enduring fidelity to their memory. We commemorate their valor and devotion. There were some things that were not surrendered at Appomattox. We did not surrender our rights and history, nor was it one of the conditions of surrender that unfriendly lips should be suffered to tell the story of that war or that unfriendly hands should write the epitaphs of the Confederate dead. We have a right to teach our children the true history of that war, the causes that led up to it and the principles involved.*”<sup>19</sup>

Those who contributed to the movement tended to portray the Confederate cause as noble and most of its leaders as exemplars of old-fashioned chivalry, defeated by Union armies through industrial strength that overwhelmed the superior military skill and courage of the South. Proponents of the Lost Cause movement also condemned the Reconstruction that followed the Civil War, claiming that it was a deliberate attempt by Northern politicians and profiteers to destroy the traditional Southern way of life. Today’s conception of the Lost Cause reminds the

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<sup>18</sup> Seth Weitz: *Defending The Old South: The Myth Of The Lost Cause and Political Immorality In Florida, 1865–1968*. The Historian, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1540-6563.2008.00232.x>

<sup>19</sup> Seth Weitz: *Defending The Old South: The Myth Of The Lost Cause and Political Immorality In Florida, 1865–1968*. The Historian, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1540-6563.2008.00232.x>



horrors of the war and often deals with a word “*myth*”, as the past events were and still are described in such a heroic way it may seem as a romantic description only. As aforementioned, the Civil War truly caused many losses and ruined the Old South culture. Nevertheless, apart from the way of living also material values collapsed, such as citizens’ property or railroads. Not to mention all the victims and deaths claimed by the Civil War. Various authors claim that the term “Lost Cause” represents American citizens’ memories of the war and compare it with a legend. From the Southern point of view the “Lost Cause” could be regarded as a pseudohistorical conception of the conflict, since the local works often depict the Confederacy as the heroic one and even romanticize the slavery. A generally known myth that claims that slaves did not have demeaning lives at all, being always provided with food, shelter and a nice treatment. According to this perception, many people could believe that slavery had not been immoral at all. However, we need to realize that the owners did not consider the slaves equal human, to which their living conditions corresponded.<sup>20</sup>

### **Southern Myths and the Northern contribution in their creation**

Although relatively short when compared to the nations of the Old World, the history of the United States has numerous iconic characters and important events linked to them. But in some cases it seems necessary to separate a certain mythology from historical reality. If the North American region had been an excellent space for the proliferation of myths since its foundation, then the South has taken over the mythical imagination of the country with the greatest frequency and vigor.

The idea of the South or the different ideas of the South belong largely to the order of social myth. George B. Tindall considers the social myths “*simply mental pictures that portray the pattern of what a people think they are (or ought to be) or what somebody else thinks they are.*”

<sup>21</sup> These mental images try to develop abstract ideas using more or less concrete and effective terms. They fuse concept and emotion in a single image and are characterized by being collective representations rather than the product of a single collectivity.

These myths can perform a number of functions. One of the theories states that a myth is a vast majority image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of normal life and its value lies in the ability to organize the experience, that gives the myth a status of an instrument used in

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<sup>20</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, Alan T. Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 11-17.

<sup>21</sup> George B. Tindall. *Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago 1964), 1-2.

our continuous effort for making our own experience intelligible. In addition, Tindall says, as this image carries a load of values, aspirations, ideals and meanings, it can serve as the object of belief, loyalty or defense, as well as hostility and opposition. In such circumstances, the myth becomes one of the realities of history, influencing the course of human actions.<sup>22</sup> There always exists the danger of illusion, the risk that by ordering our own vision of reality, myth predetermines those same categories of perception and blinds us to what does not fit into its own mental image. The extensive list of myths that surround the South and that have naturally found reflection in studies of southern literature corroborate the importance of the aforementioned. The apparent result is that the South has become an enigma, a kind of sphinx on North American soil.<sup>23</sup>

Such mythical fertility should not be seen as an internal phenomenon of the region, but as a result of the action of external forces and especially of the North. Francis Pendleton Gaines was one of the first historians to attempt to explain the process by which the North and the South cooperated in the creation of a pseudo-past, at the times of the competition between the abolitionist literature and the apologetic literature of the plantation, because “*the two opposing sides of the fiercest controversy that ever shook national thought agreed concerning certain picturesque elements of plantation life and joined hands to set the conception unforgettably in public consciousness.*”<sup>24</sup> Gaines points out three main factors that made the Southern myth of the plantation powerfully entrenched in the national consciousness: the appeal of the allure of feudalism and the allegory of aristocracy in an environment oozing romanticism; the innocent and simple figure of a black person and finally, the implicit reference to a golden age image of the American past.<sup>25</sup>

One of the basic studies tracing the entrenchment of **Southern myth in the pre-Civil War period** is the book by William R. Taylor, “Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American national character.” Taylor shows how the popular literary conception of the South during these years gradually emerged from the dialogue on national character carried out between the North and the South. This researcher explores what he considers the imaginary

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<sup>22</sup> George B. Tindall. *Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago 1964), 2.

<sup>23</sup> David M. Potter. *The Enigma of the South, Myth and Southern History*. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company 1974), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Gerster, Nicolas Cords. *Myth and Southern History: The Old South, Volume 1*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press 1989), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Gerster, Nicolas Cords. *Myth and Southern History: The Old South, Volume 1*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press 1989), 5-6.

division, the concept of a divided culture, within the American sensibility, to conclude that both the stereotype of the Northern Yankee and the Southern gentleman embodied the needs of the middle class of the expansionist United States of the 19th century during “the age of anxiety,” thus in the 1830s. The so-called "age of the common man" based on the ideas of democracy and egalitarianism, proved threatening to those who had wanted to save part of their status, allegedly endangered. This undercurrent of anti-democratic sentiment, Taylor notes, produced *"a hankering after aristocracy in the North which took the form of eulogizing the social system in the South."*<sup>26</sup>

In this way, the social structure of the South came to symbolize for many Northerners an important counterpoint, an enviable sign of social stability; while crisis, change and anxiety were taking over the North. American national precepts and fundamental values seemed to be under constant attack, so the country tried to reconcile the old republican virtues with the new and profound socioeconomic changes. Faced with the ambivalence and contradiction resulting from the rapid process of change, the North began to challenge the image of a stable South.<sup>27</sup>

What Taylor shows, through analysis of a series of Southern and Northern literary works from the prewar period, is that in both the North and the South, the middle class tried to improve their lot on a new continent where improvement could possibly work fast. The participants in this process, acting without restrictions that the institutions of other older societies had imposed, also felt the need to accommodate themselves to the ideal of an orderly and hierarchical community, as represented by the plantation, the aristocratic planter and a society scrutinized according to hierarchies; since this need arose from the suspicion of the existence of inadequacies in North American society itself.

The stereotypes of the Yankee and the Southern gentleman also served to represent regional differences. In various works, some characters became the symbols of their region. A hardworking Yankee, austere but mercenary, and the pioneer of the frontier, independent but fierce, found his contrast in that of the Southern planter, cultured and generous, although surely weak and ineffective. During this period of deep self-examination by a national uncertainty of the identity, writers attempted to define the national spirit by contrasting the virtues of one nation with the defects of the other. In this way, the planter came to represent tradition,

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<sup>26</sup> William R. Taylor. *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American national character*. (Cambridge, Mass&London: Harvard University Press 1979), 96-97.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Gerster, Nicolas Cords. *The Northern Origins of Southern Mythology*. Journal of Southern History. (Houston: Southern Historical Association 1973), 573.

humanism and indifference towards material gains, that means, the figure of the Southern gentleman was used both as a censor of the materialistic tendencies of American life, as a scapegoat for national sins.

In his work called "The South in the Northern eyes 1831 to 1861" Howard R. Floan studies the vision of the South that some writers from the North evoked in their books and divides his research into two parts, corresponding to two geographical areas: the first dedicated to some of the New England authors and also to various magazines, the second one to a couple of writers from New York. Floan concludes that in New England literature there is a marked contrast between the predominantly sympathetic tone of the most representative magazines and the much more caustic one that emerges from their most important authors, adding that "*their attitudes toward the South were in reality attitudes toward slavery. Their emotional and imaginative attitudes arose from the awesome gap between their ideas of what life ought to be and their view of life in the South as colored by abolitionism.*"<sup>28</sup> However, New York writers do not only embrace the abolitionist sentiment, but also the existence of a series of factors in New York society which facilitated the creation of an apparent goodwill towards the South, as shown by their most prominent literary representatives who displayed an affection and a benevolent understanding towards the region and towards its cultural problems.<sup>29</sup>

The North also seems to have contributed with yet another grain of sand in the construction of Southern mythology to assuage the feelings of guilt about slavery and black-white race relations. C. Van Woodward analyzes the North's position on this issue in his article "The Antislavery Myth," where he affirms that if the South used the pro-slavery myth to alleviate its wounds, lighten its burden of guilt and, above all, to rationalize and defend the segregationist system it had developed in the postwar period; the North, for its part, also felt the need to use an anti-slavery myth at all times to keep the legend alive and make it grow as the demands changed.<sup>30</sup>

In this way, the North, by adopting and offering new alternatives to the myths of the South, was doing nothing more than indirectly confessing its adherence to the postulates of the southern creed. Woodward reviews the legend of the underground railway route and discovers that it is almost entirely a postwar creation that made the figure of the abolitionist its main hero, his

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<sup>28</sup> Howard R. Floan. *The South in the Northern eyes 1831 to 1861*. (Austin, University of Texas Press 1958), 185.

<sup>29</sup> Howard R. Floan. *The South in the Northern eyes 1831 to 1861*. (Austin, University of Texas Press 1958), 111.

<sup>30</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Antislavery Myth*. (Washington D. C., American scholar 1962), 312.

achievements being exaggerated in such a way that *"under analysis of the flood of fugitives diminishes to a trickle,"* owing its origin to the *"laudable impulse to be identified with noble deeds. Family pride, local pride and regional pride were fed by abolitionist reminiscences and floods of memoirs and stories."*<sup>31</sup>

A second aspect of the antislavery myth is the legend of the North Star which claimed that the Mason and Dixon line was not only the dividing line between slavery and freedom in prewar North America, but also separated racial cruelty from benevolence, freedom and tolerance of the North. This legend, also a product of the post-war period, declared that the North enjoyed all those objectives for which the war had been fought, that means, not only union and freedom, but also equality. However, it should be remembered that *"white supremacy was a national, not a regional credo, and politicians of the Democratic, the Whig and the Republican parties openly and repeatedly expressed their allegiance to the doctrine,"* because to have acted otherwise would have been to commit a political suicide.<sup>32</sup> Hence, the North to which a runaway slave would hopefully arrive looked far from being the imagined paradise and rather resembled a new segregationist purgatory. Not surprising then that the North took advantage of Southern mythology as a means of stabilizing and perpetuating its own mythology well after the days of slavery.

**After the war,** the North followed this same Southern exploitation procedure. However, the postwar situation then required other tactics, the reformulation of the old themes, the coupling to new social circumstances and the invention or perhaps the forcing of myths long incubated in the national consciousness that would satisfy the demands of the United States of the late nineteenth century.

Two stages are distinguished in the relations between the North and the South in the postwar period. The first period that would include the years immediately after the war, from 1865 to the beginning of the 1870s; and a second one, from 1870 to the end of the century, where the two regions would finally embrace each other. The years of the first stage were *"dreary years in which there was no peace. The war ended only on the battlefield. Memories of the past and issues living in the present combined to perpetuate and perhaps enlarge the antagonism that victory and defeat had created."*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Antislavery Myth*. (Washington D. C., American scholar 1962), 314.

<sup>32</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Antislavery Myth*. (Washington D. C., American scholar 1962), 316.

<sup>33</sup> Paul H. Buck. *The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900*. (New York, Vintage Books 1937), 47.

During the 1870s, quite different circumstances began to play out. The North began to doubt the validity of federal intervention in the affairs of the Southern states. The change in public opinion together with the emergence of new problems started to facilitate the end of Reconstruction. The North quickly saw that the old idealistic goals that it had proclaimed during the war regarding freedom and protection of the black people were rising up against much less idealistic goals of protecting the commercial interests.<sup>34</sup> Conservatives in the North, threatened by radical Labor elements in the East and by Agrarian radicalism in the West, realized the important advantages that an alliance with the South would bring them. Thus, in 1878, the conservative supporters of the Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes, thanks to the promises of great economic gains for the South; succeeded in dividing the Northern Democrats, who opposed this kind of aid, from the Democrats of the South, who thought it would be favorable to them. When the Southeastern Democrats refused to join the Democratic clique to prevent the takeover of the Hayes presidency, the Republican newspapers that until then had accused the South of being treacherous, savage and disloyal, rushed and praised good sense and the honesty of the ex-confederates.<sup>35</sup>

The period that followed the election of Hayes was marked by a strong spirit of national reconciliation, leaving the South to be considered a threat to the new economic system and going to be considered a powerful ally, at the same time that its old ruling class retook the political reins of the region without any impediment. The implications of this change for those writers seeking new literary approaches to the South were immediate, especially since *"having devastated the feudal South, the Northerners wanted to be told of its glamor, of its old-time courtesy and grace. A rush of industrial development had come to an end of the war, and the cities of the North and West, now the scene of so much energetic enterprise which rendered them uglier and harsher, were losing their old amenities; and the Northerners wanted, besides, a little to make it up to the South for their wartime vituperation."*<sup>36</sup>

In this way, the North seized upon the Southern myth and began to delight in it. The author Anne Rowe analyzes precisely the impact that the postwar South had on the literary imagination of some Northern writers and points to the beginning of this fascination due to the fact that now

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<sup>34</sup> C. Van Woodward. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1971), 23.

<sup>35</sup> C. Van Woodward. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1971), 43.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Rowe. *The Enchanted Country: Northern Writers in the South, 1865-1910*. (Baton Rouge&London, Louisiana State University Press 1978), 8.

*"deviation from national norms was no longer a threat to the Union, depictions in literature of lifestyles free from the taint of northeastern big business and urbanization could be enjoyed for their very differences."* <sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the works of these authors two currents can be appreciated, one critical and the other laudatory and, despite individual differences, they all share a series of characteristics, among which the idea that the South represented a higher life stands out. However, although most of them are transitional writers who take up themes from the plantation tradition, they have importance as a group because their work clearly reflects the change in national attitude towards the South and this change *"from criticism to acceptance and fascination marked the emergence of something that had existed from the beginning - the cultivation of a longing for splendor, a dream that in the enchanted country the life was somehow different."* <sup>38</sup>

The deficiencies of Yankee culture during the last years of the nineteenth century stood out even more compared to the Southern civilization supposedly reigning in the days before the war, when the South had been considered an idyllic paradise. Postwar America seemed to be a society dominated by vulgarity and ruthless materialism strongly contrasting with an Old South based on the traditional values of family, generosity, honor, and chivalry. Both the North and the South collaborated jointly in the elaboration and development of a new alliance of fraternity that led them to cultivate and support old and new myths. A couple of authors have spoken of the Americanization of the South and the importance of considering the Southern writer as American. Among them, Howard Zinn argues that the South has always been the essence of the nation and that all the characteristics attributed to it are really North American qualities and therefore the nation reacts emotionally to the South because it unconsciously recognizes itself in it, as in a mirror. <sup>39</sup> The continuity of the South during the 20th century and with it, the Southern literary durability, was assured as long as the region continued to be *"a moral lightning rod, a deflector of national guilt, a scapegoat for stricken conscience."* <sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Anne Rowe. *The Enchanted Country: Northern Writers in the South, 1865-1910*. (Baton Rouge&London, Louisiana State University Press 1978), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Anne Rowe. *The Enchanted Country: Northern Writers in the South, 1865-1910*. (Baton Rouge&London, Louisiana State University Press 1978), 138.

<sup>39</sup> Howard Zinn. *The Southern Mystique*. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf 1964), 217.

<sup>40</sup> C. Van Woodward. *From the First Reconstruction to the Second*. (New York, Harper's Magazine 1965), 316.

## The postwar Southern writer

*“A foreigner studying our current literature, without knowledge of our history, and judging our civilization by our fiction, would undoubtedly conclude that the South was the seat of the intellectual empire in America.”*

L. Moody Simms, Jr. <sup>41</sup>

After the war, a couple of writers engaged themselves, among other tasks of rebuilding their region, in establishing their own and dignified literature. Almost all of them shared common characteristics: although they remembered the good old days of the years before the Civil War, they reached the intellectual maturity during the postwar period. They were, therefore, representatives of the new era, of the New South, and kind of introducers and interpreters of motifs, traditions and customs unknown to the rest of the nation. Their writings flourished only after 1870 as something completely new and united to the national movement, and in such an exuberant way that their study was necessary to understand the development of the American literary movement. This was the true meaning and glory of the new culture of the South: the simultaneity of its creation within the national spirit with the beginnings of a new American literature. <sup>42</sup>

Louis D. Rubin examines the relationship between literary work and society and affirms the existence of a close and creative relationship. The author's efforts to give order and meaning to life through language, his attempts to represent reality take shape and meaning from the institutions, attitudes and concerns of life that he has known, which means that, the literature the writer produces would be nourished by the nature of the society he comes from. The difficulty lies in the nature of that relationship between the southern writer and the South from which he writes, since that influence is only transmitted through art and through an image. <sup>43</sup>

The postwar Southern writer works in two spheres: the national or Northern and the regional or Southern. As for the second, it is inserted into a period dominated by the huge war bloodshed and its consequences. The Civil War represents for the South the most important historical dividing barrier. C. Van Woodward analyzes the traces that the warlike conflict imprinted on the Southern identity, finding the Southern alternative corresponding to the defining characteristics of American life, thus, in terms of the economic abundance, which has

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<sup>41</sup> Donald Henry Sheehan. *The Making of American History*. (Oak Brook, Dryden Press 1954), 610.

<sup>42</sup> John B. Henneman. *The National Element in Southern Literature*. (Sewanee, The Sewanee Review 1903), 351.

<sup>43</sup> Louis D. Rubin. *Southern Literature and Southern Society*. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1975), 4.



characterized the North American land since the first colonial days, the history of the South has been marked by great poverty. <sup>44</sup>

The fact that the Southerners had long been people beset by economic need in a rich land is one of the most enduring marks of cultural distinction. A second characteristics closely linked to the previous one regards the equally unique American experience of success and triumphs. The legend of the everlasting victory still prevails in the American consciousness. However, the Southern history, contrary to the national one, includes large components of frustration and defeat. <sup>45</sup> This does not only refer to the military one, but to long decades of failure within the economic, social and political sphere. American affluence and success come together to force and reform another mythical feature that goes back to the origins of the national foundation: the legend of American innocence. According to this legend, Americans achieved a kind of regeneration of their sins by fleeing the Old World and moving to a new one without any original blemish. The absence of all the evils of the Old world - tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, and privilege, as well as the injustice and oppression that stemmed from them, fostered a special moral complacency in the American spirit and led to the belief that they had been a chosen nation. The corruption and oppression practiced in the Old world contrasted with the innocence and freedom of these “new” people. Yet, Woodward wonders, to what extent did this national image of innocence and moral complacency influence the tortured conscience of the South? The South coexisted throughout the historical period prior to the Civil War with a great social evil, slavery and, for a hundred years later, with its consequences. Slavery, abandoned and condemned in the Old World, seemed to contradict every article of faith inscribed in American moral superiority. Naturally, this did not remain unnoticed to the Southern intellectuals, both prewar and postwar, who invested much of their energies in a desperate effort to convince the world that this evil had actually brought something “positive” as well. However, even in the most furiously apologetic pages of slavery one can detect an anxiety that convinces neither the readers nor the author. The obsession of the South is not rooted in the world of innocence, but in that of the guilt and in the reality of the evil. <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Search for Southern Identity, The Burden of Southern History*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1970), 17.

<sup>45</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Search for Southern Identity, The Burden of Southern History*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1970), 19.

<sup>46</sup> C. Van Woodward. *The Search for Southern Identity, The Burden of Southern History*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1970), 20-21.

Fred Hobson traces the genesis of the Southerner's need to interpret and explain his region. He considers it to be one of the most significant characteristics and believes it to be predominant from the 1840s and 1850s, when the South was politically cornered and feeling very insecure in the face of the criticism from outside. The Southerner, more than any other American, felt that he had something to explain, justify or defend. Hobson groups those Southerners who spoke on behalf of their region into two categories: advocates and critics. In his opinion the defenders of the Southern values felt the need to answer all the accusations and misinterpretations from abroad and to fight against the image of ignorance and violence in the region. As for the critics, those were rather concerned with race relations, guilt, and the burden of the historical past; and very often did so because of their attempts frustration about social qualities already mentioned by the first critics of the late nineteenth century who tried to silence and suppress any disagreement with the traditional regional opposition.<sup>47</sup>

The Southern attitude regarding a series of issues derived from the war outcome was gradually outlined and clearly defined. The region's magazine editors and critics promoted the Southern literature and, in general, agreed on their demands for a local and patriotic literature that would defend the Southern values against the rest of the nation. The most important dramatic works written during the postwar period reached their strongest resonance outside the Southern geographical limits thanks to the impulse and encouragement from Northern directors. On many occasions, those pressured Southern writers to suppress overly local tendencies, a possible object of interregional friction, although, at the same time, they encouraged them to idealize the Southern past. Arlin Turner summarizes those conditions: "*controversial topics must be skirted, but Southern authors might ask for sympathy; they might acclaim the heroism of the Southern soldiers or the beauty and virtue of the Southern women; they might display the picturesqueness of the Southern regions; in fact, they might portray the scene and the life of the Old South with all the idealism of a remote fairyland.*"<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Fred Hobson. *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press 1983), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Arlin Turner. *The Uncertainties of Authorship in the South after the Civil War*. (Bowling Green, Green University Popular Press 1972), 185-191.

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives and research questions**

The aim of the research is to analyse two well-known American dramas, namely *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams and *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman. The research will focus on the occurrence of characters or contradictions of old South American myths, specifically the Southern Belle, the Lost Cause Movement, the Antebellum, and the overall social structure of the time. The goal is to find the clash between tradition and modernity in these dramas, as the contemporary transformation of society in the first half of the 20th century was significant. This thesis has set the following sub-objectives:

- Find out what features of the myths of old South America are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- Find out what opposites of the characters of the myths of old South America are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- Examine how these plays create and support differences from traditional period values

Based on the objectives, the following research questions were identified and answered in the discussion chapter:

- VO1: What characters of southern myths are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- VO2: What are the opposites of southern myths in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- VO3: What are the differences between traditional values and their opposites in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.

### **Methods used**

Content analysis method was used for the research. Content analysis of the written plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes* were conducted. I also watched both film versions to supplement the research. Based on the findings, I first created a description of the plot and then conducted an analysis in terms of the individual features of southern myth. In the discussion chapter, I provide a summary, answers to the research questions and the fulfilment of the aim

of the thesis, also a comparison with other similar research.

## 2 The Glass Menagerie

The play is about the life of a lower-middle class South American family. The father has abandoned the family, so the son Tom, who takes care of his mother and sister, is the sole breadwinner. However, his life is complicated by his mother's superiority and his daughter's handicap, which makes it impossible for her to find a husband. The play portrays the unfulfilled desires of life and the frustration of everyday life in the society of the time.

### **Author - Tennessee Williams**

Tennessee Williams, by his own name Thomas Lanier Williams, was born March 26, 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi. He was born as the middle child of three children to Cornelius Williams, a traveling salesman, and his wife Edwina, who ran the household and cared for the children. His childhood and dysfunctional family relationships played an important role in T. Williams' life and work. At the age of five, he became seriously ill with diphtheria and nearly died from the effects of the illness. He was bedridden and paralyzed for over a year, and for the next year his movement was restricted to the confines of his apartment. During his illness he was entirely dependent on the company of his mother, who gave him excessive care, and his sister Rose. He thus grew into a gentle, quiet, thin boy, whom his father despised. During his childhood, he also spent a great deal of time with his maternal grandfather and bore it hard when the family moved to St. Louis.<sup>49</sup>

After the loss of his longtime lifelong friend Frank Merle, Williams fell into a severe depression. He had severe problems with alcoholism and was addicted to amphetamines and barbiturates. He was also deeply hurt that at the time he left St. Louis, his mother placed his sister Rose in an institution, where she was subsequently lobotomized. Williams never forgave his mother for this act. On September 25, 1983, he died a curious death, choking on a bottle of eye drops he was about to inject.<sup>50</sup>

### **Best known works**

His first real success was his drama *The Glass Menagerie*, written in 1944. Since the publication of this play, Williams has started his business as a playwright. His next undisputed success was his subsequent play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947. Other dramas such as *Summer and Smoke* (1947) and *The Rose Tattoo* (1951)

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<sup>49</sup> Tennessee Williams. *Memoirs.*( London: A Star Book, 1977)

<sup>50</sup> Tennessee Williams. *Memoirs.*( London: A Star Book, 1977)

followed. The second Pulitzer Prize (1955) went to Williams's drama *The Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which had its premiere on 24 March 1955. Other works include *The Descent of Orpheus*, a reworking of *The Descent of the Angels* (1957), and *The Night of the Iguana* (1959). He also wrote four novels, the best known of which is *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*. A number of his dramas have been made into equally successful films.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Glass Menagerie - plot**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was this drama that had a pivotal impact on Williams' career. In 1944, the drama won the New York Critics' Award and was made into a film by Paul Newman in 1987. The story is based largely on the author's private experiences, and even the characters are inspired by real people in Williams's life.

In fact, the entire drama is a mere memoir. It is the memory of the main character, Thomas Wingfield (hereafter referred to as Tom), who tells his story. He begins the entire play with an opening monologue introducing the story and his life in retrospect. The other characters are his mother Amanda, a Southern lady who is past her prime, his sister Laura, who suffers from a disability, and Jim O'Connor, Tom's work friend and Laura's high school sweetheart.

The story takes place in an apartment in the city of St. Louis, roughly in the 1930s. The Wingfield family lives here, having been abandoned by their father years ago, but the memory of him still permeates the apartment.

Tom lives in a small apartment with his mother and sister, who suffers from physical and mental disabilities. Unable to work, her mother tries to ensure a good future for her daughter. Laura has a limp after a childhood illness and is mentally weak and cannot cope with the stresses of everyday life. Instead, she resorts to her collection of glass animals, which she uses as an escape and a means of reassurance.

Laura's efforts to marry have so far been in vain, so she attends a school for young clerks to be able to support herself. However, the environment of this school is too stressful for Laura, so she instead goes to a boarding school, of which her mother has no idea. They have paid a lot of money to attend the classes, so the situation will cause them even more problems.

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<sup>51</sup> Tennessee Williams. *Memoirs*. (London: A Star Book, 1977). 122.

Amanda is a housewife and Tom works as a warehouse keeper. However, he is extremely dissatisfied with his job and makes his frustration known. However, the family is dependent on his work, as the father has left them and Tom takes on the role of breadwinner.

Although the de facto breadwinner is the hard-working Tom, the whole family is managed and raised by the mother, Amanda. She takes special care of her daughter Laura, preparing her for a life as a good wife, while at the same time pinning her hopes on Laura's career as a civil servant. Amanda's mother is a rather unstable and stressful character, and Tom finds her difficult to live with. She regrets her position as a single mother and urges Tom not to behave like his father, not to become a drunkard and not to leave the family. She speaks into his soul and urges him, trying to understand the difficulties of his life. Tom, however, spends his nights in the biograph and gets drunk, also planning to leave the family like his father.

His mother urges Tom that if he is to do so, he must first secure a future for his sister by finding her a groom. She herself tries to be a role model for Laura, telling her and Tom stories of her youth spent in Mississippi. According to her own words, she was a highly sought-after young lady for whom bachelors lined up. She had a huge number of marriage proposals, but ended up with Tom and Laura's father, who soon left the family. She constantly presses Laura and awaits the arrival of the cavaliers. However, no one is interested in Laura and Laura does not seem to mind her current situation. Instead of worrying, she takes care of her collection of glass animals.

Tom spends his days in unsatisfying work, and the household with his mother is also very unpleasant for him. In the evening, therefore, he goes to the biograph, and on leaving in a rage accidentally breaks one of Laura's glass figures. However, the seemingly small incident is very hurtful to Laura, which shows her over-sensitivity. Tom returns home late at night and drunk, his mother worried that in this lifestyle he will not be able to perform his job responsibly. At the same time, he is worried that she and his sister are an embarrassment to him, and so he does not bring Laura any suitors.

Laura spends her time walking and doing leisure activities instead of school, but her mother discovers this during a follow-up visit to the school. The mother is angry with her daughter because her hopes for her future are getting worse and worse. Amanda therefore desperately sets her sights on finding Laura a groom, investing both time and money in the process. However, her efforts are unsuccessful.

Tom works in the warehouse with his friend Jim, who is better off professionally and financially, and they have known each other for a long time. He considers Jim a suitable groom for his sister. He invites him to dinner at his home.

Tom plans to leave the family, just like his father, which is a very difficult situation for a mother who is unable to support herself. The success of the planned dinner is therefore highly motivating for him. In fact, Amanda agrees to let Tom go, but not before finding a husband for Laura. She elicits details from Tom, wondering if Jim drinks alcohol, how much money he makes, and more. His situation is relatively favorable, but Tom reminds her how different Laura is from the other girls and what handicaps she has. Apart from her lameness, she lives in her own world of illusions, which is a major obstacle to good marital cohabitation.

Naturally, Jim appears to be too good a suitor for Laura, but her mother denies Laura's handicaps to others and to herself. Because of this, she has more demands on her than is realistic. She tries to make Laura more attractive to Jim, altering new clothes for her. He constantly urges her about the importance of the dinner in question, which stresses Laura out.

So Jim comes to the Wingfields' for dinner. He, of course, has no idea that instead of a simple friendly dinner, he has come for a courtship, and the shy Laura, who immediately recognizes her secret love in him, does not even attend the planned dinner. Jim does not even know that his friend Tom has a sister. Jim questions why Laura is not attending. Tom says she is just shy.

The mother comes to dinner very well groomed beyond the point of daily need. Looks like she wants to impress Jim. She is talking to Jim, constantly praising Laura. Tom is rather embarrassed by the whole situation. When Amanda asks if Jim is taken, she stops him before he can get a sentence out. If she had let him talk, she probably would have found out immediately what the reality was. Instead, she invites Jim to the set board and a shy Laura, fortified by alcohol, comes to the table. She bursts into tears and is unable to participate further in the dinner. Her mother excuses her behaviour and blames it on shyness, so the dinner is only between the three of them.

Amanda takes the initiative again and arranges for Laura and Jim to be alone in the room. The electricity in the house is out and the two meet by candlelight in Laura's room. Jim gives her wine to fortify her. Jim is helpful and tries to strike up a conversation with Laura,



helping her to soften up. His mother watches them from behind a curtain, then leaves and clears the dinner dishes with Tom.

After a series of unsuccessful attempts at conversation, Laura finally comes around and reminds Jim of their high school days together. They reminisce about their school years, where Jim, unlike Laura, was very popular. He even remembers Laura, who was younger than him and was often absent from school because of her illness. They also get to Laura's problems with her insecurity and shyness. Jim is very friendly and open with Laura, helping her come to terms with her shortcomings. He is thrilled that Laura has seen him in school plays. He tells Laura about his plans for the future, he is positive, knows how to overcome obstacles and has promising prospects. Laura shows him her collection of glass animals. His mother is constantly trying to find out what is going on in the room, she is overly curious and excited.

He encourages Laura to dance despite her handicap, but one of her glass unicorns breaks in an accident. Laura does not mind the situation, she takes it positively, a definite positive change from before. Jim proves to Laura that she can overcome her obstacles and helps her find her confidence. Their encounter is romantic, bonding and feels very hopeful.

Although the whole scene culminates in a passionate kiss, Jim admits that he is engaged to another lady. He enjoyed meeting Laura, but they never see each other again. He tells about his fiancée Betty, who resembles Laura in some ways. She's quiet, shy and homely. Laura is very disappointed and admits to both Jim and Amanda that she is engaged to Betty and even Tom did not know it.

He awkwardly leaves the Wingfields' apartment and receives a glass unicorn from Laura as a souvenir, whose horn he accidentally broke off. Despite her disappointment, Laura is resigned to reality and invites Jim and Betty to visit. She is thrilled to have danced for the first time, and Jim shows her that life can be better.

Amanda, however, is angry and blames the failure of the courtship on Tom, who had no idea that Jim was engaged. Laura believes Tom, but her mother does not, and she shows her anger by arguing and forcing Tom to rectify the situation. Laura, however, does not blame him. Amanda is clearly the most devastated by the whole situation. And so, after the argument that follows, Tom not only leaves the apartment, but he also leaves St. Louis forever to travel the

world and live the life he wants. Tom dedicates the final part of the memoir to his sister, whom he is unable to forget, and no matter what he does, her image continues to haunt his mind.<sup>52</sup>

### **Analysis of the work**

This section analyses the play *The Glass Menagerie* with an emphasis on identifying elements associated with the old South American myth.

#### **2.1.1 Absence of patriarchal family**

Tom is the breadwinner. After her father left the family sixteen years ago, he became a male support for his mother. However, Amanda holds the position of head of the family, which does not suit Tom at all and he wants to leave home, just like his father.

The absence of a father in the family is in the play a form of denial of the values and myths of the old American South, where women revere a patriarchal society. Because of his father's departure from home, his mother Amanda takes the role of the man, even though Tom provides for the entire family materially. It raises the question of whether Amanda was the head of the family even when she and her husband were together, and whether that was one of the reasons he left the family. I am also led to this reflection by the fact that Tom himself has a desire to leave the family because of his mother's superiority.

After all, we actually see the situation where Tom feels constrained by his mother in the play:

"- I have nothing that belongs to me! (...) The flat, your flat! And who pays the rent? Who toils like a mule? (...) I don't want to listen anymore!"

The fact that he lives with his mother and two years older sister, that he goes to work every day in a warehouse to provide for them and himself, that he lives from paycheck to paycheck, is not exactly uplifting for the 22-year-old. Although he assumes his male role responsibly and provides his sister and mother with support, his role as head of the family is practically negated by the matriarchal values in the family. Not only is this role demeaning to him as a man in itself, in the context of the patriarchal society of the time, it must have had all the more impact on him. This fact may justify his subsequent behaviour of trying to escape from home. He spends his days at work and goes to the pub in the evening and returns home late at night, often drunk.

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<sup>52</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999).

### 2.1.2 Southern Belle and women characters

Laura and Tom's mother, Amanda, is a middle-aged housewife. In her own words, she used to be a beauty with no shortage of suitors. Her husband has run away and he prefers to wander the States, while Amanda focuses her attention on her children, marginally on her work in women's groups. She's always looking back. She reminisces about her childhood and youth in the Mississippi Delta.

Amanda often speaks of her youth as a depiction of the values of the American South, characterizing her as a young Southern girl who was respected and reciprocated by many suitors. Amanda enjoys revisiting her past and recounting to her children how successful and popular she used to be: "*One Sunday afternoon your mother was visited on Blue Mountain - seventeen! - Seventeen cavaliers! How many times we had no place to sit them down.*"<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, she lists their names over and over again, emphasizing that they were young men from rich and successful families and that it took little for her to enter such circles. These are social circles with typical white supremacy and a multitude of owned slaves. For a young lady, as Amanda was according to her narrative, the goal was to become this superior Southern woman who, because of her beauty, would marry into a wealthy family and thereby secure a future for herself and her (then future) children.

The convenient marriage that would have secured Amanda and her future offspring did not materialize, and she married Tom and Laura's father, who did not stay long with the family. However, she does not seem to have felt any particular resentment towards her husband after years away from her. Rather, she understood that he had to leave because his nature allowed him no other way out. Thus her life took on a completely different reality and instead she is part of the lower middle class and only her young son provides materially for her and her daughter. In her own family, she occupies the role of husband and "head of the family," suggesting a fairly clear clash between the illusion and myth of southern belle and her real life.

Among the southern myths, the woman appears as beautiful, gentle, pure, and brimming with tenderness. At the same time, she is able to rise up and defend her father's beloved land when necessary, being a woman of energy, rationality, and fighting spirit. In *The Glass Menagerie*,

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<sup>53</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 7.

however, Tom's older sister Laura stands out, displaying values quite different.

Laura did not graduate high school or business school. She spends her time at home tending to her collection of glass miniatures. Laura is disabled - after a childhood illness she limps on one leg. In addition, she is extremely sensitive, afraid of contact with people, which causes her stomach problems. Despite all of her daughter's handicaps, her mother is convinced that Laura has something to offer, both to potential partners and eventually in employment. She considers Laura's condition a whim. But at twenty-four, Laura has not completed her secondary education, has no job and no boyfriend. Her position is unenviable.

It all stems from Laura's lack of confidence. She is a dramatic character who represents people who are extremely closed off from the world, hidden in their shell, with the feeling that if they stick their head out of it, someone will blow it off. Laura's physical disability has a great influence on her current state. However, it is only one part of the unfortunate combination that makes Laura just the way she is. Her innate nature, her parents frustrated with their lives, is also to blame. The feeling of "I am not good enough" has stayed with her and manifests itself in every way: at school, in communication with peers, in front of her brother. This conception of the Southern woman can be described as the complete opposite of the mythical Southern Belle. Williams could use this conception of Laura not only to point to her personal life and her sister Rose, but also to the subjugation of the Southern Belle myth in Southern dramas.

Williams based the character of Laura and her close relationship with her brother on his sister Rose, with whom he was also very close. He never forgave his mother for having her daughter undergo a prefrontal lobotomy. This is a procedure in which part of the brain is removed to "calm" the patient. If the character of Tom carries Laura's abandonment as his burden, Tennessee too is constantly reminded of the wrongs he believes he has done to Rose. For example, after one party that young Thomas secretly hosted at home, Rose sued him to her parents. "I hate that ugly face of yours!" he hissed angrily at her. "It was the cruelest thing I ever did in my life. I can't stop beating myself up about it," he assesses years later, his words to his extremely over-emotional and underestimating sister.<sup>54</sup>

In the play, Amanda's mother transfers her unfulfilled desires of marrying a rich gentleman to Laura. She wants to marry her daughter off and provide her with security and a future. For Laura, however, achieving the reality of marrying a rich and successful man and becoming the

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<sup>54</sup> Tennessee Williams. (London: A Star Book, 1977.) 122.

mythical wife of the old American South is highly unrealistic. The daughter is handicapped both physically (by a limp) and mentally, and therefore men show no interest in her, not even average men. This reality is difficult for Amanda's mother to accept.

*"Not a single cavalier? Out of the question! It would have to be a whirlwind, it would have to be the flood of the world,"*<sup>55</sup> She proves Laura's incompetence and failure. At the same time, with these words, Amanda deflects what is in the air: that Laura will not marry: *"Mommy's afraid I'll be left out to dry."*<sup>56</sup>

And so she tries to send Laura to school in hopes of her applying for a secretarial job. Amanda clings to the idea. She already sees her daughter as a successful clerk in a warm office, with a regular decent income. This, too, shows that in the reality of life in the American South at that time, the Southern Belle is a mere myth. The daughter is left to fend for herself, moreover, struggling with her handicaps. Elements of the New South, which sought to develop industry and services as a replacement for slavery and the plantation system, can be seen in the possibility of finding work in the tertiary sector (clerical services).

But not even this idea of Laura's life is coming true. The disappointment of Laura's failure is great for Amanda: *"Fifty dollars of tuition, all our plans - all the hopes and aspirations I had for you - all gone, all gone up in smoke."*<sup>57</sup>

She does not understand how her daughter can waste such an opportunity, and only for reasons of mental imbalance, which Amanda does not believe in (she does not see importance to them, and certainly not their insurmountability), unlike Laura, who cannot help it. To understand Amanda is also to read her reasoning correctly: at a moment when neither of them is secure, it is not possible to play the "sensitive" and therefore not have an education, a job or a groom. The reality of both women's lives is quite harsh, especially Laura at her age does not have good prospects for the future. She is not a glorified beauty of the American South and instead lives in material insecurity and is dependent on her brother and mother.

Laura's world includes, on one hand, her collection (where she does not let anyone in) and, on the other hand, her family life with her mother and brother. She is very closed, which creates a character split between her and her mother. Amanda shouts her fantasies and (unfulfilled)

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<sup>55</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 8.

<sup>56</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 8.

<sup>57</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 15.

wishes to the world. That is why she talks about her suitors, and that is why she talks about Laura's suitors (as if she has not noticed that none have ever come and none are forthcoming). In doing so, she compensates for her disappointment and at the same time transmits to Laura the illusory hope that she will succeed. She then prefers to escape her mother's manipulative behaviour into her own world.

Amanda: "You have to stay fresh and beautiful. - Soon the cavaliers will start coming."<sup>58</sup>

Laura is not kidding herself, but neither does she seem to find the statement "I don't think any will come" tragic. Laura has pushed the category of partnership out of her world, as well as school and work. She does not dwell on it and remains calm. The arrival of Jim, who means everything to her that she has not achieved and, according to her own beliefs, cannot achieve, causes her even more problems.

On free reflection, one can observe that the difference between a mother and her daughter is similar to the difference between the two faces of Southern Belle. Laura symbolizes the fragility and gentleness of the American Southern girl (albeit in a negatively perverted form), while the mother is the energetic and combative (albeit completely irrational) "Southern lady" who defends her daughter's future at all costs, albeit practically only in her imagination.

### **2.1.3 Lost cause and men characters**

The play features two young men whose view of the world differs because of the situation. Tom is Laura's brother and Amanda's son. Next to him is his friend Jim, who is to become Laura's groom, although he is already engaged himself. The world view of these two men is different and reflects a rational world view with myths of the old South, especially Lost Cause, which created unrealistic ideas of The American Civil War

Tom's life is very unfulfilled and frustrating. Not to wonder, he lives in a matriarchal household that undermines his masculinity and overall patterns for family that are unusual for society at the time, after all.

Amanda constantly reminds Tom of her disappointment. She senses from him that he is not happy in the role she has assigned him and expects him to play. His mother disapproves of him going to the pubs in the evenings instead of getting a good night's sleep and doing his job well. She sees his behavior as a threat to the entire family (how would they support themselves if he

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<sup>58</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 8.

lost his job or left them?) At the same time, Amanda is able to objectively assess the situation, and even sympathize with Tom: *"I know that working in the warehouse is not the height of your ambition, and that like everyone else in God's world you have had to make sacrifices, but Tom - Tom - life is not a feather, life requires endurance!"*<sup>59</sup>

On the one hand, Amanda's mind is constantly drifting into memories of her own bright past full of idyllic prospects; on the other hand, she demands a rational and responsible attitude from her son, which means living within conventions and providing (only) material needs. *"Don't go at me with instincts. People have gotten away from instinct. Instinct belongs to animals. The adult Christian has no need of instincts!"*<sup>60</sup>

The more Tom gets into stereotypes and conflicts with his mother and sees his sister's plight, the more he is attracted to the world of fantasies and his desire for new things and experiences grows. He forms a naive idea of the world. This is shown in the context of his predilection for films, where he frequents cinemas daily and returns home late at night, often drunk.

He says to his friend in the warehouse: *„Look at them. All those dazzling stars - who live an adventurous life - they eat up everything! (...) Hollywood heroes are having adventures for all of America, and all of America is sitting in a dark hall watching them take it up the nose."*<sup>61</sup>

Tom would like to live like them and avoid his below-average stereotype, which frustrates him more and more. As a way out of this situation, he mentions the war, which he believes believes "make adventure accessible to the masses."<sup>62</sup>

Tom himself has not experienced war and has no idea what this situation entails. In his monologue, Tom (as the narrator) outlines the situation in which Tom-the-figure (and others) lived. The world (especially in Europe) was becoming unsettled and although it was still some time away, war was approaching: *„It hovered in the mist over Berchtesgaden, caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella. There was Guernica in Spain! But here, only swing, hot jazz and alcohol, dance halls, bars, cinemas and sex, which hung like a chandelier in the darkness, flooding the world with a fleeting, deceptive rainbow. The whole world was waiting for the*

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<sup>59</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 60.

<sup>60</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 34.

<sup>61</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 25.

<sup>62</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 31.

*bombs to start dropping.*"<sup>63</sup>

His father, who had been through the war, left home and thus did not offer his son a view of this reality. In the context of the society of the time, with the Lost Cause movement, he could therefore have been even more at odds with reality. He sees the war as an adventure that will take him out of his everyday misery and give his life the action and sparkle it lacks. However, this idea is completely naive and unrealistic.

It is natural, then, that Tom was not satisfied with the life of the American working class, affected by the economic crisis, whose only concern was to have something to eat and a place to lay their heads. Of course, all those who in a few years' time would be in the war would see it differently, and instead dream of a quiet stereotypical life where life was not at stake. Still, Tom's naive desire for adventure is understandable given his age, his current condition, and his father's role model. On the other hand, it is disparaging to the reality and the victims of war.

The second important male character in the play is Jim. He dreams of big things and a big life, while living the average life of a warehouse worker and is only slightly better off financially than Tom. In his early youth, his life was simple. Jim expected that when he finished school, everything he wanted would fall into his lap. And no wonder - he had the makings of a grammar school boy - he was a good student, always had plenty of friends around him, he was liked by girls, was a popular companion, probably good at sports, even played a successful lead role in the school's theatrical production of the operetta *The Pirates of Penzance*. So who else was going to make it further? But something went wrong and he is "just" average, hence disappointed.

It was therefore a great surprise to him when, in the six years since graduating, he encountered obstacles that he found difficult to overcome. Along the way, he lost his illusions about people, about the "adult" world, and partly about himself - about his talents, his abilities, his personal charm, his intelligence... This discovery was surely the worst for him, because it made him doubt everything he believed in.

But it is all these revelations that allow him to make the great ideas about his life come true. In doing so, Jim has found out how the world works, and what is more, he has not given up has not lost his courage. Compared to Tom and Laura, both of whom are unable to withstand a clash

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<sup>63</sup> Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*. (New Directions, 1999). 35.



with reality, he is very different.

Both Tom and Jim want to make a change in their lives. But Jim's view of the future is much more realistic than Tom's. Simply put - if Jim wants to get out of the shoe warehouse and pursue a career in electrical engineering, then Tom's plan ends up being just that - "get out of the warehouse." Everything else is just his vague notions and perhaps his belief that he will be lucky and his future will just turn out well.

Although he is by default average relative to society and severely below average in his own assessment, he takes reality differently than Tom. He does not flee from reality to the cinemas and bars, he does not think of war as the only possible driver of the boring lives of the American lower-middle class, but he goes specifically towards his goals. He takes night classes in radio engineering and public speaking. Unlike Tom, he has a plan and a realistic starting point to bring about change in his life, even though it has not yet occurred.

The characters of these two young men show the difference between reality and the world of illusion that Lost Cause symbolizes. Tom sees the war as a mythical source of adventure, and his life corresponds to the fact that his view on this issue is not only completely unrealistic. Jim, on the other hand, is the most realistic character of the entire drama and manages to learn from his mistakes of imagining life to be easy and instead of retreating into a world of illusion, he has gained the courage to still accomplish great things. In order to achieve his goals, he educates himself and acquires new skills that add to his rationality.

### 3 The Little Foxes

The Little Foxes is one of the best known works of author Lillian Hellman. It depicts the life and moral decay of a wealthy family from the American South who are willing to do anything to acquire their fortune. It shows the position of women in the society of the time and the ways in which they are able to assert their interests.

#### **Author - Lillian Hellman**

Lillian Hellman was an American playwright. She was born into a Jewish shoe merchant's family. When she was five, the family moved to New York. Lillian later returned often to her native South. After high school, she started college but dropped out. She was primarily interested in literary work.

She was also known for her leftist views, which caused obstacles in her career and a rather poor public opinion. For thirty years she was in a relationship with the American mystery and detective novel author Dashiell Hammett, who was publicly known to be a communist. She also became the inspiration for his character Nora Charles. She was also a literary agent and longtime friend of Dorothy Parker.

Lillian Hellman has held various jobs in business and as a publishing and theatre lecturer. Since 1934, she has devoted herself to literary work and public activities. From 1936 to 1937 she traveled across Europe, stayed in the Soviet Union, visited Republican Spain and its battlefields with fascism, and in 1948 came to Czechoslovakia.

She got in trouble for her leftist beliefs, and in 1952 she was summoned before The House Un-American Activities Committee. It was not until the publication of her memoirs in 1969 that Lillian Hellman's celebrity status was restored.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Best known works**

The theatre and public activity have been Lillian Hellman's life since her first play. Among her best known works are the following.

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<sup>64</sup>William Wright. *Lillian Hellman: the Image, the Woman*. (United States. Simon & Schuster. 2000).

**The Children's Hour** - 1934, a psychological drama about a scheming girl who destroys her teachers' existence with a trumped-up accusation of perversion. The play was a great success - nearly 700 performances.

**Days to Come** - 1936, the play focuses on the workers' strike, is a reflection of the economic crisis of the time. The play's low profile in the US was offset by growing international recognition.

**The Little Foxes**- 1939, based on the biblical parable of the plundering of a fertile vineyard, the history of the old Southern family Hubbard is used to depict the decay of moral principles. The play has made its way to the American and international stages, has been made into a film, and the libretto for the opera *Regina* was written.

**Watch on the Rhine** - 1941, warning of the threat of fascism. It won an award in New York as the best play of the year.

**The Searching Wind** - 1944, the play has a documentary character. It wonders whether the disasters of World War II could have been prevented.

**Another Part of the Forest** - 1946, the author returns to the theme of the *Little Foxes*. It is about the same greedy Southern family, this time in retrospect.

**The Autumn Garden** - 1951, a poetically poignant play from the Southern present. In an intimate atmosphere, the play presents a series of questions without a clear position that justifies or condemns certain actions.

**Toys in the Attic** - 1960, about the fate of a Southern family ruined by deception and delusion.<sup>65</sup>

### **The little foxes - plot**

The main character of the play is Regina, a Southern woman who seeks to acquire her family's fortune in the environment of South American society in the early 20th century. The story takes place in 1900 in an unnamed South American town near Mississippi. It is a time after the emancipation of blacks from slavery. They are establishing their place in society, with jobs and equal rights as everyone else. At least this is the spirit in which the plot of the play is carried,

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<sup>65</sup> REDAKCE TISKALI MEDIA A.S. *Lillian Hellmanová – životopis*. [online]. 2015. Accessed October 11, 2021. ISSN 1801-5131.

and the film in particular focuses on this concept, portraying it in an almost idyllic way.

Alexandra is heading home and on the way she meets the very attractive son of the seamstress, David, with whom she is already acquainted. He jokes with her about how the only person in her family she likes is her father. Already this gives a foreshadowing of the issues of the whole plot. Regina and her brothers live near each other, the families are close, but they have a lot of intrigue between them.

Her father considered only his sons to be the rightful heirs to the family fortune, as was customary at the time, and her brothers Benjamin and Oscar therefore divided the family fortune into two independent estates.

Instead of an inheritance, Regina acquired the property by a marriage of convenience to Horace. Her husband has a fragile and cautious nature, he is also a businessman and provides her with financial support. Because of his nature, he becomes a tool of family manipulation through which Regina greedily tries to amass as much wealth as possible.

Her brother Oscar married the much-despised alcoholic Birdie to acquire the cotton plantations and fields from her family's estate. Together they have a son, Leo, who is the same age as Regina's daughter Alexandra. He works as a bank teller, is arrogant, conceited and despises his mother. Birdie finds cohabitation with her husband and son uncomfortable and has a lonely and desperate life.

Regina hosts a dinner party at her home, attended by her brothers and their families and other people. Oscar presents his business plan for which he wants to get investment. Together with his brother Benjamin, Oscar wants to join forces and build a cotton mill, which is a mechanical plant for processing cotton cloth and fabric. They need an investment of \$75,000 for this project. At the dinner, it is clear that his wife Birdie has a very unfavorable position in the whole family, no one takes her seriously and the only good relationship she has is with her niece Alexandra. Regina, on the other hand, is her opposite, able to establish her place and defend her point of view.

After a successful dinner, they celebrate that their plan will be realized. But Regina announces her own intention, to go to Chicago to live a new life, taking her daughter Alexandra with her. She wants to travel more and have everything she wants in life. They resolve to split the investment, which Regina wants to participate in using her husband's out-of-town finances. She needs to take certain steps to get a share of the new venture.

She therefore decides to send her daughter Alexandra to Baltimore, where Horace lives, and bring him back under the pretext that the family misses him. As part of the consolidation of the family fortune, he contemplates marrying Alexandra off to her cousin Leo. The next day Alex sets out to see her father, going alone. She arrives to see her father, with whom she has a close and loving relationship. She confides that she has seen David with another girl because she is interested in him. She has been on several outings and picnics with him. However, he does not seem to be interested in her.

Meanwhile, Leo talks to his father, who has access to Horace's bank deposits. He has \$90,000 worth of important debentures in the bank. His father, therefore, gets an idea about how he can steal the bonds without Horace's knowledge and borrow them to invest in the cotton mill and directs Leo to take the bonds from the bank.

Alexandra and Horace arrive home where Horace needs to rest due to his failing health. He suffers from heart weakness, is dependent on medication, and is constantly at risk of a heart attack. He blames Regina for not taking an interest in him and not visiting him in Baltimore where he was being treated. The marriage of Leo and Alexandra is unacceptable to him and he forbids it. Even Ben and Oscar come to him with friendly greetings, but they are only after money and investment in their project. Although he is unwell and weak, he is persuaded to trade, his wife urges him on, and Horace sees that Regina is only after the money. This may be the exact reason he decides to pull her out of the investment entirely. He wants to invest with her brothers alone and refuses to give Regina a share of the investment, his decision is final. His decision can also be attributed to the overall nature of his wife and the ways in which she treats him.

While they argue, Oscar comes up with an idea to steal Horace's debentures from the bank vault. Meanwhile, David becomes Alex's suitor. With him, she learns what her mother and the family that uses and manipulates her are really like. Alexandra sees how her behavior is actually harming her father and endangering his health. Regina, however, is not interested in her opinions.

The time pressure on the investment puts everyone under stress and the brothers do not want to wait for Regina, preferring to steal the debentures from the bank thinking Horace will never know. Regina is angry with him, telling him that she looks forward to his death and hopes it comes soon. Alexandra overhears the entire conversation. When she meets with David, he urges her to leave her family and live a better life.

Birdie, David, Horace, and Alexandra have a conversation at lunch together where Birdie admits how she really feels. Birdie is lonely, depressed and drinks alcohol alone every day. She admits that she does not like her own son. In reality, Oscar only married her for the family fortune he really wanted. He is worried that Alexandra will end up like her in the family. David therefore sees clearly how important it is for Alexandra to leave the family. Birdie acts as a bad role model and breaks down in tears at the family gathering, Alexandra comforts her.

Horace comes to the bank to adjust his will, where he discovers that his debentures are missing. Leo is nervous about the whole situation, plus he is stupid, so it is not difficult to figure out where the bonds have gone. Horace, however, keeps it to himself. He meets David, who is concerned and interested in Alexandra. Regina shows the same interest, but David lets her know that he is not interested in her opinions.

Horace informs Regina that his bonds have disappeared, missing exactly 75,000 UDS, the required investment amount. He understands that Regina did not take the money and suspects Leo, but calls his act a loan to protect him. She confesses to Horace that she only married him for his money because her family's property was inherited by her brothers. All her talk hurts him so much that he suffers a heart attack.

Benjamin, Oscar and Leo recognize that their theft has been discovered. The problem is that Regina knows about the theft and uses it against them. When he suffers a heart attack in the aftermath, Regina makes no attempt to help him. Horace dies within a few hours without the ability to change his will. This gives Regina free rein to dispose of his property and blackmail his brothers, whom she wants a 75% ownership stake in the cotton mill. Otherwise, she threatens to report Oscar's son Leo and accuse him of stealing the bonds.

This behaviour and intrigue leads to her daughter Alexandra disowning and abandoning her. Her husband is dead and she has disgusted and alienated her entire family by her behaviour. Although Regina acquires all the property she sought, she is left all alone, without friends and family.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lillian Hellman. *The Little Foxes* (Josef Wienberger Plays, 2001.)

## **Analysis of the work**

### **3.1.1 Patriarchal family**

Unlike *Glass Menagerie*, in this work we encounter the clear presence of a patriarchal family. The hierarchy is quite obvious, which is also a central motive for the emergence of dramatic conflict.

The men have inherited all the family property and Regina lives off the money in an unsatisfying marriage. Yet she feels entitled to her share, which she has been denied. All the property lies in the hands of her brothers and husband, which fuels her need to acquire the property in other than an equitable way. By her exclusion from the inheritance she herself has been unfairly deprived of the property and her way of recovering it is also unfair.

Regina is bossy and tries to assert herself in front of her brothers. In a private conversation, she tries to get Oscar to include her in the family cotton mill business, but he refuses with words: "Since when do I take orders from you?!"

Throughout the drama there is a pervasive presence of male dominance that is typical of American society until emancipation in the second half of the 20th century. Men are the head of the family and are entitled to the property and to make decisions about it, they manage it themselves. Women are excluded from these activities and put on the sidelines. The drama responds precisely to the given injustice of the society of the time, where Regina interferes in the decision-making process of managing property. However, she cannot do so in a straightforward manner, so she resorts to intrigue, deception and manipulation.

On the other hand, the principle of patriarchal society in the drama is contradicted by the bond between Horace and Regina. The man is of a weak kindly nature and is easily manipulated, his ego is not prominent enough in the context of the time. Regina's manipulative nature therefore brings her to the forefront in decision making. She uses her daughter Alexandra to lure her husband home from Baltimore and uses him and his brothers to invest in a cotton mill. She is at least an equal in their discussions together, exuding energy, while her husband's failing health is evident.

Patriarchal superiority is not only manifested towards women, but also towards Lee, by his father and uncle. They force him to steal Horace's debentures in his work. However, they refuse to make him a business partner; he only commits the crime on the basis of a promised

unspecified reward, which he does not receive. Leo does not look like an adept heir to a vast fortune, he is dumb, spoiled and easily manipulated.

In terms of dominance, it is clear that this role in the play is held by the siblings Oscar, Benjamin and Regina, who occupy the position of head of the family in their families and in relation to their children and partners. Regina places herself in this role of her own volition, by virtue of her superiority over her daughter and husband. Horace, however, has no tolerance for her intentions; he finds his wife disappointing because of her obvious abuse and prioritization of property over family relationships. Instead, he chooses only her brothers as business partners. He does not take a positive view of her superiority and pursuit of property, does not accept her demands, and makes final decisions according to his own will. Since Regina's plan does not work out, she decides to take advantage of Horace's illness and refuses to help him. She asserts her dominance by letting him die.

In fact, she may benefit more from her inheritance than from the business partnership from which her men have excluded her. At the same time, she will take advantage of Horace's discovery that Leo stole the debentures from his bank account. She blackmails her brothers and nephews into giving her a 75 % share of the cotton mill or else she will turn in Leo, who would go to jail. Although she gains power over her husband's estate with his death, the brothers turn away from her. Likewise, her daughter rejects her superiority and instead of going to Chicago with her mother after her father's death, she leaves her with her suitor David.

### **3.1.2 Southern Belle and female characters**

In the drama we meet three completely different women. The main character is Regina, who is a strong, expressive, but inside a very corrupt woman.

On the other side is her daughter Alexandra, who is a gentle and sensitive young lady. She does not identify with her mother's scheming and manipulative nature, a gentle nature she inherited from her father. This character is the closest to the mythical Southern Belle, within the two works examined. It is the closest representation of this phenomenon. Alexandra is a young girl from a wealthy Southern family. She is also very attractive in the film adaptation.

She has a gentle and sensitive nature, and should be obedient and devoted to her father. However, this dominant role in the family is played by Regina, whom Alexandra obeys at her word and does not contradict her in any way. Regina therefore uses her to manipulate her, sending her daughter to her father Horace in a neighbouring town in order to lure him home,



where he has not lived for some time. The reason, of course, is the misuse of his property and manipulation to invest in a cotton mill, which Horace accepts, but only accepts her brothers as partners, not Regina. Her behaviour is very abusive and quite stressful for a husband in poor health. This situation causes Alexandra to resent her mother, but she does not allow her to interfere in any situation. She gradually learns to defy her mother and stand up for herself. The turning point comes when her father dies. Alexandra sees how heartless her mother is and argues with her brothers and Lee over the stolen debentures. She then refuses to live with her mother any longer and leaves her. It certainly cannot be said here that she is defending her family and her father's land. On the contrary, she leaves the property to her mother, who has gained everything she wanted by doing so, and leaves home for her future partner.

In character, her mother represents the opposite, a strong and energetic woman who fights for her father's land in the myths of the American South. In the play's conception, however, her goals are quite different. Instead, she seeks to gain as much as possible for herself, probably because she feels inferior to her brothers and deprived of the family fortune. She even admits to her husband before her death that she married him for his wealth and because she felt abandoned. However, she demonstrates her ability to cope with patriarchal superiority in virtually only negative terms. She puts all her energy into her domineering and greed, which must be all the more frustrating when none of her schemes and manipulations have the effect she expected. She tries to assert herself in front of her brothers and become their business partner, but it is not entirely clear whether they reject her in the social context of being a woman or whether they do so because of their own greed and avarice. They are not honest in any respect either, they are also only interested in property. Southern Belle as a Southern myth is not embodied by the main character Regina, nor can direct opposites be perceived to a large extent.

The complete opposite is Birdie, who is married to Regina's brother. She is an alcoholic and elderly woman who is part of the family, but no one, not even her husband, takes her seriously. It is clear that Oscar entered into this bond purely for financial reasons. Birdie is not interested in family business and investments, she keeps to herself unlike Regina who actively participates in discussions with men about property. She enters into them and puts herself on equal footing, while Birdie keeps aloof. It is evident in Birdie that she is disillusioned with life and does not receive love from her husband or son in her family.

In an interview with Horace and Alexandra, she herself says that she does not like her son at all, "not more than Oscar." It is not clear why, though, because the character of Leo is not as

reprehensible as his father, Benjamin and Regina. While Leo acts on their behalf out of a desire to acquire property, he appears rather foolish and inexperienced.

Birdie is torn by her life, she is lonely and desperate. Out of her desperation she resorts to drinking and does not assert herself in her family. Alexandra and Horace are considerate of her, but Regina and her brothers despise her. Birdie is mentally unstable, weak and keeps to herself. It is all the more striking that most of the money Oscar owns actually comes from his marriage to her. The question here is whether this is purely due to the patriarchal society of the time, Oscar's cold and greedy behaviour or also her own submissiveness and passive behaviour. It is clear in the relationship between Regina and her brothers that the opinions of women are subordinate to his, however, by her nature and imperiousness Regina does not hold back from her brothers. On the contrary, she tries to control everyone around her and despises Birdie. From this we can conclude that Birdie expresses herself in a passive manner of her own volition and her opinions are not oppressed, rather they are not expressed at all regardless of the circumstances.

With his sensitive nature, he identifies with the young Alexandra, in whom he sees a young version of himself. He warns her against her mother and uncles so that she doesn't end up like her in 20 years, desperate and alone with a family that despises her. Rather than Southern Belle (or her opposite), Birdie identifies with the negative effect of patriarchal attitudes in which she is oppressed as a woman by her heartless husband and son. In her unstable nature, she is more reminiscent of the character Laura in *Glass Menagerie*. She herself lacks the strength and will to stand up for herself. However, Alexandra begins to differ from her in this respect at the moment of her father's death, when she decides to leave her mother and go to her future partner, whom her mother disapproves of because of his social status. Her suitor, David, makes it clear that he does not like her family, which is shown early on in the play, "There is only one member of your family I like, your father," and continues as he defies her mother's will and ends up fighting with Leo. It is clear, therefore, that Alexandra's direction in life is different from her aunt, who married Regina's brother Oscar, and turns away from her family, which predicts a better future for her than Birdie's.

### **3.1.3 Old and New South**

In the drama, the racial divide among society is evident. Specifically, the film adaptation shows an idyllic society at the beginning, where the "whites" are on top and the "blacks" are instead loving servants who are totally connected to their position and have everything they need in

life. Alexandra has a friendly relationship with her maid, and in one of the very first scenes we see happy black children running into the home of a wealthy family. They are happy in their lives, they have everything they need and society accepts them as equals.

Society appears idyllic with positions divided in such a way that everyone is happy, even though this is a typical racial stereotype from the slave era. No one is oppressed or has their rights questioned. The bearer of this ideal in the Giddens family is the maid, who is always friendly and expresses an opinion that is respected by others. Alexandra is friendly towards her, only Regina acts cold and distant, but this is due to her nature.

In the film's adaptation, racial positions are precisely divided, with blacks in the position of servants along with the family of David, Alexandra's suitor, who is the son of Regina's seamstress. None of the blacks are in a higher social or professional position. The distribution of the positions of "masters and servants" is therefore practically the same as in the days of slavery, except that now they are all free and perfectly happy. So the positions remain the same, only now it is by free choice, which of course makes no logical sense. The film adaptation of the play in particular is very idyllically presented in this regard, regardless of any social irregularities of the time. There is a clear denial of racism, slavery and post-revolutionary social ills.

The heroes of the play represent a characteristically superior white family who made their fortune from growing cotton. The families owning the cotton trade are very wealthy and superior in the social ladder. Thus, they should embody happiness as society of the time imagines it. On the contrary, they actually reflect unhappiness, corruption of character and mutual resentment, especially on Regina's part.

The racial stereotype in the play is not quite complete. David, Alexandra's suitor, has a lower social level, but he openly despises her family and will not be manipulated. He and his mother, who is Regina's seamstress, also represent the lower class here. At the end of the play, therefore, Alexandra turns away not only from her mother but also from the family fortune.

The drama takes place in 1900, when slavery was already banned, but it is obvious that in earlier times the ancestors of the families were slave owners. This is confirmed by Birdie when she talks to Alexandra and Horace about how she met her husband Oscar. She admits to alcoholism and that her marriage to him destroyed her. She is weak-willed and unstable, drinking alone. Her parents despised Oscar precisely because he and his siblings came from a slaveholding

family. However, her family also has considerable wealth with a similar past, so it is clear that this is not the only issue. Regina and her siblings are relatively unpopular people in their neighborhood because of their character, not their wealth. Regina is also disliked by David, Alexandra's suitor. He, on the other hand, advises her on how she can escape from her family, even though he loves her father. He comes from a lower social class, the son of a seamstress. However, he makes it clear to Regina in the conversation that her opinion is irrelevant to him in terms of whether she approves of his relationship with Alexandra: "If I do or what actually I don't care whether you like it or not." He also expresses his opinion to Leo, whom he slaps after suggesting that his interest in Alexandra is based on the family fortune.

Later, she found out he only married her for the family fortune. He warns of their callousness and warns Alexandra not to end up like her.

The play already focuses on the period after the abolition of slavery, but the organization of society is not fundamentally different from the time of slavery.

The whole plot of the play is linked to this issue. The family is transforming their cotton empire, where people can no longer work as slaves and instead want to invest in an automated operation that replaces human labour. Their intention reflects the social order of the time, and the transition to automation, with machines replacing slaves, may thus suggest a definitive end to slavery as it was known in the Old South.

## 4 Discussion

This part of the thesis evaluates the results of the analysis of the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*, which fulfill the following sub-objectives.

- To find out what features of the myths of old South America are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- To determine what contrasting features of the myths of old South America are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- Examine how these plays create and support differences from traditional period values
- Similarly, the discussion answers the chosen research questions. The individual sections are evaluated separately in terms of the two separate plays.
- VO1: What features of southern myths are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- VO2: What opposites of southern myths are found in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*.
- VO3: What are the differences between traditional values and their opposites in the plays *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes*

In both plays, the clash between tradition and modernity is quite clear. The traditions of the old American South speak of a social order in which "whites" are superior to "blacks" and men are superior to women. The complicated social situation of the time is presented in a one-sided and idyllic way from the perspective of the Old South myths. The social arrangement is presented in such a way that the hierarchy created is satisfactory for all concerned, if not bringing them happiness and joy in life. The distorted view of history and South American society at the turn of the 19th century (+- 20 years) has sought to deny all real crimes against health, life and human dignity. The transformation that this society underwent after the war was fundamental and the changes in the social order are reflected in works from the 1930s and 1940s that look back on this period.

In the two works compared, we find not only a clash between tradition and modernity, but also different levels of change in the family structure, first in the area of female emancipation. With regard to the timeline, I will first mention Lillian Hellman's play *The Little Foxes*, which takes

place in the early 1900s directly. The main character here is Regina, who represents the clash between tradition and modernity, and through intrigue, manipulation and blackmail, she gets the position she wants and tries to get her family fortune.

Outwardly, Regina acts as an equal to men, especially in the environment of her family, where she challenges the patriarchal superiority of her brothers and husband. It should be noted that, in the end, this is just a vocal questioning of their will, opinions and family tradition (only the brothers inherited the property). In fact, her resistance to the men in question has no effect and in many situations she experiences rejection. A specific situation is the rejection by her brother Oscar, whom she tries to force in a private conversation to accept her into the family business. Similarly, she is refused admission to the store by her dying husband, who, though in frail health and with little energy to resist Regina's loud superiority and domineering ways, nevertheless refuses to act on her behalf by his actions. The final decision always falls to the men, which is highly frustrating for Regina. She therefore decides to get her way in an extremely mean-spirited way, i.e., she lets her husband die and blackmails her brothers on his deathbed for stealing the bonds. Contrasting her defiant nature is Birdie, her brother's wife, who is quiet, keeps to herself and does not contradict the men in any way. This position is also daunting for her as a woman and combined with the callousness and greed of her husband and son, she feels alone, desperate and resorts to alcoholism.

Regina's daughter Alexandra, on the other hand, is the representative of tradition, and she has a sensitive and submissive nature, which is why she is controlled and manipulated by her mother. On the contrary, she has a warm and affectionate relationship with her father, as does her suitor David. The strong position of power in the relationship with the daughter is held by the mother Regina, not the father. In this respect, it can be observed that Regina's questioning of her inferior position has only had a real effect on her relationship with her daughter; the men in the family have not accepted this attitude. As a result, however, the daughter abandoned her, as did the rest of the family.

A significant social progression in female emancipation and the challenging of the traditional patriarchal family occurs in *The Glass Menagerie*, a play set some 35-40 years later. Here it is not just a clash between tradition and modernity, but a complete role reversal and suppression of the male position.

Amanda's mother is the head of the family that her father left behind. Amanda remembers her youth in the context of Southern tradition, when she was a young beautiful lady who was desired

by many men. The reality of life was different as a result, a marriage of convenience did not occur and she married into the middle class. Eventually her husband left her and Amanda lives alone and is head of the family to her now grown children.

She is being supported by her son, who works in a warehouse to support his mother and sister. His work and life are very frustrating. As the man who supports the family, he should have the role of head of the family even in the context of social rules. He sacrifices his life for the family and instead at home his mother constantly questions his authority and masculine position. Tom does not want to spend time at home because of his adverse life situation and instead goes to the biographers and gets drunk. He wants to leave home, which his mother tries to prevent because she and her disabled daughter are unable to support themselves. Tom loudly and actively resists her dominance, much like Regina resists male supremacy in *Foxes*. In this context, there is a clear questioning of the patriarchal set-up, to the point where the man in the family is oppressed. However, by making his displeasure known and planning to leave the home, he creates resistance to this injustice. Amanda and Tom's relationship creates a clear re-compensation of tradition, where instead of achieving equality, male and female roles are merely tossed around.

The completely dominant position the mother adopts towards her daughter is shared by the mothers in both plays analysed. While Tom has the chance to escape from his mother by going to work and the pub in the evening, Laura has a weak and submissive nature and has little chance to find a partner on her own due to her handicap and nature, which makes her cling more to her mother. She tries to control her future and make decisions for her by sending her daughter to a school for clerks, which she is unable to study due to her oversensitivity. At the same time, she tries to find a partner for Laura, which is also difficult and she eventually forces this role on Tom, who brings his friend Jim. However, he is already engaged, so the courtship ends unsuccessfully and Tom leaves the house, leaving his mother and sister behind.

In both dramas we can observe to varying degrees the clash between tradition and modernity in the family structure. In neither case, however, do these women (Amanda, Regina) achieve happiness. In Regina's case, she may have acquired a fortune, but she remained abandoned. Amanda lost much more, a son who supported her and a home for herself and her daughter.

The clash between tradition and modernity, however, does not only focus on patriarchal society and the myth of the Southern Belle. The entire society of the American South was transformed as slavery was abolished after the war and the rights of African-Americans began to be asserted.

The society was riddled with illusions and a distorted view of history that was promoted by the Lost Cause movement. In this case, any negative aspects regarding slavery and the war were questioned. Serious social problems of the past began to be taken lightly, forgotten, and presented in an idyllic manner in the territory. In this respect, the Lost Cause movement was influential in the creation of both plays. First, there is the play *The Little Foxes*, where the situation after the abolition of slavery is presented as an ideal world full of equality and interpersonal tolerance. African-Americans hold virtually the same positions in society as they did during slavery, except that they are adequately compensated for their work. The society looks happy and contented, "blacks" are perfectly happy with their lives and jobs, they have plenty of opportunities and possibilities. The servants of the family (Alexandra, Regina, Horace, etc.) have respected opinions and are valued in the family; for Alexandra, she is almost part of the family. The "blacks", however, hold only menial jobs as in the days of slavery.

The whole business plan of Oscar, Benjamin and Regina, namely the construction of an automatic cotton spinning line, also symbolizes the period transformation. The first steps towards technological automation mark the definitive end of slave labour with cotton and the handing over of some of the drudgery to machines.

*The Glass Menagerie* is set roughly 35 years later. While in the 1900 period, one cannot see the play downplaying the state of war, Tom has created an illusion of war typical of the Lost Cause movement. Tom is bored and frustrated with his life, his unsatisfactory family situation and his strenuous job. In the evenings he goes to the biographers and watches movie heroes whose lives are more adventurous than his own. He imagines war as a "break from boredom" or an event that will "make adventure accessible to the masses." His inadequate view and idyllic image of war may be fueled not only by the social opinion of the Lost Cause movement, but also by the absence of a father in his family. His father was in the war, but because he left the family he could not communicate his experiences to his son and show him the clash with reality.

The absence of a male role model in Tom's life thus supports his naive ideas about life, as does his inability to find a realistic way out of his frustrating life. While his friend Jim, who is also dissatisfied in life, seeks a way out in self-education, overcoming obstacles and acquiring new skills, Tom limits himself to simply "I want a change." His realization follows suit, as his only recourse becomes to run away from his family.

At the end of the play, the question arises how they will cope in life if they are left without a male companion. This may be a further progression in female emancipation that creates a clash



with patriarchal tradition. In both plays we can see how emancipation permeates across the period context. In *The Little Foxes*, Regina succeeds only in challenging her brothers and husband, but does not achieve real results until the death of her husband, who refused to invest in a business for her benefit. In *The Glass Menagerie*, the mother is already successfully controlling her son, who supports her, and his male position in the family is completely challenged. The mother then embodies all dominance, which leads to conflict with her son.

For Tennessee Williams, the clash between tradition and modernity is not just reflected in a single work. In their annotated analysis, Hern and Hooper (2015) argue that this is a typical feature of Williams' plays, and is particularly present in *The Streetcar Named Desire*.<sup>67</sup>

Holtan (1969) states that Williams' works generally offer a view of the clash between tradition and modernity, but without a definitive resolution of the dilemma.<sup>68</sup>

This is exactly what is also typical of *The Glass Menagerie* from the results of this analysis, because at the end of the drama Tom leaves his family and there is no mention of how Amanda and Laura will handle this situation.

Williams' plays offer the traditional values of the time conceived in a new and unusual way, as would likely have been appreciated in a contemporary context. It alludes to the social problems associated with the transition of a traditional society into a modern one at the time. *The Glass Menagerie* is a look at the lower social class and its problems, as are Williams' other plays. The results of my analysis agree with this view, the whole drama is based on the inability of women to support themselves. For the mother the reason is not clear, for Laura the reason is her mental handicap.

Lillian Hellman, on the other hand, is not so focused on the clash of tradition and modernity, which is on the one hand due to the fact that *The Little Foxes* takes place 20-30 years earlier than *The Glass Menagerie*. On the other hand, she also has her own authorial traits that profile more into this work. The play is not just focused on southern myth. Holditch states that Hellman in *The Little Foxes* refers to ancient Greek history and to biblical elements. He presents ancient

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<sup>67</sup> Tennessee Williams in HOOPER, John and HERN, Jeffrey. *A streetcar named desire*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.)

<sup>68</sup> Orley I. Holtan (1969) "Machine"; vs. "Garden";: Tennessee Williams and the southern myth, *Central States Speech Journal*, 20:1, 14-9, DOI: [10.1080/10510976909362946](https://doi.org/10.1080/10510976909362946)

Greece through the choice of names like Regina, and the entire play is a comparison to the biblical legend of the plundering of the fertile vineyard.<sup>69</sup>

Watson and Ritchie then argue that Hellman offers an ironic view of society at the time and pushes for adherence to tradition while acknowledging the changes that accompany society.<sup>70</sup> I agree with this concept, which is shown in my analysis by seeing how Regina actively tries to resist male supremacy but is met with constant rejection. It is then this that leads to the climax of the whole drama, where Regina refuses to help her dying husband because he refuses to include her in their joint investment. On the other hand, it can be countered by saying that he did so not because she is a woman but because of her inhuman nature and behaviour towards him.

In her analysis, Soukupová (2017) states that Birdie represents the Southern Belle myth archetype. In this conception, the woman in question is stylized by Hellman as a victim, where Birdie is abandoned, despised and oppressed by the Hubbard family. Because of this, she then creates a negative view of the Southern Belle, that the Southern Belle is not a symbol of beauty and gentleness, but instead the woman becomes desperate and alone in traditional society. Birdie thus becomes a symbol of the desire for women's liberation from male supremacy.<sup>71</sup> I share this view, but it should be noted that Regina does not create a contradiction that would make it clear that Hellman supports the clash between tradition and modernity. Both women are characterized in the work as having negative qualities. Compared to Tennessee Williams, I clearly consider Lillian Hellman to be a more traditional author.

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<sup>69</sup> W. Kenneth Holditch. *Another Part of the Country: "Lillian Hellman as Southern Playwright"*. (*Southern Quarterly*, 1987, 25.3: 11.)

<sup>70</sup> Ritchie D. Watson Jr. *Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes" and the New South Creed: An Ironic View of Southern History*. (*The Southern Literary Journal*, 1996) 59-68.

<sup>71</sup> Markéta Soukupová. *Neither Old, Nor New: The Southern Belle Archetype in Lillian Hellman's Birdie Hubbard from The Little Foxes and Tennessee Williams's Blanche Dubois from A Streetcar Named Desire*. 2017. Bachelor thesis.

## Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the values of the old American South and their conflict with modernity in period drama. The aim of the thesis was to compare how the plays *Glass Menagerie* and *The Little Foxes* reflect the conflict between tradition and modernity in the society of the old American South. This is an era of America that was famous for slavery. Tradition speaks of the superiority of the white race, with wealthy families being at the top of society while 'blacks' worked in the cotton fields. Traditionally, families were patriarchal and male authority was not questioned but rather loved by their wives.

As the years passed, the war came to be questioned as a tragic event, just as slavery was interpreted in a very idyllic way. This distorted illusion of reality overshadowed the tragic history that the generations that followed began to deny. This public perception was responsible for the Lost Cause movement, which denied the facts of slavery and the war. It should be noted that even after the abolition of slavery, African-Americans were not given adequate rights and faced discrimination for the next several decades.

Both plays tell the story of the changes that society was going through at the time. The status of women in patriarchal families began to gradually improve. *The Little Foxes* is set in 1900 and the protagonist Regina here challenges her inferior position as a woman by trying to gain investment in the family business. However, this is not a righteous breakthrough, but one of constant manipulation, deception and blackmail. However, she is met with rejection from her husband and brothers.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, on the other hand, Tom as a man is completely oppressed by his mother. His mother is the head of the family, while Tom supports her and her sister. The mother's attitude towards him as a man is superior, it is not about achieving equality but simply swapping male and female roles. However, when the mother describes her youth in Mississippi, to a large extent her memories instead portray tradition. In her memoir, she evaluates herself as a young, beautiful, and sensitive woman who had the prospect of a profitable marriage. In contrast, her daughter is the exact opposite, with potential partners showing no interest in her. The play culminates with Tom leaving his mother and sister, which creates the question of how women will be able to continue to support themselves and function without a man in the household.

While the emancipation and dismantling of the Southern Belle myth is evident in both plays, both works are accompanied by a period idyll concerning the post-war social order. The film treatment of *The Little Foxes* offers an idyllic view of the situation of African Americans who continue to hold menial jobs even after the abolition of slavery. However, they feel perfectly content and happy in their lives. Together with the "whites" they create an idyllic society where people, their needs and opinions are mutually respected. Likewise, in their menial jobs, almost identical to those during slavery, they feel content and happy, which, of course, does not even make logical sense.

The influence of the Lost Cause movement is also evident, particularly in *The Glass Menagerie*, where it shapes Tom's views and attitudes towards his life and the war. Tom feels bored and frustrated in his life and seeks new entertainment and adventure like the heroes in his favourite films. He sees a way out in war, which he sees as a source of entertainment and a break from everyday boredom. His unrealistic mindset is supported by his general outlook on life, his unspecific plans for the future and his sheer desire to escape from everyday reality into another life.

## Resumé

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na hodnoty starého amerického jihu a jejich konflikt s modernitou v dobovém dramatu. Cílem práce bylo porovnat, jakým způsobem hry Glass Managerie a Little foxes reflektují střet mezi tradicí a modernitou společnosti starého amerického jihu. Jedná se o oblast, která byla proslulá otroctvím. Tradice hovoří o nadřazenosti bílé rasy, kdy bohaté rodiny byli na společenské výši, zatímco „černoši“ pracovali na bavlníkových polích. Rodiny byly tradičně patriarchální a mužská autorita v nich nebyla zpochybňována, ale naopak jejich ženami milována.

S odstupem let začala být zpochybňována válka jako tragická událost, stejně tak otroctví bylo vykládáno velice idylicky. Tato zkreslená iluze o realitě zastiňovala tragickou historii, kterou generace, které následovaly, začaly popírat. Toto veřejné mínění mělo na svědomí hnutí lost cause, které popíralo skutečnosti o otrokářství a válce. Nutno podotknout, že afroameričanům ani po zrušení otroctví nebyla dána adekvátní práva a s diskriminací se potýkaly dalších několik desítek let.

V obou hrách je zcela jasný střet mezi tradicí a modernitou. Tehdejší komplikovaná společenská situace je z pohledu mýtů starého jihu podávána jednostranně a idylicky. Společenské uspořádání je prezentováno tak, že vytvořená hierarchie je pro všechny zúčastněné vyhovující, ne-li jim přináší štěstí a radost ze života. Zkreslený náhled na historii a jihoamerickou společnost na přelomu 19. a 20. století (+- 20 let) se snažil o popření všech reálných zločinů na zdraví, životech a lidské důstojnosti. Proměna, kterou tato společnost po válce prošla, byla zásadní a změny ve společenském uspořádání reflektují i díla z 30. a 40. let 20. století, které se na toto období zpětně zaměřují.

V obou porovnávaných dílech nalezneme nejen střet mezi tradicí a modernitou, ale také různé úrovně změn v rodinném uspořádání, nejprve v oblasti ženské emancipace. S ohledem na časovou linii nejprve zmíním hru Lištičky od Lillian Hellmanové, která probíhá na začátku 20. století přímo v roce 1900. Hlavní představitelkou střetu mezi tradicí a modernitou je zde Regina, která se prostřednictvím svých intrik, manipulací a vydírání dostává do silné pozice a snaží se o získání rodinného majetku.

Regina navenek vystupuje jako mužům rovna, zejména v prostředí své rodiny, kde zpochybňuje patriarchální nadřazenost svých bratrů a manžela. Nutno podotknout, že ve výsledku se jedná právě pouze o hlasité zpochybňování jejich vůle, názorů a rodinné tradice (majetky zdědili jen

bratři). Její odpor totiž vůči daným mužům nemá efekt a v mnohých situacích zažívá odmítání. Konkrétní situací je odmítnutí bratrem Oscarem, kterého se v soukromém rozhovoru snaží donutit k tomu, aby ji přijal do rodinného obchodu. Stejně tak ji odmítá do obchodu přijmout umírající manžel, který má sice chatrné zdraví a jen málo energie odporovat hlasité nadřazenosti a panovačnosti Reginy, přesto však svými činy v její prospěch jednat odmítá. Konečné rozhodnutí vždy připadá mužům, což je pro Reginu značně frustrující. Svého se proto rozhodne dosáhnout extrémně podlou cestou, tedy nechává manžela zemřít a na jeho smrtelné posteli vydírá své bratry kvůli krádeži dluhopisů.

Kontrast pro její vzdorovitou povahu vytváří Birdie, manželka jejího bratra, která je tichá, drží se v ústraní a mužům v ničem neodporuje. I tato pozice je pro ni jako pro ženu skličující a v kombinaci s bezcitností a chamtivostí jejího manžela i syna se cítí osamocená, zoufalá a uchyluje se k alkoholismu.

Představitelkou tradice je naopak Reginina dcera Alexandra, která má citlivou a poddajnou povahu, proto je matkou ovládána a manipulována. Se svým otcem má naopak vřelý a láskyplný vztah, stejně tak se k ní chová i nápadník David. Silnou mocenskou pozici zastává ve vztahu s dcerou matka Regina, nikoli otec. V tomto ohledu lze pozorovat, že zpochybnění podřadné pozice Reginou mělo reálný efekt pouze na vztahu s dcerou, muži v rodině tento její přístup nepřijali. Ve výsledku ji ovšem dcera opustila, stejně tak jako zbytek rodiny.

Významný společenský postup v ženské emancipaci a zpochybnění tradiční patriarchální rodiny dochází ve hře *Skleněný zvěřinec*, která se odehrává o zhruba 35-40 let později. Zde se nejedná pouze o střet tradice a modernity, ale přímo o naprostou výměnu rolí a potlačení mužské pozice.

Matka Amanda je hlavou rodiny, kterou otec opustil. Na své mládí Amanda vzpomíná v kontextu jižanské tradice, kdy byla mladou krásnou dámou, o kterou mělo zájem mnoho mužů. Realita života namísto toho byla ve výsledku jiná, k výhodnému sňatku nedošlo a ona se provdala do střední třídy. Nakonec ji manžel opustil a Amanda žije sama a dělá hlavu rodiny již dospělým dětem.

Živí ji její syn, který proto, aby zvládal živit matku i sestru, pracuje ve skladu. Jeho práce i život jsou velmi frustrující. Jakožto muž, který rodinu živí by měl mít i v kontextu společenských pravidel roli hlavy rodiny. Pro rodinu obětuje svůj život a namísto toho doma matka neustále

zpochybňuje jeho autoritu a mužskou pozici. Tom kvůli své nepříznivé životní situaci nechce trávit čas doma a místo toho chodí do biografu a opíjí se.

Chce opustit domov, čemuž se matka snaží zabránit, protože se s handicapovanou dcerou nejsou schopny samy uživit. Tom její dominanci nahlas a aktivně odporuje, podobně jako Regina v Lištičkách odporuje nadřazenosti mužů. V tomto kontextu je jasné zpochybnění patriarchálního uspořádání, a to až do takové míry, že je muž v rodině utlačován. Tím, že dává svou nespokojenost najevo a plánuje domov opustit, ale vytváří odpor vůči této nespravedlnosti. Vztah Amandy a Toma vytváří jasnou pře-kompensaci tradice, kdy namísto toho, aby bylo dosaženo rovnoprávnosti, se pouze prohazují mužské a ženské role.

Zcela dominantní pozici matka zastává vůči své dceři, což mají společného matky v obou analyzovaných hrách. Zatímco Tom má šanci před matkou uniknout do práce a večer do biografu, Laura má slabou a poddajnou povahu a kvůli handicapu i povaze má jen malou šanci najít si sama partnera, kvůli čemuž se upíná více na svou matku. Ta se snaží ovládat její budoucnost a rozhodovat o ní tím, že dceru poslala do školy pro úřednice, kterou není schopna studovat pro svou přecitlivělost. Zároveň se snaží pro Lauru nalézt partnera, což je rovněž těžké a tuto roli nakonec nutí Tomovi, který přivádí svého kamaráda Jima. Ten už je ovšem zasnoubený, proto námluvy končí neúspěšně a Tom odchází z domu a matku se sestrou opouští.

V obou dramatech můžeme v různé míře pozorovat střet mezi tradicí a modernitou v rodinném uspořádání. Ani v jednom případě však tyto ženy (Amanda, Regina) nedosáhly štěstí. V případě Reginy sice získala majetek, ale zůstala opuštěná. Amanda ztratila mnohem více, syna, který ji živil a zázemí pro sebe a svou dceru.

Střet tradice a modernity se ovšem nezaměřuje pouze na patriarchální společnost a mýtus Southern belle. Proměnou prošla celá společnost amerického jihu, která po válce zrušila otroctví a začala se prosazovat i práva afro-američanů. Společnost provázela iluze a zkreslený pohled na historii, kterou prosazovalo hnutí lost cause. V tomto případě byly zpochybnovány jakékoli negativní aspekty týkající se otroctví a války. Závažné společenské problémy minulosti začaly být na daném území brány na lehkou váhu, zapomínány a podávány idylicky. V tomto ohledu se hnutí lost cause podepsalo na tvorbě obou her.

Nejprve se jedná o hru Lištičky, kde je situace po zrušení otroctví podávána jako ideální svět plný rovnoprávnosti a mezilidské tolerance. Afroameričani ve společnosti zastávají prakticky stejné pozice jako za dob otroctví, akorát za svou práci dostávají „adekvátní náhrady.“

Společnost se tváří šťastně a spokojeně, „černoši“ jsou se svými životy a pracovními příležitostmi naprosto spokojeni, mají dostatek příležitostí a možností. Služebná rodiny (Alexandra, Regina, Horace atd.) má respektovány názory a v rodině je vážená, pro Alexandru je téměř součástí rodiny. „Černoši“ však zastávají pouze podřadné pracovní pozice jako za dob otroctví.

Dobovou proměnu symbolizuje i celý obchodní plán Oscara, Benjamina a Reginy, a to zbudování automatické linky na předání bavlny. První kroky k technologické automatizaci značí definitivní ukončení otrocké práce s bavlnou a předání části námahy strojům.

Hra Skleněný zvěřinec se odehrává zhruba o 35 let později. Zatímco v období 1900 nelze ve hře vidět zlehčování válečného stavu, Tom má o válce vytvořenou iluzi typickou pro hnutí lost cause. Tom je znuděný a frustrovaný svým životem, neuspokojivou rodinnou situací a namáhavou prací. Po večerech chodí do biografu a sleduje filmové hrdiny, jejichž život je dobrodružnější než ten jeho.

Válku si představuje jako „vytržení z nudy“ či událost, která „zpřístupní dobrodružství širokým masám.“ Neadekvátní názor a idylická představa války u něj může být podpořena nejen společenským míněním hnutí lost cause, ale také absencí otce v rodině. Jeho otec byl ve válce, ovšem protože od rodiny odešel, nemohl synovi sdělit své zkušenosti a ukázat mu střet s realitou.

Absence mužského vzoru v životě Toma tak podporuje jeho naivní představy o životě, stejně tak jako jeho neschopnost hledat reálné východisko z jeho frustrujícího života. Zatímco jeho kamarád Jim, který je rovněž v životě nespokojený, hledá východisko v sebevzdělávání, překonávání překážek a získávání nových dovedností, Tom se omezuje na prosté „chci změnu.“ Podle toho se odvíjí i realizace, jelikož jeho jediným východiskem se stává útěk od rodiny.

V závěru hry proto vyvstává otázka, jak si dále v životě poradí, když zůstanou zcela bez mužského zázemí. Může se jednat o další postup v ženské emancipaci, která vytváří střet s patriarchální tradicí. V obou hrách lze pozorovat, jak emancipace postupuje napříč dobovým kontextem. V Lištičkách se Regině daří bratry a manžela pouze zpochybňovat, skutečných výsledků však nedosahuje až do smrti manžela, který odmítl investovat do obchodu v její prospěch. Ve Skleněném zvěřinci již matka úspěšně ovládá svého syna, který ji živí a zcela zpochybněna je jeho mužská pozice v rodině. Matka pak ztělesňuje veškerou dominanci, což vede ke konfliktu se synem.



Obě divadelní hry vypovídají o změnách, kterou tehdejší společnost procházela. Postavení žen v patriarchálních rodinách začalo být postupně zlepšováno. Lištičky se odehrávají v roce 1900 a hlavní hrdinka Regina zde zpochybňuje svou podřadnou ženskou pozici tím, že se snaží o získání investice do rodinného obchodu. Nejedná se však o láskyplnou průbojnost, ale o neustálé manipulace, podvody a vydírání. Ze strany svého manžela a bratrů se však setkává s odmítnutím.

Naproti tomu ve Skleněném zvěřinci je Tom jako muž svou matkou naprosto utlačován. Matka je hlavou rodiny, zatímco Tom živí ji a její sestru. Postoje matky vůči němu jako muži jsou nadřazené, nejedná se o dosažení rovnoprávnosti, ale prosté prohození mužské a ženské role. Když ovšem matka popisuje své mládí v Mississippi, do velké míry ji její vzpomínky naopak vyobrazují tradici. Ve vzpomínkách se hodnotí jako mladá, krásná a citlivá žena, která měla vyhlídky výhodného sňatku. Naproti tomu její dcera je přesným opakem, potenciální partneri o ni nejeví žádný zájem. Hra vrcholí tím, že Tom matku a sestru opouští, což vytváří otázku, jak ženy budou schopny žít se dále samy a fungovat bez muže v domácnosti.

Zatímco emancipace a boření mýtu Southern Belle je v obou hrách zřetelná, obě díla jsou provázeny dobovou idylkou týkající se poválečného uspořádání společnosti. Filmové zpracování Little Foxes nabízí idylický pohled na situaci Afroameričanů, kteří i po zrušení otroctví zastávají jen podřadné pracovní pozice. Ve svých životech se však cítí naprosto spokojeni a šťastni. Společně s „bělochy“ vytváří idylickou společnost, kde jsou lidé, jejich potřeby a názory vzájemně respektovány. Stejně tak na svých podřadných pracovních pozicích téměř stejných jako za dob otroctví se cítí spokojeně a šťastně, což samozřejmě ani logicky nedává smysl.

Evidentní je i vliv hnutí lost cause, a to zejména ve hře Skleněný zvěřinec, kde se podepisuje na názorech a postojích Toma vůči svému životu a válce. Tom se cítí ve svém životě znuděný a frustrovaný, hledá novou zábavu a dobrodružství tak, jako hrdinové v jeho oblíbených filmech. Východisko vidí ve válce, kterou vidí jako zdroj zábavy a vytržení z každodenní nudy. Nerealistické smýšlení podporuje i jeho celkové smýšlení o životě, nekonkrétní plány do budoucna a pouhá snaha o útěk z každodenní reality.

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