

The Spanish Civil War as a Red Herring in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*
Through the Lens of Fernando Fernán-Gómez's *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

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INTRODUCTION

Tom Wingfield sits in on the fire escape of his first-floor St. Louis apartment. It is 1945, or at least that is when Tom begins telling *The Glass Menagerie*, a story of a recent past. An incredibly successful work of American theatre, *The Glass Menagerie* tells the story of a young man's resentment of his over-bearing mother, Amanda, obsessed with her past beauty. His crippled sister, Laura, sits in the home tending to her collection of her glass animals, representing both Tom's perceived world of stagnancy, as well as his sentimental connection to the world he came from. Fueled by fantasies of film, news of foreign conflict, and culturally entrenched notions of the American Dream, Tom wishes on the moon for a life beyond St. Louis: a life of adventure.

This is Tom Wingfield's dilemma. In Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom is haunted by what he would define as indefinite, perpetual routine—contained by the walls of his apartment and warehouse job—that brings him no personal excitement, satisfaction, or fulfillment. He finds St. Louis and the people around him to be full of “shouting and confusion,” which is a phrase I will use throughout this paper to illustrate dissonance, a collective lack of purpose or direction, and a lack of agency over one's external circumstance. For Tom, stagnancy and shouting and confusion lead him to dream of a world where both of these two things are resolved. For him, this image, ironically, takes shape of the Bombing of Guernica in the Spanish Civil War. Tom's mind is occupied by the voids he perceives in his life, and this paper will investigate the issues in how he tries to fill them.

While many critics, directors, and readers alike have responded to Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, this particular reading of the text draws on Spanish recollection of its

Civil War after Franco's censorship was eradicated from Spanish popular media. There is a common debate of whether Tom Wingfield is a romantic hero or not, whether he is justified in leaving his family or not at the end of the play, or if he really escapes at all. While this paper addresses all of these arguments, I will attempt to take it a step further, and allow the prolific Spanish actor and playwright's drama *Las bicicletas son para el verano* to respond to Tom's specific idealization of the bombing of Guernica throughout *The Glass Menagerie*.

It is not Tom's need for escape that I argue is problematic, but rather what he believes his is running to: fetishizing the Spanish Civil War as a symbol of adventure and purposeful action. Specifically, I will first present a reading of Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*, using his narrator—Tom's—continued fascination with the bombing of Guernica as an entry point into his dissatisfaction with his present reality and delusions of the outside world. I will then introduce the character of Luisito in Fernando Fernán-Gómez's *Las bicicletas son para el verano* to challenge Tom's framework in positioning Guernica as a foil to his own situation. The two characters share more similarities in their relationships to their social contexts than they differ. For example, as Tom descends his fire escape nightly to escape to the movies, Luisito spends *Las bicicletas* asking his father for a bicycle, and reading fiction about foreign conflict and adventures. A war and socioeconomic crisis spanning two continents and dictating two nations' trajectories, this analysis attempts to put both conflicts in conversation with one another via the medium of theatre.

During the mid-1930s, both the United States and Spain were amidst great periods of strain and transition, although of different natures on the surface. In the American

South, the Great Depression was nearing its close, as Francisco Franco's regime staged a coup d'état over the Spanish republic. This conversation, however, had already begun during the first gunshots of the Spanish Civil War, not from Spain itself, but rather an intense reaction from the English-speaking West. This paper seeks to not only contextualize American perception and romanticization of the Spanish Civil War, but also give Spanish Civil War literature the chance to respond.

Both Tom and Luisito's senses of selves are intertwined with the worlds they grow up in, and their yearnings to escape these worlds are, in turn, key aspects to whom they are as characters. On the basis of historical context and Tom's opening monologue that contrasts Guernica to post-Great Depression St. Louis, Luisito's world seems in opposition to Tom's. Luisito's life was interrupted by bombing, and Tom's daily routine consisted of going to his warehouse job, and coming home with money for his mother and sister, without feeling as though anything is actually happening to him. What Tom fails to understand about characters like Luisito, however, is that they have no direct contribution to the Spanish Civil War. At the conclusion of this paper, I will raise the question of whether Tom would have a moment of introspection if he were to have access to Luisito's story, and the reality that the two of them both attempt to escape the present through art and depictions of foreign worlds.

Ultimately, Tom is too tied to his own world, even before I prove this to be further illuminated by his understanding of the bombing of Guernica to not exist in the first place. In the end of the play, he admits this to the audience, "I tried to leave you behind, but I am more faithful than I intended to be," you being Laura, a representation of everything he will always be connected to in the life he tries to escape (Williams 96). In

“The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” Jacques Lacan presents the theory of the imago, something Tom is tied to throughout the play. Lacan explains, after one can recognize himself in the mirror, and “the image has been mastered and found empty, it rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment” (Lacan 1164). This—the *imago*, likeness, or statue—therefore, presents a feedback loop one develops with his sense of self in relation to what is projected back to him via his environment. Tom establishes himself as a dynamic outsider, fueled by the fact that nothing changes around him. His key personality traits of dissatisfaction and his nightly trips to the movies—which will be further discussed in later sections—are only critical in comparison to the environment he pushes back against. Tom’s whole sense of self is based on what he is not. He is not Amanda, urging him to solidify financial security for the three present members of his family. He is not Laura, afraid of the outside world beyond her glass menagerie. Defined by opposition, Tom is a dreamer, but Tom cannot be Tom, then, without St. Louis.

Lacan continues, “the function of the imago [...] is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality,” which, in this case, suggests Tom and Luisito’s sense of self to be inextricable from the world of the American Dream and the uncertainty of the Spanish Civil War, respectively (1165). Tom’s fascination with Guernica, is ironically rooted in his relationship with the Wingfield apartment and the warehouse. If Luisito’s Spanish Civil War is an account of what many actually experienced during the War, then Tom’s Guernica is reactionary. He cannot be a dreamer without a solidified present to define his sense of self around.

If Tom is Tom because of how he feels in his city, home, and overall zeitgeist, then he will always feel an attachment to this formative aspect of his identity. I will return to this question at the end of the analysis, but if Lacan is correct in saying we form our identities based on how our environments reflect our image back to us, Tom can never escape what he is running from. Tom still, however, stops paying his family's bills and leaves them in the dark, both literally and figuratively. This brings Tom's potential for a successful escape into question even before Luisito has the chance to respond to Tom's fantasy of Guernica. Luisito, like Tom, creates his romantic and idealistic personality in reaction to his external environment, as well. Just as this paper will investigate American perception of the Spanish Civil War, it will hypothesize how Fernando Fernán-Gómez would respond to Tom's Guernica in his work, *Las bicicletas son para el verano*.

In Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom Wingfield creates a hyperbolized depiction of the world outside of his St. Louis apartment and factory job. These adventures attempt to offset his dissatisfaction with his stagnant existence in the post-Great Depression South. Wishing for some greater action and purpose to infiltrate his external world, Tom's desire for his own bombing of Guernica both perpetuates his desire for escape and his inability to ever be satisfied, as his desires are ungrounded. While Tom uses the Spanish Civil War as an ideal escape from the American South, Fernando Fernán-Gómez's *Las bicicletas son para el verano* proves that Tom's perception of "shouting and confusion" is more than just St. Louis, the warehouse, and his apartment; families like Luisito's were as out of control as Southern working-class families in the 1930s. Tom and Luisito, ultimately, share similar means of both coping

with their social milieu, as well as planning physical means to escape it. The difference is, in the Spanish Civil War—in Luisito’s world—every day could be a matter of life or death. Ultimately, when put in conversation with one another, Luisito proves Tom’s efforts of escape to be increasingly futile, as the place Tom is running to never really existed at all.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

“The success ethic is universally shared by every American or, in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s apt phrasing, our culture compels us to unceasingly “run faster, stretch our arms further...[until] one fine morning.” (Hauhart 138)

Tom Wingfield is a young man living with his mother and sister in their first-floor St. Louis apartment. Day after day, he wakes up to go to his job at the warehouse, and night after night, descends the fire escape to the movies. He is caught between changing his life and ensuring security for the women in his family, neither of whom have a job, nor do they leave the apartment during the scenes of the play. In the first scene of the play, Amanda criticizes Tom for the way he chews, how much he smokes, and replays her fantasies of all of the supposed “gentleman callers” of her past she expects for Laura (Williams 7). Amanda is stuck in this image of her family that Tom will provide, and Laura will marry, but this first scene proves that Tom does not listen, and there are no men courting Laura. Amanda wishes for predictable security, which Tom initially begrudgingly delivers, but lets his mother know that while he works daily for her, he needs something else to keep him going. “You think I’m crazy about the warehouse,” he rhetorically exclaims to her, “You think I’m in love with the Continental Shoemakers”

(Williams 23)? This dichotomy permeates *The Glass Menagerie*, one that is not solely unique to the Wingfield family—the foundation of Tom’s Guernica projection—but also a larger cultural phenomenon of what it means to fulfill the American Dream.

Specifically, Tom’s dissatisfaction comes from waiting, and feeling left out from something. The reader first sees Tom interact with other characters via his arguments with his mother about leaving at night to go to the movies, which he sees as necessary, and to her are risking his ability to provide familial security. In his sociological inquiry, *Seeking the American Dream*, Professor Robert C. Hauhart calls the American Dream a phenomenon and cultural convention intrinsically intertwined with the Southern landscape of a stunted economy after the American Civil War. The American Dream makes sense; it is also vague, distant, and arguably unattainable. It is important to consider the American Dream in regards to Tom’s dissatisfaction, as Tom is both a provider for security in the Winfield household, and a dreamer searching to change the circumstance he finds oppressive. For clarification, Tom actively pursuing a better life for himself is not problematic in his carrying out of the American Dream, but rather propelling himself towards fantasy worlds I will later prove to be both problematic and non-existent.

“When we hear the phrase, we think we know immediately what the speaker or writer is talking about,” Hauhart argues (vi). Every person dreams differently, but “some (or more frightening still, many) of these American Dreams [like Tom’s] are such empty visions, and face such daunting barriers, that they cannot be achieved” (vii).¹ In congruence with Lacan’s *imago*, Hauhart would argue that characters, such as Williams’s

¹ The next two sections of this paper will discuss what these daunting barriers are, and why they are both empty and unachievable.

Tom, are deeply affected by “the impact of American life on the nature of the self and creation of a social identity within the peculiar cultural contexts that writers from many eras have found to be distinctively American” (72). Both Tom’s state and yearnings are influenced by this American construction.

Tom’s need to escape his circumstance mirrors the dichotomy of the American Dream, as he ultimately chooses to change his situation and run away, rather than continue to be the family’s breadwinner and keep the apartment’s lights on. And so, the American dream—in all its vagueness—creates a community of individual dreamers reconciling “the chaos of the early Great Depression” (72). In a sense, it is easier to work within a system, rather than to change it. Conquering a broken system, however, “would not address the disjunction between the external demands of the social order and the inner dimension of frustrated aspirations, emotional yearning, and unsatisfying human relationships” (72). As we see in *The Glass Menagerie*, one of Tom’s core personality traits is Hauhart’s “inner dimension of frustrated aspirations.” The “tired and true” pursuit of a better life—by vague definition—pushed the Middletown populations into factory jobs not unlike Tom’s warehouse, giving Amanda comfort in “the safe and secure rather than the new or adventurous” (78). This is the social background of the play.

Yet, simultaneously the “tired and true” lifestyle may have been the pace of the Great Depression, but the American Dream transcends individual contexts of time and space, and the “overwhelming [...] cultural obligation to pursue certain approved means for becoming wealthy” certainly never left the American dialogue of self-improvement (83). In the “shouting and confusion” of post-Great Depression St. Louis, Tom is caught between the Dream’s doctrine of hard work and dedication, and the subtle, yet consistent,

whispering to make a leap and be something great. The Dream is both pragmatic and romantic. Despite day after day providing a stable, sustainable life for his family, Tom is ultimately seduced by the latter face of the Dream, as “Americans have regularly exhibited a willingness to change their way of life when they have found their circumstances oppressive or unappealing” (135).

In Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom is both stifled by the expectations of providing for his family, and filled with a yearning to escape his St. Louis apartment to find a greater sense of purpose. This sense of purpose contains a “vagueness implemented to restore hope before anything else,” because Tom must rely on the idea he is able to escape his circumstance. The economic turmoil of the post-Great Depression South left Tom with “a sense of self [...] reduced to something less than full and complete human [being,]” which the American Dream calls for him to combat (72). He is both a man earning a living for his family, but ultimately lets the power go out on his mother and sister, as he pursues a life of adventure at sea, accepting an offer to join the Merchant Marines. He is a physical manifestation of the contradiction that is the American Dream, and as this paper will further argue, never reaches what the Dream promises in the distance. The American Dream is so embedded into our literature and what we believe is worth fighting for. It is no coincidence Williams’s post-Great Depression Southern play is centered on a man who is pulled in both directions by the same Dream. The drive, as well as the obligation, create Tom into a man who cannot be fully satisfied by one thing

or another, and ultimately sets the stage for a gross oversimplification of an exotic other world where the action is all he needs to feel complete.²

“IN SPAIN THERE WAS GUERNICA”

“It is difficult to avoid using clichés to describe the experience of being bombed” (Patterson 149)

For Tom Wingfield, there is “sixty-five dollars a month [to] give up all that [he dreams] of doing and being *ever*,” and, across the Atlantic, there is Guernica and a world he sees full of action and purpose (Williams 23). Tom frames his version of the American Dream—the pursuit of the beyond—in opposition to what he calls “shouting and confusion,” or the purposelessness of St. Louis (5). “In Spain there was a revolution,” and the reader must know that the revolution he refers to is Franco’s fascist regime overthrowing the Republic: an attempt at establishing a lasting democracy in Spain. This detail Tom fails to acknowledge is an immediate red herring to his audience. The audience should not only be suspicious of any man yearning for destruction, but also believing that destruction is a destination, as he explains later with his grand gesture of an exit from the play. Individualism, especially in terms of American construction, does not go hand in hand with fascist dictatorship. The reality of Spain’s revolution is the first step in understanding Tom’s delusions. The next three steps are: understanding the history of

² This theme of masculinity and men not living up to American ideals permeated literature of the post-Great Depression South. While Williams complicates this discussion by involving foreign conflict, plays like Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, continue to question the South’s nostalgia for white masculinity and dwindling and doubt of the collective American Dream.

the Spanish Civil War, the English-speaking world's fascination with it, and how Tom uses the War as a catalyst for expressing his need to escape his current life.

Amidst the “shouting and confusion” of Tom’s St. Louis, Spain was not a picture of adventure, but rather, in turmoil. As one understands of the 1930s, Europe was a fragmenting continent, on the verge of the Second World War. After the end of the Spanish monarchy, 1931-1933 was a period of radical, fast change, specifically the secularization of the government, as well as women’s suffrage, and urban growth and development. With the subsequent July 1936 coup d’état, the fascist revolutionaries were unable to swiftly seize the government, therefore marking the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. In his *A Short History of the Spanish Civil War*, Julian Casanova concludes, “there is no simple answer as to why the climate of euphoria and hope in 1931 [the beginning of the republic] was transformed into the cure, all-destructive war of 1936-1939” (Casanova 15). If every action merits an equal or opposite reaction, then one could argue Franco’s regime responded to “the Republic [trying] to change too many things at once” by implementing a rigid dictatorship (15). As the War began with a coup that could be neither contained nor immediately successful, the Spanish Civil War contained both horrifying violence and impending anxiety and periods of waiting for a victor.

In popular knowledge, Guernica may be considered the most commonly recognized travesty of the Spanish Civil War. Take Pablo Picasso’s famous painting, “Guernica,” for example. A small bulb of light hangs over “Guernica,” as a man reaches out a candle to the center of the painting. The chiaroscuro, cubist painting displays people screaming, severed limbs, and animals running chaotically. Picasso was commissioned by the Spanish Republic initially to create a mural, but the subject of the piece changed

upon the bombing of Guernica, and it was then used to show the world the atrocities of Franco's coup. In "The Glass Menagerie and the Transformation of the Subject," Granger Babcock draws parallels between "Guernica" and the way Tennessee Williams utilizes light in *The Glass Menagerie*. Picasso, he argues:

Does not use the electric light to symbolize hope or 'enlightenment,' as some have suggested [...] In the painting, the light merely illuminates the slaughter of Guernica. It is part of the narrative of progress that has promised salvation but has brought only destruction and death. (Babcock 31)

The same goes for Williams, as "the lights that illuminate the warehouse where Tom Wingfield works, and which he finds so oppressive," Babcock observes, "Picasso's light only illuminates brutality," as well (31). Referring back to Hauhart's notion that "Americans have regularly exhibited a willingness to change their way of life when they have found their circumstances oppressive or unappealing," Babcock's argument that "The oppressiveness of the warehouse light is [...] Williams's borrowing and transformation of Picasso's image, as, perhaps, is his use of light imagery throughout the play" (Hauhart 135, Babcock 31). By creating parallels between Picasso's "Guernica" and Tom's physical environment, both the audience and reader fully experience the world of oppression Tom describes to them. As "Williams [borrowed] the central image from Picasso's 'Guernica,'" the reader is left to decide if this is another exhibition of Tom's

disillusionment in his Spanish Civil War fantasy, or Williams is speaking to what Luisito proves, that oppression permeated the War, rather than excitement.³

Additionally, as I will discuss later in this section, over 1,500 English works have been published on the Spanish Civil War. In his text *Guernica and Total War*, Ian Patterson writes: “one of the most fearsome ideas to emerge in the course of the twentieth century was the idea of total war—the belief that the most effective way of winning wars was by the total obliteration, or the threat of obliteration” (Patterson 2). “The military uprising of July 1936,” Patterson continues, “forced the Republic, a democratic and constitutional regime, to take part in a war it had not begun” (102). Total obliteration looked like, “in the space of a few hours [...] the thriving and peaceful market town was largely reduced to rubble, its inhabitants killed, injured or driven into exile from their homes” (17). The future threat of total obliteration came soon after, upon realizing that “it was the first time that a completely unmilitarised, undefended, ordinary civilian town in Europe had been subjected to this sort of devastating attack from the air” (17). Nobody in the Republic was safe, and internationally, it represented “a series of crucial additional factors which made it a case study in propaganda, ethics, and international law,” where no one was in any harm’s way (17).

In Spain, “the modern vision of the sky falling on one’s head” was a literal reality (3). As I will specifically argue that Tom is misguided in wishing for a conflict like

³ Tennessee Williams took his first trip to Europe and Spain in 1948, three years after he wrote *The Glass Menagerie*. While Williams’s experience in Spain and foreign observation of the Spanish Civil War, “even if he had not yet had any direct contact with the country,” influenced Tom’s Guernica soliloquies, this paper does not make an attempt to draw conclusions on whether Tom’s sensationalizing of the Spanish Civil War reflected Williams’s attitudes on the conflict. Tennessee Williams, did write in his journals, however, his trips to Spain were “the shock of something new to keep [him] from sinking into the old summer lethargy and stupefaction” (190-193 Torres-Zúñiga).

Guernica, Americans did not have the sky falling on their heads at all the Great Depression, even if it felt like a fitting metaphor for crisis. The fear of destruction and the reality of obliteration separated the anxiety and genuine fear from non-Spaniards and those within earshot of the bombings:

For many in Britain, America and elsewhere—those with secure jobs and a steady or growing level of prosperity—these questions [of survival] were not urgent. The social movements of the early 1930s tended to involve mainly idealists or those with an already developed social conscience. But even those who were not troubled by the spectacle of hunger, unemployment or the rise of fascism for their dreams shaped by the novels and magazine stories they read, and by that they heard on the radio or saw on the screen of their local cinema. (6)

When something happens so far away and unlike any personal or cultural experience, hearing of bombings becomes something like an action film, separated from one's reality. As Guernica loomed in northern Spain, Madrid was experiencing a conflict, not defined by absolute obliteration, but rather a sustained slow and painful anticipation of Franco's military ultimately taking the city in 1939. This is the social background of *Las bicicletas son para el verano*. Madrid was not wiped out over night, but rather, a constant anxiety and the last point of conquest for Franco. It was out of their control, as if it was a game of waiting. The Republic surrendered only three days after the Nationalists entered Madrid on March 28, 1939. Patterson analyzes that "the military rebels were quite clear about what they wanted to destroy, less clear about what they wanted to construct instead" (23).

There was no resolution in sight, and no plan of action. Citizens waited as the world watched.

Tom's perception of Guernica was not distinctly unique from other English speakers during the Spanish Civil War, and Williams was clearly aware of the drastic impact it had on literature in the United States. "The response to the tragedy of Guernica in the outside world was inextricable from the response to the Spanish Civil War itself, which had, at this point, been going on for months. It was a profoundly complex conflict presented as a melodramatically simple one," Patterson continues (55). The "complex conflict" of a new Republic defending itself against a fascist coup d'état, rooted in religion, the budding roots of World War II, and years of political dissonance became a simplified "melodramatic backdrop" to binary issues, such as "Left and Right, socialism and barbarism" (55). While the outside perception of Guernica incited simplification and "fantasies of future wars," the War itself relied heavily on support from the outside, as Germany made Guernica possible for Franco, and the International Brigades defended the Republic. It is possible they were all fighting for a different vision and interpretation of the Spanish Civil War.⁴ People made a foreign conflict a personal matter, although their livelihoods, families, and homes were not at stake.

While "neither side [of the War] could prevail without foreign aid," the Spanish Civil War attracted an international attention that transcended a need for monetary aid and weapons supply (Valleau 1). In her text *The Spanish Civil War in American and*

⁴ The International Brigades were a group of Communist Party foreign volunteers fighting for the Republic during the Spanish Civil War, as popularly portrayed in Ken Loach's 1995 British film, "Tierra y Libertad." Notably, the International Brigades contributed to defending the 1936 Siege of Madrid, although Franco ultimately took Madrid in 1939.

European Films, Marjorie A. Valleau continues to argue: “The unique nature of the Spanish Civil, a struggle between the polar political ideologies of democracy and fascism, aroused tremendous intellectual concern for Spain, an interest that came out of Western man’s humanitarian, liberal tradition” (3). The West had a stake in the War, in terms of both social, democratic values it posed contrary to the financially struggling United States, specifically the desperate American South. The Spanish Civil War was a conflict between America’s perception of good and evil, of a romantic fight to preserve the hope of the American Dream and democracy for others abroad.

The Spanish Civil War became subject to many American tragedies, spanning across medias, including film, literature, and theater, being the subject of “at least 1,500 titles in the English language alone” (3). If “no other single event in history produced such a proportion of literature,” then something about the Spanish Civil War but both challenge and reinforce some sentiment about the core of the American experience in the mid 20th century, if not beyond (3). With a fascination overseas comes the danger of oversimplification of the intricacies of the Spanish experience during after long after the Civil War. The whole world was watching Spain, and while many—like Tom—were watching from afar, many artists declared themselves qualified to write on the War and its greater significance. In his collection of foreign recollections of the Civil War, *And I Remember Spain*, Murray A. Sperber argues that writers—specifically American—“farthest from the war understood it least and shouted the loudest” (201). He continues, “their motives were often unstable combinations of conscious and trendiness and they were almost never mediated by reality” (201). This quotation reveals a primary flaw in

Tom's fantasy of Guernica; he attaches meaning to something he has only heard about in the news.

Spain, in a sense, was like a Hollywood film, with a distant emotional investment from American intellectuals, as if anything meriting this degree of passion merited a response from anyone listening from afar. Even with "no inside knowledge on the affair [...] reflecting on [the Spanish Civil War] from a distance," Santayana declares the War "a sort of turning-point in history" (229). Parallel to Santayana's declaration of significance, Donal Odgen Stewart, President of the League of American Writers during the Spanish Civil War, calls the bombing of Guernica "martyrdom" (232). The word martyr, specifically, connotes a romantic hero with a purpose beyond himself. If Tom's view of Guernica is that of glorified sacrifice, then the reality presented in *Las bicicletas son para el verano* makes the War real and more tragically human. Distinguishing literary voices interpreting the War from afar from actual witnesses separates real events from projected significance. Sperber argues that witnesses writing their accounts of the War "particularly saw the tragedy of the war," rather than just the larger picture (251). The individual pain and tragedy is in great danger of getting lost across the Atlantic, the "political victims" losing their individual identity, just as Luisito's family sat day after day in their living room, as the sound of bombs drew closer to Madrid. There is a "lack of ego insistence" when one's neighbors are dying, and those leading the fight for either cause is far from the citizens' periphery (251). Tom, then, wishes to be a part of something without suffering the consequences.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE AS AN "EMANCIPATORY MANIFESTO"

“Yes, until there’s a war. That’s when adventure becomes available to the masses [...] But I’m not patient.” (Williams 61)

As previously noted, Tennessee Williams is one of the literary voices during the mid-century writing on something that is not a direct matter of his own survival. In her essay “Sea, Sun and ‘Que Sabe!’” Laura Torres-Zúñiga writes, “Williams fictionalized his experiences in Barcelona to incorporate them into his dramatic world,” although the dramatization of Spain preceded any of his experiences there (193).⁵ As “the civil war provided a fitting metaphor for the conflict between Tom’s desire for escape and action and the stifling Wingfield household,” and this comparison set the stage for Tom’s opening soliloquy (193-94). If *The Glass Menagerie* is Tom’s “emancipatory manifesto,” then *Guernica* is the chaos he feels he needs to disrupt his stagnant environment (194).

In 1961, Tennessee Williams wrote in his introduction to *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* a personal sentiment that reflects both the above scholarly understanding of the American Dream, and Tom’s restlessness to change his situation that this section addresses. It is also important to note that Williams’s below reflection on the pursuit of desire is not inherently problematic for Tom, but where, exactly, he looks for it is:

I’m not sure I would want to be well-adjusted to things as they are. I would prefer to be racked by desire for things better than what they are, even for things, which are unattainable, than to be satisfied with things as they are. I don’t think the

⁵ See footnote 3.

human race should settle for what it has now achieved at all, any more than I think America must settle for its present state. (Babcock 19)

Here, Williams's sentiment about fighting stagnancy—exhibiting a willingness to change his way of life—aligns with Tom's need to experience a great world around him. That world, as I will prove, cannot be Guernica. In his work "The Glass Menagerie and the Transformation of the Subject," Granger Babcock synthesizes Williams's collective work, calling it "symptomatic of the lower middle class's enslavement" and inability to change one's way of life (20). Similar to Hauhart's analysis of the American Dream, Williams's plays portray lower middle class Americans as "worker bees," stuck in "a system of habitation that produces isolation and alterity" (20). "Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse," Tom expresses, and it is critically important to understand the warehouse as a physical representation of lower-middle class oppression, and what his mother believes is necessary to ensure his family's security (34).

This is the social background of the play. In the play's first monologue, Williams's juxtaposition between the bombing of Guernica and the "shouting and confusion" is a misleading foil, as he ignores Sperber's depiction of the individual victim of the Spanish Civil War. Tom's perception of the opposite of "shouting and confusion" is chaos, mayhem, and a fight for a democratic cause, but this is not reality. Tom is wishing on a glorious explosion.

First in Scene Five, Amanda wishes on the moon, for “happiness” and “good fortune,” both of which, in the context of the scene, mean a stable husband for Laura (49). The moon is as far away as any of them can rationalize, and none can reach. If the “little sliver of the moon” is all Amanda can see of her desires of Laura being fulfilled, then when Tom delivers his final soliloquy—“I didn’t go to the moon, I went much further”—draws a parallel between his mother’s impending disappointment and his delusions. Williams’s symbol of the moon directly translates to Tom’s desires for adventure looming in the distance, without a way to be reached, so far away that he can imagine an alternate world night after night. He went much further, committing himself to the pursuit of *Guernica* and the movies, “attempting to find in motion what was lost in space:” to regain control in a world that did not let him experience anything on his own accord (97). Like the moon’s ability to make a dream come true, a distant explosion cannot add purpose to one’s life. If the solution to Tom’s dissatisfaction is an embellishment of a war he never bore witness to, then his efforts to replicate that passion are grounded in nothing. Therefore, by the end of the play when Tom makes his final escape, he cannot internalize a new mindset or worldview for himself if he is stuck chasing something that was never real.

For Tom, what is at stake is the pursuit of the other side—the beautiful, alluring side—of the American Dream. Amanda understands the spirit of this fantasy, pleading that she knows “[his] ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the whole wide world” (32). She understands the dichotomy of the Dream, but her family’s security comes before any personal desire for adventure. In their first displayed conflict of the play, Amanda yells at Tom, “I think you’ve been doing things that you’re ashamed

of. That's why you act like this. I don't believe that you go every night to the movies" (Williams 23). He "pretends to" go every night, according to his mother, as Amanda cannot connect the adventure he sees on screen to an attempt to fill a void in his life (23). "You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers," Tom sarcastically yells back to his mother (23). "But I get up. *I go*," he continues, establishing stakes that are as two-side as Hauhart's analysis of the American Dream (23). While he is responsible for keeping the lights on in the Wingfield apartment, the greater stake is the fact that, "for sixty-five dollars a month [he gives] up all that [he dreams] of doing and being *ever*" (23). Without the ability to "change [his] way of life when [he has] found [his] circumstances oppressive or unappealing," Tom must look elsewhere for that spark until he boils over and chases it (Hauhart 135).

Tom, therefore, relies on imagined external stimulus to create the sense of purpose, danger, and adventure he romanticizes the War across the Atlantic to be. To desperately believe he is part of some adventure greater than himself, Tom ultimately removes himself from the Wingfield apartment, descending the steps of the fire escape to smoke, to reflect, and above all else, go to the movies. He turns himself and his story into the same dramatic performance he sees on the screen. Through his attempted departure, Tom is, in turn, attempting to recreate a false image of the War that will guide him away from his feelings of purposelessness. If his life cannot be filled with the excitement he dreams is occurring elsewhere, then he must create it for himself.

Tom's central means of escape—from both his apartment and his social world—comes from his nightly trips to the movies. The reader first learns of Tom's escapades in the beginning of the third scene, after the play has primarily revolved around Amanda's

obsession with “gentleman callers” and getting Laura married. Tom opens scene three with another monologue, cutting to a stage direction of Amanda and Tom “[violently]” arguing with Laura, terrified, silently watching (Williams 20). Amanda, again, “[does not] believe that [he goes] every night to the movies” (23). She imagines him drunk night after night, “[jeopardizing his] job” and the stability of the family (23). We see Tom going to the movies amidst conflicts inside the walls of the apartment, climbing down the fire escape into a new reality he creates for himself. He may have pursued a career with the Merchant Marines, an acceptance he hid from his family, or he may be roaming the country, looking to fight for a purpose. The act of climbing the fire escape—although only a single floor—was only a symbolic gesture into the world he thinks will be “lit by lightning” and like the movies he watches (97).

Although the reader never actually follows Tom to the movies, one can trust this is his nightly destination based on that initial argument with Amanda. “I’m going to opium dens,” he cries as she refuses to believe he is escaping their argument to go, yet again, to the movies. “I’m a hired assassin [...] I run a string of cat houses in the Valley [...] I wear a patch over one eye and a false mustache,” he continues (24). In a way, he is neither lying about his late night trips to the movies, nor his wild, degenerate adventures. If the movies are Tom’s means to escape the Wingfield apartment, then he is living these simultaneous alternate realities as a means of sheer survival. The danger that comes with becoming intertwined, however, with this fantasy, shaping the outside world into an exotic, larger than life ‘other;’ “And in Spain there was Guernica.” There is a time, however, when Tom’s waiting for an adventure pushes beyond nightly trips to the movies. No matter how hard he tries to forget, the majority of his life is spent in the

warehouse. This moment, towards the end of the play, is where he ultimately admits his understanding of the Spanish Civil War is rooted in his love for the movies. “Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America,” he exclaims (61). “Yes until there’s a war,” he continues, “that’s when adventure becomes available to the masses” (61). Hollywood, to Tom, is only biding the time until someone actually starts blowing someone up, and the scenes come to life. This expression parallels Tom telling Amanda, in an earlier scene, “Oh, I could tell you many things to make you sleepless! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They’re going to blow us all sky-high some night! I’ll be glad, very happy, and so will you” (24)! This image is a direct reference to his Guernica motif, now placing himself in a fictional world, fighting both for a heroic cause, and against a brutal enemy. Parallel to his romantic idea of the bombings of Guernica, Tom finds excitement in being blown up, destroyed in a violent fight that will destroy the physical world he occupies. War, he believes, is “when adventure becomes available to the masses,” and his Hollywood-esque vision of a unified rally illuminates his desperation for something beyond his currently life (61).

With his expressive, hyperbolic desires for a world of constant commotion, Tom becomes a self-critical, open book. From the moment he steps on stage, “[*The Glass Menagerie*] is memory,” and he disclaims he decides what he includes, omits, and how he tells the saga of the Wingfield household and his ultimate departure (Williams 5). He is an actor, creating his own movie like the ones he escapes to, emblematic of some greater intention and purpose. Tom as both a narrator and protagonist is a performance to his audience, just as his trips to the movies and fantasies of Guernica are to him. The *Glass Menagerie* is, in itself, Tom’s movie, as it is his only way of reconciling with his

life. He tells you from the beginning that there are things he is creating into symbols, as he manipulates the reader into following him through his journey of both memory and reconciliation. Ironically, even in retrospect, his romantic ideas permeate the passing of time. As a performer, “[Tom] protects himself from the savage in-fighting in the apartment by maintaining distance between the pain of the situation through irony,” Thomas L. King writes in his article “Irony and Distance in ‘The Glass Menagerie’” (King 208). “For the artist,” King continues, “irony is a device that protects him from the pain of his experience so that he may use it objectively in his art” (209). This is another example of how performance and fantasy help Tom cope with his desperation. His theatrical soliloquies, including those about Guernica, hyperbolize the stakes that exist in his environment, and add a level of drama and excitement to a situation in which he is painfully unhappy. “Yes, I have tricks in my pocket,” Tom disclaims before the first scene begins, “I give you the truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion” (Williams 3). This illusion, therefore, is an outside world of pirates, revolutionaries, and bombings for a cause. Guernica is the illusion for and contrast between Tom and real things that happen to real people. Tom’s romantic depiction of himself, exiting the fire escape nightly to immerse himself in adventure, toes the line between “pervasive humor and irony,” as his audience cannot trust the reality he depicts (207).

In an attempt to replicate his perception of Guernica, Tom has made his life into a tragic performance, and ultimately, is unable to become a part of any world at all. Just as his fantasies are based on his dissatisfaction with his reality, Tom can never be a part of a context that is not his own. In his article “The Glass Menagerie: Three Visions of Time,” Sam Bluefarb writes, “The effort to escape both the restrictions of time and its demands

forms the thematic and motivational basis of Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*,” and, subsequently, Tom “eventually [finds he] can never quite succeed in breaking the bonds of their world” (Bluefarb 513). If, through a Lacanian lens, the Wingfields are inseparable from the post-Great Depression South, then Tennessee Williams has created a vacuum where Tom is destined to chase an unattainable illusion of purpose and adventure. “The present is a static, stillborn entity,” Bluefarb continues, “always modified, always restricted, always looked upon in terms of the past” (513). “Time is not only static,” and Tom “[fails] to come to terms with the nature of the flow of time itself.” Therefore, Tom is held in St. Louis by his environment, stuck in the feedback loop of his imago. His real, rooted past stays with him through the fleeting search for Guernica, one that will soon prove—via Spanish theatrical recollection—to be even more detrimental.

“ATTEMPTING TO FIND IN MOTION WHAT WAS LOST IN SPACE”

If Guernica is Tom’s goal state of action, he cannot get there just by releasing himself into the open world. In the last lines of the play, as Tom attempts to do so, Amanda shouts to him, “You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions” (Williams 95)! And that is exactly what Tom decides to do. He goes to the movies, ultimately choosing one of Hauhart’s versions of the American Dream. He changes his circumstance, rather than choosing the stable consistency of a man keeping his family afloat. The former, to Tom, is his Guernica. He descends the single level of fire escape, turns off the lights in the Wingfield apartment, and “[goes] to the moon: (96). He “was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box,” and steps “out into the world of vagabondage, toward the

romance of the sea and the ships, to the presumably freer life of the seafarer” (Bluefarb 515). He can no longer sustain himself on “the synthetic escape he has, until now, found in the darkened movie houses,” and must now recreate the world he believes exists beyond his St. Louis apartment (515). This dream world further demonstrates his desperate need to escape St. Louis, rather than having a destination to run to.

Tom’s father’s portrait hangs above the fireplace. He “fell in love with long distances,” but that’s as much as the audience learns of him (Williams 5). Tom, however, professes he “followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps,” which is ironic, given no one knows exactly what those footsteps look like (96). Tom is lost in his own search for action, trying to give meaning to his experience, “attempting to find in motion what was lost in space” (96). He cannot settle down again, as he “would have stopped, but [he] was pursued by something:” his own restlessness and perpetual dissatisfaction (96). No matter where he is, no matter if he “[goes] to the moon,” something keeps him in the Wingfield apartment, so he must keep running (95). “Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder,” Tom expresses, and because he admits from the beginning that the play is a dramatic rendition of the truth, the audience understands that Laura has been on his shoulder and in the back of his mind. As previously noted, Tom does not disclose how long ago he left St. Louis, although it is clear he has not physically gone back. He needs to beg his sister to let him leave her behind, and his character still delivers the same romantic soliloquies as the beginning of the play. He is, indeed, “more faithful than he intended to be,” even when his previous life only now exists in his mind (96). Bluefarb then argues, “at first glance it would seem that Tom’s escape to sea is essentially a romantic escape [...] Yet, even after he makes the break, he is still tied, through guilt, to

his own immediate past which, through the reawakened image of the lost Laura, he has abandoned” (Bluefarb 515). His attachment to Laura after his physical departure is the final proof of his act’s synthetic quality. Before the play ends, Tom begs Laura to blow her candles out and leave him behind, as he cannot do the same. While he is chasing a new reality for himself, he is still rooted in Laura, Amanda, and St. Louis, therefore, to a false image. Bluefarb takes his thesis a step farther, saying, “perhaps [Tom] never really meant to” run away from the past (515-516). When this argument is put in conversation with *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, Tom’s disillusion of Guernica is increasingly pronounced, as he never managed to actually run towards anything.

There is a difference between running to something and running away, and Bluefarb argues that rather running to a romantic adventure and great conflict, Tom’s departure comes from “desperation to escape the drab present and a past that prevents the present from fulfilling itself in a future” (515). In order to eradicate a life that brings him no fulfillment, he must create himself in the image of a poet: “a young man searching for the *ultima Thule* of romance” (515). Where he hopes his vision of Guernica lies is, actually, “a plunge into a world of harsher reality,” proving he is ““too grimly desperate a man [to be a poet]” (517, 516). But he is more faithful than he intended to be to the world he is rooted to, and one cannot create a life when he is running towards an illusion. As Guernica cannot become his reality, the first floor St. Louis apartment and the warehouse are the only tangible spaces he knows.

In the end, Tom tries to replicate Guernica in his dramatic parting, by turning off the contrived lights of his apartment and waiting for something spontaneous to happen to him and figuratively light up his world with adventure. By stepping out onto the fire

escape, Tom's "detachment has been broken down," and he has physically left the world he so yearned to leave behind for [the illusion of adventure]" (King 213). Tom's performance has exhausted him, and so has the sheer allure of the movies. If *The Glass Menagerie* is Tom's memory play, then its tragic nostalgia—though embellished with irony and performativity—makes him Sperber's direct witness to the post-Great Depression South. Therefore, the final monologue reveals the heartbreak that comes with an attempted liberation of external circumstance. "Tom escapes into his artist's detachment having exorcized the pain with the creation of the play," and only does so by confronting the pain and personal anguish he experienced in a small, first-floor apartment in St. Louis, the portrait of his father hanging above him, an symbol of what is taunting Tom about what awaits him outside the apartment. As analyzed on page 12, Picasso's central light bulb in his painting 'Guernica,' parallels Williams's use of the warehouse light, Laura's candles, and the image of lightening, drawing a parallel image between Tom's world and the Spanish Civil War. As Tom's fight is for fulfillment however, the Spanish Civil War's was for the direction of a nation and sheer survival.

Abandoning his sister and turning off the lights of the set do not equal resolution, and Tom leaves the play lost in a limbo of neither here nor there. Tom is more faithful than he intended to be because has "unfinished meaning of [his] own fragmented [life]" (Bluefarb 518). As Tom, through a Lacanian lens, defines his sense of himself through the lens and feedback of his environment, is he actually able to move beyond the Wingfield apartment? Stuck in perpetual motion, the answer lies with Fernán-Gómez's Luisito across the ocean in Madrid. Despite the newspaper headlines that project over

Tom during his opening monologue of *The Glass Menagerie*, Guernica, within the context of this play, never actually existed.

Williams informs the reader of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War as Tom still wishes there to be a Guernica in his own life. But, as noted previously in this paper, while Guernica and total war caught the attention of the world, it took Franco a grueling three years to take Madrid. As the bombs and radio reports surround his family home, Luisito's proximity and lack of control during the War ironically mimic's Tom's feeling of stagnancy. Tom's construction of what life could be like with violent conflict and pursuit/defense of a greater purpose is fully deconstructed by Fernán-Gómez's *Las bicicletas son para el verano*. Additionally, Luisito exhibits similar means of escaping his world and into romantic fantasies of his own. If Luisito needs a world to fantasize apart from his out-of-control reality, then the Spanish Civil War Tom idealizes will just lead him back to where he started.

SHOUTING AND CONFUSION IN MADRID

“porque ser escritor es muy bonito” (60)

During Franco and his allies' bombing of Spain, almost every scene in *Las bicicletas son para el verano* takes place in interior spaces. Similar to Tom's life in St. Louis, the conflict in Luisito's world takes place on the periphery. 14-year-old Luisito lives “[en] campo muy cerca—casi dentro—de la ciudad,” just outside of the center of the conflict (Fernán-Gomez 7). In the prólogo of the play, Fernán-Gómez establishes a distance from any form of war, bringing war into the dialogue not through actual events,

but in novels and cinema (8). Luisito and his friend Pablo's discussion about movies engaging one's imagination leads into the dramatic irony of the end of their conversation. "¿Te imaginas que aquí hubiera una guerra de verdad?" Luisito asks Pablo (11). "En las ciudades no puede haber batallas," Pablo responds, and so begins the cognitive dissonance between their inherent sense of security, and bombings slowly engulfing their lives (12). If bombings do not happen in cities, then these boys in Madrid are not overwhelmed with purpose of the War, and they will not fall in love with Tom's 'adventure' that they are, on paper, a part of. Fernán-Gómez's choice to establish the conflict on the periphery of the play both exhibits the unique role Madrid played in the War, and also how writers were able to discuss such a pivotal time in Spanish history, after Franco's death. Before I argue how Luisito's story proves Tom's dream world and perception of the Spanish Civil War to be detrimentally false, and his escape unsuccessfully futile, I must explain the limitations of how one was able to discuss the War as Spain transitioned out of the dictatorship and into a society free of Franco's censorship.

Ironically, as the Spanish Civil War exists as an undertone to *The Glass Menagerie*, physical combat also occupies the periphery of *Las bicicletas son para el verano*. While Fernán-Gómez wrote *Las bicicletas* as a recollection of the Civil War after Franco's censorship was lifted from Spain, it did not immediately become normalized to speak openly and critically about Spanish history and political dissonance. Fernán-Gómez was a prolific actor and playwright of the 1980's, both writing and appearing in plays and films with the Spanish Civil War in the background. Some films more directly about the war than others, he was a primary voice in la Transición in opening discourse in

post-Francoist Spain. In his biography, Manuel Barrera Benítez characterizes the work of Fernán-Gómez as “la utopia que debe seguir siéndolo” (Barrera Benítez 347). His work finds the beauty in the War, emphasizing that life goes on, while addressing the atrocity of the Spanish Civil War. All of his characters are uniquely individual, ranging from “la vis cómica del personaje (Sancho) o su negatividad (Tartufo) o su nerviosismo o su inseguridad” (348). Additionally, he integrated “la coexistencia de estilos propia de toda su carrera dramática,” and wrote and acted in various creative forms addressing the war from various angles and through different perspectives (350). Fernán-Gómez, Barrera Benítez writes, “renuncia al enfrentamiento y demuestra que lo que interesa realmente no es otra cosa que contar una experiencia personal que la ha permitido conocer la vida cotidiana” (114). He is able to tell a larger cultural history through the story of individual characters, and vice versa. While Fernán-Gómez and Luisito’s family are victims of the Civil War, the War exists in the background, looming over them, as Franco loomed over Madrid for the duration of the War.

During Franco’s regime, Daniel Arroyo-Rodríguez emphasizes in his text, *Narrativas guerrilleras*, that those in control of media and collective memory have the power to form a collective narrative and the perceived history of a nation. During “la Transición”—the period of Spain’s sociopolitical transition after Franco’s death—styles of art, theatre, and film began to fill voids that were left after the period of censorship (15-17). Arroyo-Rodríguez emphasizes:

“El discurso cultural dominante durante la Transición desplaza los proyectos utópicos y revolucionarios que intervienen en la Guerra Civil a un plano de fondo,

promoviendo nuevos valores, que, como la democracia y el desarrollo económico y social, se perciben como el futuro de España” (98).

The “desideologización” of Franco’s regime into an ideal, free Spain is something Luisito hopes to achieve over the course of *Las bicicletas*. Change, however, could not happen immediately after Franco’s death, as cultural censorship was so embedded in the natural narrative. If subverting the order via art was a necessary means for expression, then progress into full openness and expression was not linear. A change in government does not mean a change in cultural discourse. Fernán-Gómez’s structure of the play served as a reflection of this practice in discussing the War post-Franco, as well as highlighting the lack of agency citizens had in the fate of their country.

Fernando Fernán-Gómez is—what Sperber would call—a witness to the Civil War, and *Las bicicletas* is the painful, individual experience that came from growing up amidst the conflict. Manuel Barrera Benítez describes *Las bicicletas son para el verano* as “acercándolo al corazón” (Barrera Benítez 100). Furthermore, he writes Fernán-Gómez as “ha sabido acercarse a [la Guerra Civil] desde una perspectiva original y superadora de las demás oír cuanto se hace eco del cambio de costumbres y del desarrollo de la sociedad española” (101). Fernán-Gómez opened up the discussion in a society who generally spoke of the War in an ironically and comically roundabout way. This story, however, is one of mundane family life. Madrid is being bombed, but it is also about “las hijas de los caseros de las que estaba enamorado, la necesidad de cenar en la cocina, menos peligrosa que el comedor, las dos radios, la republican y nacional [...] él escritor frustrado” (103). Rather than discussing anything in isolation, Fernán-Gómez “aceptó los

cambios” of daily life and what was important during the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the structure of the play, he juxtaposes violence, intra-family workings, and Luisito’s fantasy worlds, in order to show the intricacies of daily life in war. Fernán-Gómez presents two seemingly contradictory wartime experiences, being families trying to maintain normalcy, and the violence permeating Spain. Specifically, “el campo” is both the location of the bombings, and “[el] lugar de juego, de ilusión, de fantasía,” for Luisito and his dreams of getting a bicycle to ride with his friends away from the confines of his home (105). The interior of Luisito’s home is familiar and secure, but he expresses a need for poetry and film to keep his imagination from standing still. El campo is freedom, yet it gets more dangerous every day. In this, Fernando Fernán-Gómez is able to establish the “shouting and confusion” coming from a War that both violently impacted its citizens, and silenced them as well.

Tom “protects himself from the savage in-fighting in the apartment by maintaining distance between the pain of the situation through irony” (Williams 208). Fernán-Gómez, through the intricacies of Luisito’s experience, gives roundabout commentary on the affects of the War without actually engaging any direct scenes of the War itself. “Todo ello no implica una visión neutral del episodio histórico de nuestra Guerra Civil,” and he is able to reconcile with Franco’s regime after his censorship was lifted, as were many other artists (Soler, López xl). In this, the play is both a depiction of the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War, as well as a reconciliation and long-awaited grieving period for Spanish writers and witnesses alike: “La obra concluye con una apasionada reivindicación de la memoria histórica y colectiva de una cultura como la republica española y de un pueblo que ha experimentado la tragedia de una guerra civil”

(xxiv). In having this piece respond to Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, it is ironic that a secondary analysis describes a similar sentiment of stagnancy that Tom feels. Tom's contrast to Spain, therefore, is a mere illusion for something in opposition to his current situation. He creates an image of a romantic, chaotic projection of an external, false reality across the Atlantic.

Luisito's world exists within the walls of his family and friends' homes. He listens to reports of the War he knows little about over the radio. He hears the bombs from outside of the house closing in on Madrid, and internal family conflicts still occupy the majority of dialogue. This is the social background of the play. In Spain there was Guernica, and in St. Louis there was only shouting and confusion. If the shouting and confusion, to Tom, looks like a lack of agency to change his situation, confinement to interior spaces, and a need to create fantasy worlds, then that would still be the case if Tom were to replicate the Spanish Civil War. In order to establish the shouting and confusion of Luisito's world, Manuel Aznar Soler and José Ramón López García write the play's introduction around the central theme of "espacios interiores" (xxviii). Just as Fernán-Gómez writes the War in the periphery of the home, Luisito's world exists inside enclosed spaces, exactly where Tom feels stifled in the home and warehouse.

As this section will discuss, there is a push and pull between the War and Luisito's espacios interiores. Every time bombs drop, Luisito's family argues about something else, he tries to convince the maid, María, to love him, or Manolita losing the two men she loves to the War. Even as the War persists, life goes on. Luisito still asks his father intermittently for a bicycle, and ends the play unable to move through el campo any differently. People still have dreams and aspirations, and in *Las bicicletas*

son para el verano, the Spanish Civil War does not add adventure and excitement, like Tom thinks it does. Rather, it only takes away and complicates life, leaving characters like Luisito to search for fulfillment elsewhere, beyond their present realities.

The fact that there are even examples of Luisito attempting to escape his world should pose many questions at Tom. If Luisito and Tom could relate to one another about the fantasy worlds they escape to, and the physical means they try to take to get away from it, then we lose so much faith in Tom's potential for moving beyond the Wingfield apartment and St. Louis. As the sole connector between the Wingfield apartment and the outside world, for Tom, is the fire escape, the idea and image of the bicycle—one that never comes into fruition—provides a hope for freedom, in Luisito's eyes. Luisito's primary exhibition of a pursuit of freedom and an environment beyond his *espacios interiores* and the periphery of the War is his desire for a bicycle, apparent in the play's title and consistent throughout its plot. *Las bicicletas son para el verano* is divided into two parts, the first establishing the above social background of the play and how Luisito copes with it. In the second, however, the conflict starts to engulf Luisito's creative outlets, and the play ends without a bicycle.

“Yo la bicicleta la quiero para el verano,” Luisito tells his father, Don Luis, in the first scene of the play (Fernán-Gómez 26). His friends all have bicycles, but Luisito's failing grades are of more concern to Don Luis. Here, amidst a conversation over a bicycle and grades, Luisito utters the line that reverberates throughout the play: “todo es política, papa” (27). Here, the audience begins to see how carefully Fernán-Gómez weaves universal, daily events between the overarching War. “Todo es política,” and Luisito tries to promise his father that if he gets him a bicycle for the summer, he will get

better grades in September. But, like the uncertainty of the bombs around Madrid for the duration of the Civil War, Don Luis cannot offer Luisito any definitive answers. “Yo te compro la bicicleta, y tú te comprometes a probar,” he says, but immediately follows with, “pues... no sé...” when Luisito asks for specifics (29). Like Tom, Luisito’s dreams of freedom and agency go unresolved. Even with the promise of being able to enjoy freedom and physical agency, Luisito has the door closed in his face every time his father does not grant him this access. He wants to see and do more, but his circumstance keeps him locked in los espacios interiores.

Conversations around Luisito’s dream of having a bicycle enter the play’s dialogue in moments of intense shouting and confusion being, in this case, fear and anticipation of the War. In the fourth scene, while his family and neighbors discuss their uncertainties of the Civil War, Luisito, again, asks when he will get a bicycle. “¿Estás loco, Luisito?” Doña Dolores asks him, after he interrupts their conversation (55). They do not understand why he needs it this very instant, and he responds that they do not understand why it is so important. He wants to go with his friends today, yes, but in getting the bicycle today, he would never have to ask his family permission for the freedom he desires.

As Luisito yearns for physical freedom, but from the first scene, it is doubtful he will obtain a bicycle by the end of the play. Therefore, like Tom, Luisito relies on romantic, fantasy worlds and alternate realities to mediate his external conflict. Even before Luisito’s first conversation with Don Luis about the bicycle, his mother, Doña Dolores, complains to her neighbor, Doña Antonia, about how Luisito does not study, but rather “se pasa el día leyendo novelas” (18). Luisito spends his days reading and writing,

valuing creativity and exploring literature, rather than focusing on his grades in school. Immediately following his first request for a bicycle, he recites a poem he wrote to his friend. “Quiero estar siempre a tu lado, / quiero a tu lado estar siempre,” it begins (34). “Quiero estar frente a sus labios, / quiero estar frente a tus dientes. / La mariposa se va, / la mariposa no vuelve,” he writes, using images of longing and mobility Tom does in his speech to Amanda about where he goes when he goes to the movies (35). “La mariposa no vuelve,” and Tom as a romantic hero hopes to do this. Luisito wanting to share this poem with his friend proves he has similar aspirations. He calls la mariposa beautiful in that it lives for a day: “Si se va, ya nunca vuelve” (36). Tom is not the only young man with dreams of beauty elsewhere. Only two scenes into the play, Luisito is a similar boy who speaks and writes whimsically about the world, more fascinated with books and poetry than his physics class in school.

As Tom goes to the movies, Luisito shares with his father that he is reading Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables* during the Civil War (94). While he does not provide any detail of why he reads what he does, he mentions *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Mysteries of Paris* as other favorite books of his. These three titles are all about other nations’ conflicts, wars outside of his own sphere that could not actually touch him, no matter how horrific they are. This trend is already one we have seen in Tom. Both young men find adventure, escape, and solace in the adventure and conflict in a foreign world they do not have a personal stake in. In other words, their survival is not dependent on the outcomes of their films and novels. Because as Luisito reads further and further into French tragedy, he tells his family: “baja la radio...” (97). If the radio is turned down, then the War cannot get in the house. Reality, however, ultimately wins, “suba la radio,

don Luis,” his mother urges (98). She knows they will hear news of the state of their country and Madrid. The act closes with the family in silence around the radio, and any discussion of poetry or bicycles is put on hold. Here, the War demonstrates the threshold to how much violence it takes for art to be put on hold. Tom always finds a way to at least try to be an artist. Luisito’s art is ignored, and in the middle of the play, there are scenes where he does not speak at all.

When the play transitions to the second act, Luisito’s pursuit of art and the bicycle take a backseat to the family’s impending urgency to survive. The War is still circling around them in the periphery, “con absoluta indiferencia” in conversation, but the content of the War “is a series of everyday familiar situations, contributing to its costumbristic nature” (Glaze 422). In la segunda parte, the radio becomes increasingly present. Neither Luisito nor his friend Pablo really understand what is going on, as their only information comes from bombs in the distance and reporters from a little box in the center of the room. It is important to note that neither here, nor for the rest of the play, do the characters or the audience see any physical bombings. Luisito and Don Luis walk through the ruins of a hospital in the epólogo, but Tom’s imagination of participating in the War remains unfulfilled. By the ninth scene, “no pasa día sin que nos llegue la noticia de una muerte,” and while they personally know two people who have died in the War, visually, still nothing has changed (Fernán-Gómez 110). They wait. Luisito does not read anymore. Luisito starts to speak less, and grows increasingly frustrated, challenging his mother who has accepted that “la guerra es la guerra” (148). “Es imposible,” Luisito refutes (148). He wants to write, but does not know where to begin. This is their life, and

Doña Dolores accepts that “todo tendrá que normalizarse,” because they are not agents in their own circumstance (16).

Unlike Tom, Luisito never lashes out. He is a victim, trying his best to express what he wants, although he never has any similarly passionate outbursts, except for in the third to last scene when he exclaims, “la paz! La paz!” when his mother is accepting the War without offering any frustration about it (149). Here, the reader can see emotion coming through from Luisito, and it is a critical moment to see what he has been holding in during the play. For this moment of passion, the reader can sympathize with Luisito, for this brief outburst shows that there are things he is working through, but does not have the means by which to express them. This could be considered the same for Spain at the time of the play. In the end, however, Luisito remains a passive character, and even as he and his father, Don Luis, wander through the rubble of a Madrid hospital in the epílogo, he begins to ask questions of the War, but the play ends with the bicycle, zooming in to the desires of any 14-year-old. Luisito’s attitude towards the way could be interpreted as apolitical or apathetic, but his world is interrupted by a conflict he cannot see until he witnesses the aftermath, which further supports him proving Tom to be misguided in his quest for Guernica. Luisito is not even fully involved in the conflict surrounding him, and Tom’s assumption that when “there’s a war, [...] adventure becomes available to the masses” (Williams 61). Luisito and his *espacios interiores* prove otherwise. His adventures still existed in poems and novels, and needing to retreat to his basement when the bombs drew too near.

LUISITO RESPONDS

If *Las bicicletas son para el verano* were allowed to respond to Tom, Tom would not make it through his opening monologue. Tom calls St. Louis a city “where the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind” (Williams 5). As I have just proven above, Luisito’s family spends nights sitting around a radio to know the fate of their nation. Luisito sits inside writing poems about mariposas, waiting for a bicycle. He tries to express passion for the War, but cannot get anywhere. War does not care for the individual, and it certainly does not wait for its citizens to keep up. Luisito considers Madrid to also be an “otherwise peaceful [city like St. Louis],” as “en las ciudades no puede haber batallas” (5, Fernán-Gómez 12). Maybe there was a Revolution in Spain, but Luisito is unimportant to the conflict, and the War certainly would not have considered Tom important, either. Luisito’s Madrid may look a lot more like St. Louis than Tom would want to realize, and either way, Tom’s *imago* would not let him leave anything behind anyway. He is too emblematic of the dichotomy of the Dream. They are both stories of two young men trapped in a world they wish to escape. In the end, as Tom is more faithful to his loathed circumstance than he intended to be, Luisito cannot obtain a bicycle, his version of Tom’s fire escape.

Luisito’s story ends, again, “[en] campo muy cerca—casi dentro—de la ciudad,” just as the play began; yet this time, everything is in ruins (Fernán-Gómez 166). The Spanish Civil War has destroyed their lives, and although the boy and his father reflect on Spain and directly address the conflict that has occupied the periphery of the play, Luisito still wants a bicycle. Here, Don Luis takes a trick from up Tom’s sleeve this time. “Qué malo es, ¿verdad?” he ironically asks his son (169). Qué malo es Luisito’s adolescent confusion, or Amanda’s obsession with Tom providing for her family, but the ruin of a

nation and a fascist dictatorship is something too heartbreaking to call it what it is. Tom's vision of Guernica relies on him not being Sperber's witness to the War. His Guernica does not end with the line: "Sabe Dios cuándo habrá otro verano" (170). Instead, Guernica, to Tom, is immediate satisfaction and shock-value. Luisito will likely never get his bike. In a way, Tom will never get his bicycle—a separation from St. Louis—either. At the end of the play, Luisito tells his father he wants a bicycle to go out with a girl, but that needs to wait for another summer. Tom does not have a destination, and if he thinks Guernica is the bicycle that will give him fulfillment, he is never getting one, either. For Tom's sake, I hope he never gets to Guernica.

CONCLUSION

"My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They're going to blow us all sky-high some night! I'll be glad, very happy, and so will you!" (Williams 24)

One of the most well known pieces of American theatre, *The Glass Menagerie* is a work thoroughly analyzed and discussed since its publication and first performance in 1945. It is revered for its complex depiction of the American South, on both micro and macro levels. While many critics and biographers have investigated Williams's fascination with Spain and his writings of the Spanish Civil War—including Guernica's presence in *The Glass Menagerie*—putting the play in conversation with a witness account of the War is imperative to understanding how flawed Tom's perceptions of the foreign conflict is. As Tom and Luisito share ways of coping with conflict in their environments, Tom proves to be increasingly delusional, as he yearns for the very thing threatening Luisito's family's survival.

In turn, *The Glass Menagerie* provides insight into the high stakes Sperber presents, of the matter of life and death for Spain that the outside claimed to be its own metaphysical struggle. As noted in the beginning of this paper, Sperber argues that foreign writers' "motives were often unstable combinations of conscious and trendiness and they were almost never mediated by reality," and "those writers farthest from the war understood it least and shouted the loudest" (201). During this phenomenon of over 1,500 English texts being published on the Spanish Civil War, Spaniards were burdened by censorship that did not allow writers of the Republic to speak on their own behalf. While Williams—along with Miller, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald alike—created elaborate and beautifully human stories of individual experiences and desires, Fernán-Gómez had to wait until after the death of Franco in 1975 to begin to illustrate the hardships of the Spanish Civil War. Even then, "in practice, the transition to democracy has proved to be a time of confusion for playwrights and playgoers alike. Closely mirroring Spanish society in general, the theatre has undergone both an initial euphoria and a subsequent sense of disillusionment and doubt" (Boring 459). As previously noted, Spanish artistic progress and liberation took more than the death of a dictator. Spain was finding its voice, but Tom was already speaking on its behalf.⁶ Fernando Fernán-Gómez is a quintessential voice of film, literature, and theatre of la Transición, but not all of his work is accessible in the English language. *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, the critical lens of this

⁶ While this paper allows *Las bicicletas son para el verano* to respond to *The Glass Menagerie*, it does not allude to any response to Williams from Fernán-Gómez in the 1980s. Tennessee Williams was well known in Spain during the dictatorship, and while it is possible Fernán-Gómez read *The Glass Menagerie* specifically, this paper does not assume Williams influenced *Las bicicletas* in any way (García, Torres-Zúñiga).

analysis, is not available to the American audience that has a strong likelihood of reading *The Glass Menagerie* at some point in their schooling.

The contrast between the eagerness in American culture to write on a conflict so far away, and Spanish writers struggling to write about their own War proves Tom to be increasingly ignorant of any struggle not his own, and in this case, more detrimental. Additionally, through reading *The Glass Menagerie* in conjunction with *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, one may ask if Tom had access to such a witness account, would his understanding change? Because Tom's fantasy of adventure beyond the Wingfield apartment spans from movies, to joining the Merchant Marines, to dreaming of being part of a war, Guernica does not exist in a vacuum. Guernica is just a projection for his dissatisfaction, and reading about Luisito would not change the fundamental issue Tom has of needing to run away from his life, rather than towards anything.

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