



## Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana

*Tennessee Williams*

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Three plays by one of the titans of twentieth century drama, demonstrating the immense power of his understanding of human nature and its frailties.

## **Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana Details**

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Author : Tennessee Williams

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## **From Reader Review Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana for online ebook**

### **John Lucy says**

I waited too long between reading and writing review to have anything particularly meaningful to say. But I can say that, since these plays are all similar in theme, the last play seems boring and repetitive.

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Also, Sweet Bird of Youth, in my humble opinion, may be the best Williams play.

### **Chrissy says**

Sweet Bird of Youth - Depressing, but pretty good read.

The Rose Tattoo - not really into it.

The Night of the Iguana - Superb. A few of the characterizations hit close to home, which made them so real.

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### **Stephanie says**

My favorite thing about this collection was the stage directions! What a vision Tennessee had for his work on stage. So descriptive.

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### **Opskar01 says**

Only read Sweet bird of youth--I say read night of the iguana instead

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### **George says**

I'm reading (only) "The Night of the Iguana," because I bought the movie version starring Ava Gardner as Maxine Faulk. (See my review of "Ava Gardner.") I want to read the Tennessee Williams play before seeing the movie. The part she played, as owner of the Costa Verde hotel, is believed to be one of Ava Gardner's best performances.

I've now finished the play. A bit somber for my taste, but still interesting. I liked the ending. Maxine was not my favorite character in the play (I suppose Hannah was, although I was lukewarm about all three main characters), but I'm looking forward, now, to Ava Gardner's performance in the movie. Here's a plot summary from Wikipedia:

In 1940s Mexico, an ex-minister, Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, has been locked out of his church after characterizing the Occidental image of God as a "senile delinquent," during one of his sermons. Shannon is

not de-frocked, but rather institutionalized for a "nervous breakdown."

Some time after his release, Rev. Shannon obtains employment as a tour guide for a second-rate travel agency. Shortly before the opening of the play, Shannon is accused of having committed a statutory rape of a sixteen-year old girl, named Charlotte Goodall, who is accompanying his current group of tourists.

As the curtain rises, Shannon is arriving with a group of women at a cheap hotel on the coast of Mexico that had been managed by his friends Fred and Maxine. The former has recently died, and Maxine Faulk has assumed sole responsibility for managing the establishment.

Shannon, in the middle of another nervous breakdown, tries to manage not only his tour party, who have turned against him for entering into sexual relations with the minor, but also Maxine, who is interested in him for purely carnal reasons. Adding to this chaotic scenario, a strangely virginal spinster, Hannah Jelkes, appears with her moribund grandfather, Nonno, who, despite his severe "decrepitude", is in the midst of composing his last poem.

Hannah, who barely scrapes by as traveling painter and sketch artist, soon finds herself at the end of her rope, that is to say, at Maxine's mercy. Shannon, who wields considerable influence over Maxine, offers Hannah shelter for the night. The play's main axis is the development of the deeply human bond between Hannah and Shannon, whose names even resemble each other.

Like the Iguana, captured and tied to a pole by the Mexicans in the play, they have come to the end of their rope. This metaphor is intensified when Shannon tears at his golden cross on his neck, lacerating himself, as if to free himself from its constraints.

Minor characters in the play include: a), a group of German tourists whose Nazi marching songs paradoxically function to lighten the heavier themes of the play, and yet cast us deeper into human suffering as they remind us of the horrors of World War II, b) the Mexican "boys" Maxine employs to help run the hotel who comically ignore her laconic commands, c) and Judith Fellowes, the "butch" vocal teacher charged with Charlotte's care during the trip. The latter is one of Williams few overtly lesbian characters (see *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* by Williams, in which a love triangle among three women is the play's sole interest).

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## **BurgundyA says**

I love Tennessee Williams so much. He is my ultimate favorite playwright. His work always amazes me.

These three plays are wonderful. I enjoyed reading them and would recommend them to anyone. Out of the 3 my top faves was Sweet Bird of Youth.

The movies aren't bad. Check them out if you'll like, but I'd highly suggest you to read the books first. =)~

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### **Maureen says**

I can't really pick my favorite Williams play, but *Night of the Iguana* is nearly it. The room just got a little more humid. Do I smell cigarette smoke?

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### **Susan says**

I enjoyed re-reading these plays by Tennessee Williams. Having read *The Rose Tattoo* again, I wish I had more knowledge of Italian.

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### **Mstrutzelastraza says**

Sure, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Streetcar Named Desire* are more well known, but give these plays a chance. They are great reads.

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### **Megan says**

Enjoyed these. *Night of the Iguana* probably my favorite of the three.

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### **Dianne says**

\*I think I'll write a review on this book (or on these three plays) since I haven't written one for a while.

I picked up this book when Borders was having its closing sales, because I read *The Glass Menagerie* in a class and wanted to read his other works.

In the foreword, Tennessee Williams writes:

Last year I thought it might help me as a writer to undertake psychoanalysis and so I did. The analyst, being acquainted with my work and recognizing the psychic wounds expressed in it, asked me, soon after we started, "Why are you so full of hate, anger and envy?" (xi)  
(Williams agreed with "anger" and "envy", but contested "hate.")

Knowing this and part of Williams' experiences, I understand where he comes from and how it has influenced his plays. However, despite the topics he addresses (through the characters' aimlessness and depression) in his play, one can't say that he didn't strive or put in effort to create original compositions. His plays are far from sugarcoated, but he does a good job at presenting unadulterated reality.

*Sweet Bird of Youth* commences on an Easter Sunday. When I read this part, I immediately thought of other books, which mentions Easter Sunday: *Faust* and *Silas Marner* too, I believe. The setting seems trite. However, I have not read a play like this one. Chance, the protagonist, is a confused person, who, like Jay Gatsby (from *The Great Gatsby*...), tries to return to the past to a girl he likes. Meanwhile, he is with a

distraught actress nicknamed "Princess" for emotional support... Personally, the play was "okay"; it didn't really attract my attention. I was a neutral reader who didn't grasp the story. I think I get it now. The "Three" are similar to The Glass Menagerie, a sad love story. More mature readers might like it more than I do, but the stories are a bit too depressing for my taste.

The Rose Tattoo has a similar theme, but seems more dynamic. The main character, the Italian widow, who lost her husband, fears that she will lose her only daughter to a sailor. She is a stereotypical Italian women who's not afraid to yell. She tries to recover from her lost, but is insecure that her husband may have cheated on her and this drives her to insanity. Though she does some despicable things, the story was well-developed and the focus on the daughter and mother relationship was very moving in one of the scenes. At least it shows that the mother, Serafina, meant well but was struggling with reality.

The Night of the Iguana was intriguing. I kept asking myself what does the iguana has to do with the story, and in the end, I liked it because the iguana was the symbol of being bounded and being freed. The story emphasizes more on looking for help. The minister, Shannon, who had a nervous breakdown has some personal issues and struggles with self-discipline and self-respect (but would probably not want to admit it). He accompanies Maxine, the manager of a hotel, who recently lost her husband and also has some struggles of her own. It seems like Shannon is in some bad company: gossipy people who cannot sympathize or help him, and people who struggle with their own self-discipline and have no regard for Shannon, who (to complicate matters) has a reprehensible history. In contrast, there is the noble Hannah, who cares for her grandfather, who (she declares) is "ninety-eight years young." Funny, but at first I couldn't tell how old Hannah was. The way she acted made her seem young, but later I found out that the word "spinster" meant "old maid". (Oh, okay. I knew that...)

Perhaps it is the good arrangement of the plays, but the book was enjoyable in the end when it ends with Hannah, who has to endure so much, who helps others, and who willingly accept the reality without making a show out of it. Some parts of the book might have some of us shaking our heads, but it also lures me to write something about it. It's easy read, but one might want to consult the dictionary sometimes to fully understand the play. (-Or not. The choice is yours.)

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### **Shannon says**

The ROSE TATTOO is one of my favorites! Tennessee Williams is the sultry sultan of my bubble baths!

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### **Jason says**

Maybe they should rename this "Two Racist Plays, and Another One". Entertaining nonetheless.

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### **Irus says**

i love tennessee!

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**Laurie says**

yeah, I'm a fan of southern melodrama.

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