

# Tennessee Williams and the Representation of Animal Images

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Since Aristophanes, playwrights have cast animals in roles where they represent human behaviour. These playwrights have chosen one or more animals to pinpoint behavioural tendencies of their characters. Ben Jonson (*Volpone*), Anton Chekhov (*The Seagull*), Henrik Ibsen (*The Wild Duck*) and Eugene Ionesco (*The Rhinoceros*) are such playwrights who use animal imagery to depict, and comment on, human behaviour. This paper does not deal with animal imagery as it is generally understood in similes and metaphors; in dialogue and descriptions. Instead, this paper deals with animals and their images as metaphors of characters in respective plays. Tennessee Williams was one playwright who employed animals as motifs. He never tired of experimenting with the idea that animals, properly selected and harnessed, could best capture the mental state of his protagonists. This paper is concerned with the "why" and "how" of his powerful fascination.

**Key words:** *Animal imagery, conflict, metaphor.*

## Introduction

In his personal life, Williams was a fond lover of animals and always had a pet in his house. Attention to this aspect of his personal life was drawn by an apparently trite reference in Richard F. Leavitt's *The World of Tennessee Williams*, a book prepared from material, both pictorial and biographical, supplied by the playwright himself. It is therefore regrettable that his biographers and critics have generally ignored this - shall we call it the animal side - of his personality. Let us first of consider in detail the following (Hoare,

1996):

Williams has had an array of pets that included, at one time or another, a cat called Gentleman Caller, a parrot named Laurita, an iguana of uncertain sex named Mr Ava Gardner, a monkey named Creature, and a succession of English bulldogs named Mr. Moon, Buffo, Baby Doll, Miss Brinda, and Madame Sophia. He has also had a Belgian Shepherd named Satan and a Boston bull named Gigi. But his favourite of all was Miss Brinda, who had every possible defect including walleyes and practically no legs. She used to pose with the fashion models in Rome at the foot of the Spanish Steps, but never for any longer than one hour at a time (Leavitt 1978).

The detail, rich in itself, is further supplemented by a number of plays Williams named after animals and birds. These are (Cuthbert, 2013): *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Eccentricities of a Nightingale* (revised version of *Summer and Smoke*), *The Night of the Iguana* and; shorter plays such as *Rise in Flame*, *Cried the Phoenix* and *A Perfect Analysis Given by a Parrot*, which appeared in *Dragon Country*.

### **Tennessee Williams Powerful Fascination**

A reader of Williams would know that he uses animal imagery throughout his plays. For convenience, we may regroup his plays into two categories: one, where animals are present in flesh and blood, participating in the action to illuminate some important facets of the protagonist's life; and two, though not present and live on stage, they aid, through their well-known behavioural characteristics, to uncover the complex forces that control or beset the character's life or situation (?? 2013). The former category includes (in order of prominence on stage) the iguana (*The Night of the Iguana*), the goat (*The Rose Tattoo*), the cat (*The Kingdom of Earth*), the bitch (*Period of Adjustment*) and; the lupus or ferocious dogs (*The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*). In the second category we see the unicorn (*The Glass Menagerie*), the cat (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), the griffin (*The Milk Train*), the tortoise/vultures and the flies/ venus flytrap (*Suddenly Last Summer*) and; the bird of Paradise (*Orpheus Descending*). Even if we ignore this facile categorisation, the fact however remains that animals are just there. Simultaneously, they are unobtrusive, so unobtrusive that it is probably the first time they are seen and discussed as metaphors of the protagonists (?? 2013).

These animals and their images owe their existence to their creator's rich, feminine side. C. G. Jung, in his analytical psychology, defined the feminine personality in males as "the anima" (and its opposite in females as "the animus"). The anima, Jung said, was responsible in males not only for moods but also for tenderness, perception and sensitivity



to the feelings of others. A male as male would only be capable of analysis, calculation, aggression, or in other words, all that goes with "logos." Anima personality, on the other hand, endows a man with Eros or capacity to participate in the feelings of others: to love, understand and share emotions. In males, love for animals, plants, infants or tiny creatures that need attention, and cannot be verbalised in human speech, comes from this Eros. That Williams had an enormously rich feminine side is seen not only in his convincing portrayal of complex female characters, torn by circumstances beyond their control, but also in his dramatisation of their aspirations and frustrations. At the same time, his fascination with animals is seen in their presence of one per play, amply demonstrating the truth of the contention (Bloom, 2007).

Williams' fondness for animals adds a sensitive dimension to his plays. He uses the known behaviour patterns of animals to illustrate and objectify the mental and emotional states of his protagonists. A character's personal love for, and an unconscious identification with, an animal sheds light on such aspects of a psyche which would otherwise remain unilluminated. This is to say that the animals, precisely because of the love or proximity enjoyed with the protagonists, provides a key to the intricacies of the character. With regards to the plays earlier mentioned, the dramatic plot unfolds by weaving into itself the animal's presence (Williams and Waters, 2006). For detailed formalistic analysis, we are not concerned with selecting animal images at a spoken or dialogue level. Instead, the focus is on key issues in plot so as to evaluate how animal motifs help us better understand characters.

In *The Class Menagerie*, the unicorn emblematises Laura Wingfield and her predicament. The animal, which but for a horn on the forehead and a stately lion-like tail, resembles a horse and much sought after by hunters. Its majestic beauty and exquisite features made the royal households in Scotland adopt its image as their imperial insignia, minted even on coins. The fabulous creature, however, has a peculiar side: it is known to live by itself in a state of inexplicable aloofness. It could, it is believed, be tamed only by a virgin in whose lap it would quietly lay its head. The unicorn thus came to be associated with maiden shyness and paranoia by its looks (Notable, 2011). It is in the latter sense that the unicorn image has been used in *The Class Menagerie*.

The unicorn is Laura's prize possession among all the other figurines of her glass menagerie. Whenever the prescriptions, exhortations and nagging instructions of Amanda upset her, she retreats into the sanctuary of her room and begins to play with her glass animals. Unable to face her meaningless existence, she lives in 'a world of her own - a world of - little glass ornaments' (Williams 1945) as fragile as her own contact with reality. As Joseph K. Davis (1977) says, (Manuscript Materials, 2006)

Quite literally they [the glass figurines] offer her the only security, intimacy, and permanence she can find in the brutal environment of her St. Louis tenement. Fragile and artistic, these glass figures, like Laura herself, suggest a world other than the one Williams depicts in the play.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons of her love for the glass animals, especially the unicorn, her favourite. Laura, it appears, identifies with the behaviour of the unicorn: she feels as awkward with her pleuritic leg and consequent clumping sound she makes while walking. Most likely, this behaviour is reminiscent of the unicorn with its protruding horn and gives giving her reason to shun exposure as much as the animal did. We can assume that a long-drawn identity with the unicorn, compounded by Amanda's persistent jabs regarding her unpopularity, give Laura a traumatic inferiority complex. As a result, she 'drifts along, doing nothing' (*ibidem*:261), becoming a pathetic misfit in the world. It is through her association with the unicorn that Williams conveys to the reader Laura's future prospects: they are not bleak at all, even though Tom, her brother, believes so. Laura's future prospects are portrayed by the transformation of the unicorn. (Williams and Thornton, 2006)

During the clumsy waltz with Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller, the unicorn 'accidentally' loses its horn. The fortuitous loss augurs Laura's return to normalcy. The horn gone; the unicorn looks like any other animal. It is no longer ethereal or abnormal in looks, and with Laura's words, bears out the inference of hope for Laura:

Now it is just like all the other horses...It doesn't matter. May be its a blessing in disguise .... it's no tragedy, Freckles...I'll imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less freakish ...Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns (*ibidem*:302-303).

Laura, in the course of the play, seems to shed much of her inhibiting shyness. Encouraged by Jim's warm words, she opens up, laughs and interacts like any other normal girl would. On learning from him about his engagement with Betty, an unruffled Laura hands him the hornless unicorn as a memento of their meeting. He has crashed into her life, broken the deathlike spell and retrieved the forlorn maiden from her castle of dreams and fantasies; because, prompted by his words of encouragement, she seems to bestir herself to overcome her crippling inferiority. Her pressing the unicorn into Jim's hand signifies her break with her of fantasies. Through this innocuous action, Williams asks his audience to understand that Laura (Spoto, 1997) will redeem her word to Jim about growing out of her inferiority complex. However, Tom, at the play's end, does not think so. He pities her because she is too trapped to offer struggle. Nonetheless, Laura's action points in a different direction. It offers hope for which the plot does not provide.

In *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams uses the goat, an age old symbol of aggressive vitality and sensuality, to objectify Serafina's condition. According to James G. Frazer and other anthropologists, goats and bulls are sacred to Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and abandonment, and were reared through the year and sacrificed at a special function held in Dionysus' honour. Williams' (1978) Johnston (1979) remarks about *The Rose Tattoo* point to the essential significance of this ancient ritual:

*The Rose Tattoo* is the Dionysian element in human life, its mystery, its beauty, its significance....It is the dissatisfaction with empiric evidence that makes the poet and mystic, for it is the lyric as well as the Bacchantic impulse, and although the goat is one of its most immemorial symbols, it must not be confused with mere sexuality. The element is higher and more distilled than that. Its purest form is probably manifested by children and birds in their rhapsodic moments of flight and play.... (Kolin, 1998)

*The Rose Tattoo* celebrates the beatific and divine; the spiritual and ecstatic in human life. The Dionysian spirit does not refer to mere body hunger satiated through sex. It refers to the rapturous communion experienced through each other. Serafina's love for Rosario is Dionysian in this sense. Secondly, Dionysus is conceived by his votaries as a perpetually young god capable of inspiring them into frenzied abandon. Serafina here, for instance, is so completely imbued with the spirit of Dionysiac exuberance Rosario manifests, that she often mentions him as a 'boy': '... a body like a young boy and hair on his head as thick and black as mine is and skin on him smooth and sweet as a yellow rose petal' (Williams 1950:44-45). Another 'devotee' of Rosario, Estelle Hohengarten, recalls him as a vital and virile man 'wild like a Gypsy' (*ibidem*:25). Dionysus, thirdly, is depicted as a floral god in ancient mythology. Rosario, too, in this play, is revered by Serafina as 'my rose of the world,' 'the first best, the only best' Her love for Rosario is a weird amalgam of the physical and the spiritual (Greenberg-Slovin, 2014).

Serafina is conceived as a priestess of love; a votary of Dionysus, vibrating with primitive animalism and vital chthonic sexuality. She is described as an emotional woman with an uncontrollable temper and sudden, fluctuating passions. She has a voluptuous 'heavy sagging bulk' and walks like 'a parading matador'. A matador, as we know, excites the bull in the ring to a fury of belligerency and aggression before killing it. Serafina (meaning "fine nights") has in her the quality of bringing out the intensity of response and excitement in her men, both Rosario and Alvaro. Williams later compares her to a 'weary bull' and calls her a 'strange beast in a cage'. The Strega cynically thinks of Serafina as "primitive," uncivilized and unsophisticated, in terms of imagery it is right too. Civilisation teaches us to control our impulses, desires and motivations. Serafina, on the other hand, is her natural,

spontaneous and unrefined Dionysian self (Jeste and Palmer, 2004). It is in this context that sealing herself from contact with the outside world, after Rosario's death, is most unnatural. Her neglect of dress, oblivion of time, repression of her vital, sensuous nature, regimentation of Rosa and insistence on maintaining sacerdotal purity of home, body and thought strikes us as incompatible with her real nature. Her accent to the spiritual, against the physical, seems unnatural and she must return into the body and repair the unnatural split.

Alvaro's arrival coincides with the discovery of Rosario's unfaithfulness. Alvaro Mangiacavello (meaning 'eat a horse') makes her laugh at his comic antics and discard her customary glumness. He reconnects her to the vital springs of emotional life and, when Serafina begins to respond and emote, the goat is introduced. The animal crashes through Serafina's fence and, after a chase, is tamed by Alvaro. Serafina, who had been asking for a sign from Madonna regarding her response to Alvaro and his overtures, is unequivocally answered. Williams (1984) makes a remarkable use of the goat and its bleating outside hereafter:

Serafina remains anxiously half-way between the shutters and the protecting Modonna. She gives a furious imitation of the bleating goat contorting her face with loathing, it is the fury of woman at the desire she suffers. At last the goat is captured. (Baden and Kenney, 2005)

Hereafter, the goat bleating outside provides the Bacchantic symphony while the soft moonlight beckons her to shed pretences and unite with her lover. The goat symbolises the primitive energy she seeks to repress and issues forth, sublimated, in her irritation and violence against the neighbours, priest and her daughter, as well as herself. In the end, the goat in her is rehabilitated and the Bacchantic impulses rechannelled; which is to say, she resumes her active participation in life.

In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the cat emblemizes Maggie and her battles for survival against formidable odds and adversaries. Maggie, the cat, is a woman of vigorous spirit and unflinching determination. Nancy M. Tischler (1977:505) aptly comments, "she is a scrappy little fighter, spitting at the enemy, purring for the master, clawing for survival."

Maggie, the wife of Brick Pollitt, is simultaneously fighting on many fronts. She is pitted against her husband who refuses to consummate their marriage, fearing failure like his friend, Skipper; against her brother-in-law, Cooper, and his wife, Mae, who spare no pains in dubbing Brick an alcoholic and hence unfit for the large inheritance of Big Daddy; and against Big Daddy, who, in spite of his love for Brick, will not give him a dime until he fathers a child. Maggie understands the exigency of the situation which Brick, soaked in

liquor, cannot. Brick's refusal to sleep with her, above all, is a challenge to her sexual appeal which she knows has not diminished (Baden and Kenney, 2010). Brick's avoidance of her, the fear of losing the inheritance and the imminent death of Big Daddy, all combine to make Maggie as anxious as a cat. She decides to fight back. It is a lone battle and her armour is her determination to win. She says to Brick, "But one thing I don't have is the charm of the defeated, my hat is in the ring and I am determined to win" (Williams 1956:118). She questions, "What is the victory of a cat on a hot tin roof? I wish I knew . . . Just staying on it, I guess, as long as she can . . ." (*ibidem*).

The cat is the well-known symbol of sensuality; also, of mystery, jealousy, savagery, guile and vindictiveness associated with the feminine. With her sleek looks and a charming figure, she keeps Big Daddy enamoured of herself; with her savagery she hits back at Mae and Cooper; and like a mother-cat, carrying her injured kitten lovingly by the neck, she coaxes the snozzled Brick back to life, in order to reconstruct him. To save Brick's inheritance, she tells a blatant lie that she is expecting a child:

To seduce Brick back into life, she alternatively entreats, mocks, curses, warns, goads, harangues and even threatens suicide. Like a zealous mother, she tries to plan and provide for his future, like a lawyer she fights for him and like a priestess of love, a hierodule, she invites "the godlike being" to consummate with her, beget a child and save himself (Kataria 1982a:54).

Literally catty, wily, seductive and protective all in one, the cat is her emblem and typically, her behaviour.

In *Orpheus Descending*, Williams uses an imaginary bird, the Bird of Paradise, to reveal the feeling of entrapment in the protagonist, Lady Torraine. The bird seems to capture her imagination when she verbalises her profound longing to fly away with the bird and be free of her captor. Val Xavier, who brings her the thought and possibility of freedom, and with whom she wishes to flee at the end of the play, manifests the spirit of the exotic bird. (?? 1996) Lady Torraine, in her past, was an emotional and vivacious young woman, the daughter of an immigrant Sicilian, Papa Romano, who accompanied her father on his daily errands through the city, with the monkey dancing to the tune of an organ grinder. After the monkey's death, Papa Romano buys a piece of land on Moon Lake and converts it into an orchard. In a world peopled by the cruel and the heartless, Papa Romano tries to recreate an earthly paradise with arbours and vine groves. Here the father and the daughter sing romantic Sicilian songs to visitors. It is in these groves that Lady receives passionate fulfilment from David Cutrere. But the Edenic bliss is destroyed: the wine garden is set ablaze by Jabe Torraine and his men. Papa Romano, symbolises and is the harbinger of the Dionysian cult, and is burnt alive in the garden. When Lady, pregnant from Cutrere, is



jilted by her lover, she is quickly appropriated by Jabe as booty shelved from the fire. The baby is aborted and along with it her youthful vivacity. Ever since, she lives with Jabe a ruined "emotional life . . . arrested by the memory of her youthful love with David Cutrere and the idyllic vision of the wine garden, her lost Eden" (Thompson 1977:704). While her past was emotionally rich, her present is marked by sterility and dreary solitude.

Her deepest desire in the play is to recreate her lost paradise, revive Dionysian cult and escape death's domain. The mention of the legendary bird of paradise sets her imagination afire. This bird, Val Xavier tells her, spends its life in empyrean purity and touches the earth only in death. The earth, in this context, represents a scourge which the bird evades by flying high. Its high flight suggests Orphic yearnings to transcend the corporeal, mundane influences. Coleridge too celebrated the bird of Paradise in his poem "The Eolian Harp" where he compares the ethereal melodies of the harp to the ever-soaring flight of the bird of paradise: *Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise, Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!* (Campbell 1903:49)

Lady Torrance is literally carried away by the description of this bird. To her, the bird symbolises escape from a depressing reality; a life of repression, exploitation and meaninglessness. She is fascinated by the thought of one such creature who can transcend the earth-bound conditions that beset mankind at every step:

Because I don't think nothing living has ever been that free, not even nearly. Show me one of them birds and I'll say, Yes, God's made one perfect creature! - I sure would give this mercantile store and every bit of stock in it to be that tiny bird the colour of the sky. . . , for one night to sleep on the wind and -float under th' - stars . . . (Williams 1958a:279).

The bird represents freedom, and Val Xavier, a man with queer looks, perfect functions, an exotic snake-skin jacket, the deliverer. He seems to her to be the man who can navigate her to freedom. He has already broken the deadly sterility of her life by impregnating her and by rejuvenating in her the impulse to live on. An escape with him to 'when you go where you go/' as Lady says, is her last attempt to gain the elusive paradise.

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, captivity is once explored by Williams. The captor here is Mrs. Violet Venable, a domineering matriarch who stunted the growth of her poet son, Sebastian, through her authoritarian manner. The mother dominated the life of her son; she chose his food and drink and also the quantity. She determined the waters for him to swim in, the friends to take, the kind of feeling to have for himself, for her and for others in the world. She decided for him the looks he must have, the one poem that he must write annually, and never to think of another woman in his life other than herself. Sebastian is a



prisoner, a man with no choices, a puppet manoeuvred by his mother. (Williams, 2011)

Sebastian, a sensitive man, sees his own pathetic condition reflected in the plight of the flies in his jungle garden; where the Venus flytrap and the hapless flies reflect his reality. The "well-groomed jungle" with "giant fern-forests, massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of the body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood" (Williams 1958b:113) represents his own terrible predicament felt by him. Figuratively, he feels himself the hapless fly sucked into the flytrap, too stung and enervated to struggle or escape. As time passes, he comes to regard himself as an impotent victim of Cod, who he feels, sadistically enjoyed his helplessness. Catharine says she tried to save him from "completing - a sort of! - image! - he had of himself as a sort of! - sacrifice to all - terrible sort of a [God] . . . Yes, a *cruel* one, Doctor!" (ibdemem:143). He comes to believe, unconsciously of course, that his salvation lies, like that of the flies, in his dismemberment by the devouring dragon, his mother. By rearing a weird jungle of exotic and frightening plants, he tries to leap from his own predicament to a situation where his plight is not too personal and exclusive. (2011)

The view outlined above is corroborated by his fascination for another savage spectacle. At Encantadas, where he goes with his mother to see the newly hatched turtles scampering seaward, seeking aquatic safety, are attacked by the scurrying vultures. For him, the vultures, like the Venus flytrap, signify his mother. Sebastian here identifies himself with the unfortunate turtles. It seems that Sebastian's confrontation with the starkest facts of existence harrow and unnerve him. Robert B. Heilman (1965:785) aptly says that at the end, Sebastian "manages to invite, to contrive as it were, a death that closely parallels a destruction that years before had held a pathological fascination for him ..." And "last summer" he left his mother behind and did attempt to break the hold of the terrible mother only to end in a terrible death. He is mauled, mangled and devoured by the cannibal boys of Cabaza de Lobo. He is eaten up much like the flies and the turtles he had identified himself with.

The iguana in *The Night of the Iguana* objectifies the predicament of the two central characters, Shannon and Nonno. The play opens at Puerto Barrio where Maxine Faulk, the "larger than life" widow of Fed Faulk, runs a hotel (Williams 1961:22). Rev. Shannon, her old friend, and a neurotic defrocked priest, arrives in the course of the play, heckled and harassed by a group of ladies he has been guiding through Mexico. He is at the end of his tether and, as in the past, he sulks, cries and craves for psychic comfort from Maxine. (Rand, 2007)

Hannah's arrival at the hotel with her grampa, Nonno, complicates the situation. Nonno is an elderly poet, 99 years "young," who recites verses whenever Hannah cues him. That night, Hannah intuitively knows, is going to be difficult for her grampa. Penniless herself

and unable to push the wheelchair any further in the storm, Hannah lands in Maxine's hotel. She appeals to the sentiment of the patron and begs of her a night's refuge. She takes Maxine's irritation in her stride and cajoles her begrudged permission for that night only. The spectre of death she has seen lurking in Nonno's eyes compels her to weather Maxine's deprecations. She wishes her grampa to pass on peacefully in a corner of the hotel. She recalls her visits to the House for the Dying in Shanghai where she went to paint the faces of the penniless people lying on the verge of death. She recalls that "sometimes only their eyes were still alive, but, Mr, Shannon, those eyes...looked up...as clear as the stars in the Southern Cross,...and lately...my grandfather's eyes have looked up at me like that...," (/b/cfem:108). She believes him to be at the end of his tether, needing psychic comfort and solicitude, which she administers most lovingly.

It is here that the iguana, a big tropical lizard is introduced. The lizard, too, is at the end of its tether and is frantically trying to get away. Hannah mentions its struggle to Shannon as of one trying to go on past the "end of its rope...Like you! Like me! Like Grampa with his last poem!" (/b/"cfem:120). The struggle of the iguana and the struggle of Grampa with his last poem upsets Hannah "because of its parallel situation" (*ibidem*:122). She requests Shannon to "cut it [the iguana] loose, set it free" (*ibidem*), while she herself settles to take down Nonno's poem. Just when Shannon returns after setting the iguana free, Nonno retires to his cubicle fully satisfied at finishing his last and loveliest poem (*ibi*-cfem:125). The struggle of the lizard ends in freedom just as the emotional dilemma of Shannon regarding Maxine and the corporeal life of Nonno end. Williams' has woven the lizard into the texture of the play in a most remarkable way.

The griffin embodies Mrs. Flora Goforth in *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*. The griffin is a mythological monster, half-lion, half-eagle, yet completely human. The stage assistants hoist a banner of the golden griffin when the play begins and lower it at her death. Between these two events, the lurid details of the life of the golden griffin, Mrs. Flora Goforth, are unfolded. The griffin reminds us of the Egyptian goddess Ta-Urt, represented in images as a gravid monster, hippopotamus, crocodile, lioness and woman. The Sphinx, likewise, is another monster with half the body of a cat and the other of a woman. Psychologically, these parts represent the terrible aspects of a goddess. In the griffin, its half-lion, half-eagle parts represent the awful, violent and rapacious. The emphasis, in both these parts, is on majestic looks and ferocious behaviour. The griffin in *The Milk Train* signifies Mrs. Goforth's psychological monstrosity. She is greedy, haughty, brutal and lacking all the values of Eros. And true to her symbol "which is a force in life that's almost stronger than death" (Williams 1964:68), the lady possesses a charming body and an overweening superiority complex. She must dominate all those around her, snub or rob them at will. She feels herself so powerful that she can vanquish death too. On her death bed, she wages a "fierce contest" with death, staring at it, like a griffin, trying to stare

out the creature.

Her immodest and strident narcissism, her harnessing Eros to the service of ego rather than to a life of sharing and commitment, leads her to promiscuity. All her life, she has voraciously devoured men and their purses. She calls her lovers and husbands "apes and ostriches" (*ibi-dem*:9). In terms of imagery, her references make sense because an avaricious griffin attacks and feasts on innocuous apes and ostriches without much resistance. It is to such a woman that Chris, like a true *Bodhisattva* (Kataria 1982b:137) arrives to administer the rites of death. He prepares her for the ultimate journey and sits by her side until the "fierce life in her" (*ibidem*:119) goes forth. For a woman of such enormous ego, Chris knows death would be difficult. For a woman wallowing in maya, it would be impossible to renounce her undying love for worldly possessions. To succeed with her, he weathers her angry invectives/ suffers the attack of her "lupos" (her ferocious watchdogs), humiliating and brutally heaped starvation. He, however, disarms her by remaining dispassionately steadfast to his mission - he must prepare her for the final launch - the go forth. Much as what Hannah in *The Night of the Iguana* does to her grampa, he brings her the solicitude of a lover, the compassion of a hero and the forgiveness of a saint. He helps her pass on into the folds of death because, as he says, death is one moment only, after a life of so many. That a monstrous griffin too could be tamed and taught the values of Eros is the message that Williams conveys in this complicated play.

## Conclusion

Williams, endowed with a rich feminine side, was a keen observer of human and animal behaviour. The complex life of his female characters could be best objectified with the use of animal motifs. He explores the known behavioural characteristics of animals as paradigms to objectify and highlight the situations and responses of his protagonists. Needless to add, Williams sought these animal motifs both in real life and in mythology. And finally, his plays are richer, more symbolically diverse and multilayered with the presence of these animals. The pathetic and paranoid life of Laura is exemplified by the unicorn as a metaphor. Likewise, the jealousy of a cat, the desire for the freedom of a bird, the helplessness of an iguana could not have been made obvious without the use of animal metaphors. (Rand, 2010)

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## Conflict of Interest

The Authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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