

America's Melting Pot or the Salad Bowl: The Stage Immigrant's Dilemma

Dr. Safi Mahmoud Mahfouz¹

Abstract

*This study aims at shedding light on the stereotypical images of immigrants in twentieth-century American canonical drama and expose the function of such ethnic minority groups in American theatre and drama. The study strives to investigate the stage immigrants' experiences that range from persecution and marginalization, to aspiration of assimilation, and the obstacles such characters of diverse ethnic origins face while trying to assimilate into a multicultural, pluralistic, heterogeneous American society. This historicizing of drama helps explore the stereotypical images of immigrants in the racial and ethnic discourse of some selected modern and contemporary American plays. The study is confined to American plays that constitute America's mainstream national plays in which immigrants serve as the rupture in such plays, thus creating a cultural unease. These plays include Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Touch of the Poet* both plays depict the stories of Irish immigrants and their pride in their Irish heritage; Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* about illegal Italian Americans; Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* that discusses the life of a furious polish immigrant; *The Glass Menagerie* about an Irish gentleman caller; and *The Rose Tattoo* about Sicilian immigrants; Henry David Hwang's *M. Butterfly*; and Herb Gardener's *Conversations with My Father*; a tragicomedy about Jewish immigrants. The study bases much of the argument on a performance studies approach that privileges performance history and audience responses.*

Key words: identity, representations, immigrants, racial, ethnic, discourse, American Drama

A thorough overview of literary studies on ethnicity and immigrants in the United States would reveal that previous scholars have confined themselves to one aspect of cultural pluralism in American theatre and drama such as feminist drama and African American drama. Theatre studies on cultural pluralism related to immigrants in the United States seem rare and the existing ones do not provide a clear perception. This study strives to fill this gap. Most American literature on ethnicity has so far exclusively focused on Afro-Americans, thus ignoring the marginalized immigrants and the role they play in American social, economic and political welfare. Ethnic images and ideologies have played a determining role in the making of American drama, and these stage productions have in turn helped shape perceptions of ethnicity, often in vexed and complicated ways (Cho 16). The portrayal of othered identities through racial representation and stereotyping is not new to American theater and drama as it accompanied theatrical performances of the nineteenth century. Tracing the development of American drama would certainly validate Cho's argument when he asserted that "It is possible to think of all American drama as "ethnic theater"(16).

¹Associate Professor of Modern American Literature- Drama and Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Literatures , Postdoctoral research visiting scholar, Theatre Department , The Graduate Center , The City University of New York, NY, USA., 365 Fifth Avenue, Office 3402

The studies strives to show that distorted stereotypical images of immigrant communities in American drama are derogatory, biased and are not based on solid logical ground, but are merely the recollection of personal experiences of some individuals and thus are far from generalizability.

With the rise of American canonical drama as a literary genre among the performing arts in the first half of the twentieth century, new conceptions of race, color and national identity started to emerge on stage faithfully reflecting immigrants' cultural exclusion from and their attempts at assimilation into the mainstream culture. In some American plays ethnic minorities were presented as subjects rather than objects, thus creating a recognized other though still stereotyped as an inferior other. Mae Ngai (2004) asserts that alien citizens are "persons who are American by virtue of birth in the United States, but who are presumed to be foreign by the mainstream of American culture and, at times, by the state." (2)

Twentieth-century ethnicity theory has focused on questions of immigration and cultural assimilation of diverse ethnic minorities into the American society. The desire for recognition through assimilation is common to all immigrant minorities. The extensive theatrical production of Israel Zangwill's famous play *The Melting Plot* (1908), a play emphasizing amalgamation of races in the American popular culture, popularized theories of ethnic assimilation into American mainstream culture and history. However, for many sociologists and literary critics the melting pot theory of American culture is no longer accepted as a way of understanding ethnic minorities in the United States (Cho 5).

The salad bowl or the cultural mosaic theory has called for the integration of the diverse ethnicities of [United States](#) residents thus combining them like the different ingredients of a salad. This model has challenged the more traditional concept of cultural assimilation in the [melting pot](#). In the salad bowl notion various American cultures remain distinct and do not merge together into a single homogeneous society. Immigrants who favor the salad bowl assimilate into the new world culture, but at the same time keep certain cultural practices of their old world. Some, however, do not assimilate, but choose to live a life on the margins, in ethnic enclaves where they can stick to their old world culture (Irene Mata 7). Payant and Rose (1999) argue that the dichotomy of the old, new worlds constitutes a dilemma to every immigrant to the United States as all immigrants are perplexed by the dilemma of assimilation into the mainstream culture of the new world and maintaining their diasporic identity in a multicultural society.

This study is quite different from previous studies on the perceptions of immigrants in American drama in particular Lewis Marcuson's *The Stage Immigrant: The Irish, Italians, and Jews in American Drama, 1920-1960*. Lewis Marcuson (1990) states that in American immigrant dramas of the 1920s three ethnic groups frequently dominated the American stage: the Irish, Italians and Jews. Diane Vecchio (1992) argues that Marcuson's account of the stereotypical images of these three ethnic minorities is quite negative as they were portrayed in comedies of that period as satiric and humorous figures (115). However, Marcuson maintains that in American immigrant dramas staged in the late 1930s these ethnic groups were portrayed as means of social protest.

However, Vecchio pointed out that Marcuson stated that plays staged during the war years treated primarily the immigrants' reaction to fascism; while post war immigrant dramas reflected the assimilation of immigrants in the American society positively portraying them as successful and wealthy businessmen (115). Marcuson's work has many drawbacks. First, in the preface to the book Marcuson claims that his book is concerned with the attitudes and cultural traits carried by the immigrants across the ocean, the problems they face in their adopted land, and the means by which their eventual integration into American society is achieved. This claim is not based on first hand experience as the problems immigrants experience are not depicted from the perspectives of the immigrants themselves, but rather from that of the early American playwrights who used such ethnic groups as objects of satire and ridicule. Second, Marcuson's account of the treatment of the Irish, the Italians, and the Jews on the American stage is subjective, and thus biased and unreliable.

Moreover, Marcuson's study investigates the treatment of immigrants on the American stage during a limited period of American history and does not cover postwar and contemporary American immigrant dramas. The 1920s in the United States was a period dominated by racial antagonisms, the Red Scare and nativists who protested against the massive influx of immigrants to the country. This study is more inclusive for it covers the stereotypical images of immigrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds in modern and contemporary American drama. Moreover, the study bases its argument on the social, historical and political background of every era in American history and the factors that stimulated such stereotypical images and perceptions.

Marcuson argues that the Irish, the Italians, and the Jews disappeared from the American stage in the 1960s because such ethnic groups achieved assimilation and integration into the American society. Thus, their portrayal on the stage as ethnic groups became unjustified. Marcuson's prophetic vision of the status of immigrants in American drama in the future is not only weak, but also unjustified for he asserts that:

The disappearance of the European immigrant as a frequently-seen figure in American life... has become nearly complete. It is probable that he will be even less prominent in the future both in American society and in the theatre that reflects it (303).

With the popularity of Eugene O'Neill as America's first prominent American playwright of an Irish ethnic background, a white ethnic drama investigating issues of ethnicity and narratives of the "self" started to emerge (Cho 46). O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into the Night* can be considered as the first authentic ethnic drama that boldly addresses ethnicity on stage. The play portrays familial deception and stinginess in an Irish immigrant household. James Tyrone is portrayed as a stingy Irish American businessman who continuously resorts to deception to convince his family that he is about to become bankrupt while he continues buying lands from his buddy McGuire. His wife Mary sees through his dishonesty. She asserts that her husband could afford to buy any piece of land in the country, but when asked to provide for his family, he lies that he is bankrupt. Tyrone's stinginess is shown at its worst when his son Edmund is diagnosed with tuberculosis. He hospitalizes his son in a cheap state sanitarium though financially he could have afforded to send him to a hospital of a good reputation.

When Edmund confronts him with the fact that he was stingy on his medication, Tyrone refutes the accusation claiming that he was facing financial problems and could not have afforded to send him to a costly hospital. When Edmund protests, "I wonder what they thought of you when they heard you moaning poorhouse and showing you wanted to wish me on charity," Tyrone untruthfully tells his son, "It's a lie! All I told them was I couldn't afford any millionaire's sanitarium because I was land poor. That's the truth" (*Long Day's Journey* 144-45). In reality, Tyrone's justification is fictitious as he keeps purchasing real estates while he refuses to send his son to an expensive hospital claiming that he is bankrupt. Edmund accuses his father of not telling the truth for he has been told by McGuire that that he has recently purchased a new piece of land, "Don't lie about it! We met McGuire in the hotel bar after he left you." Enraged, Tyrone irritably calls McGuire a liar, "He's a liar if he said" (*Long Day's Journey* 144-45).

Tyrone's deception and stinginess are also shown during his wife's pregnancy. Shortly before she gives birth to Edmund, his wife Mary is afflicted with pain. Instead of bringing her a good doctor, he stingily brought her a cheap, unqualified physician who by mistake gave her morphine as a pain killer. After delivery Mary becomes addicted to that drug. When Edmund accuses his father of making his mother a drug addict, he denies his son's accusations by fabricating lies:

It [drug addiction] never should have gotten a hold on her!...she's not to blame! And I know who is! You are! Your damned stinginess.

If you'd spent money for a decent doctor, she'd never have known morphine existed. Instead you put her in the hands of a hotel quack who wouldn't admit his ignorance and took the easiest way out... All because his fee was cheap! (Long Day's Journey 140).

Tyrone deceives everyone else when he asserts that Mary will soon stop consuming morphine binges though he knows that he was the cause of her addiction. Mary even becomes self-deluded and takes refuge into an illusory world of drugs for instead of taking care of her ill son who suffers from severe tuberculosis she increases her doses of the morphine.

Eugene O'Neill's *A Touch of the Poet* portrays the lifestyle of an Irish immigrant family in early-19th-century Massachusetts. The play reveals a deluded Irish immigrant's excessive pride of and nostalgia for his homeland. Cornelius Melody is now a tavern owner in Boston; a secluded inn that attracts few customers, but before he immigrated to the United States, he was a major in Wellington's army that fought Napoleon at Talavera in Spain. All the characters in the play see through Con's pretensions whenever he recalls his imagined aristocratic lineage and romantic conquests. One of his drunken dinner guests remarks "Ain't he a lunatic struttin' around like a play actor in his red coat," says one of them, "lyin' about his battles with the French." Con is full of aristocratic pretensions; a man whose glory days were spent in the British Army fighting Napoleon. Throughout the play he keeps reminding his wife, daughter and his friends that he was heir to an Irish estate and a commissioned officer with His British Majesty's Seventh Dragoons in Spain.

Ben Brantley (2005) states that the introductory background music of the wail of uilleann pipes that suddenly shifts into a military glory establishes the central opposition of inner pain and public fantasy. Now he has become a drunkard running a failing, heavily mortgaged inn and keeps lashing out verbal insults at everyone and damning everything. However, he hides the fact that his father was not tenuously noble; but rather acquired his castle through persistent greed and that he himself was dismissed from the army during the Peninsular wars for his philandering, and that his profligacy caused his bankruptcy, and that in desperation he fled to America, where he was cheated. At the tavern, the disillusioned Con, hopelessly takes off his shabby frock coat and puts on his resplendent uniform. He has summoned his cousin, his army mate corporal Jamie Cregan and some friends to commemorate the nineteenth anniversary of the battle of Talavera in Spain.

Con keeps boasting that was born with a spoon of gold in his mouth into a wealthy Irish family that used to live in a luxurious castle on a vast estate in Ireland. In her theater review of the play Glenda Frank (2006) states "It is a tragedy about the immigrant experience, a tale about Irish nobility – not about kings, but about the transcendent dream passed from father to child, and the price of that dream." He treats his wife, Nora, a woman of fading beauty with contempt, and his daughter Sara as his slave. He keeps insulting her by asserting that she was born a servant into a poor family. While Nora has been aged by years of drudgery in the tavern, along with her daughter, Sara, Con drinks whiskey and entertains his friends and patrons with his war victories. Now Con has nothing left to be proud of except such war stories most of which might seem untrue. He has lost all of his money, and he has become almost as poor as his wife's family back in Ireland.

To escape the harsh reality of his tedious existence as the owner of a shabby unprofitable tavern, Con takes refuge into alcoholism and a fanciful world of old war stories that constitute "the hell of his own pride." Con is so stingy that he even refuses to pay the family's grocery bill, and instead squanders money on whiskey for his friends and his mare. Sara is fed up with her self-deluded father's being a drunkard almost all the time and what makes her develop a kind of disgust of his behavior is the way he keeps insulting her mother in front of her though she idolizes him like a saint. Unlike her mother, Sara takes after her father in having an excessive pride of her Irish ancestors. However, in front of her idol, the rich Yankee poet Simon, she looks down upon her father and keeps reproaching him for his fake vanity.

Like all angels of the house Nora is submissive to her husband, but she loves him unconditionally, no matter how badly he treats her. However, when the gentleman caller Simon's father arrives at Con's inn to ask for Sara's hand for his son, he senses that Con is a deluded man and consequently forbids Simon and Sara from marrying. Having felt humiliated, Con vows to avenge this insult, but his vengeance seems far different than what he intended.

The full length mirror that Con arrogantly keeps looking into to contemplate his great Irish ancestral heritage is a symbol of his vanity and pride. We feel such excessive pride and vanity when he takes no notice of Sara's insults and implores her to rise above what he has become; arrogant and above all mundane existence. The final scene of the play is so tragic and is played in pantomime. It shows the spiritual descent of a man full of aristocratic pretensions and fake glory. The nostalgic music of the bagpipe and the Irish tunes are played in the background. Con returns from the police station in a miserable condition. He has been humiliated and beaten by the police, and his military uniform tattered beyond recognition.

He attracts the attention of the audience with minimal dialogue and abundant gestures, revealing a man who has faced public defeat with pride. Nora's unconditional love for her desperate husband is shown at its best in this scene. She is seen pantomimically tenderly folding and smoothing the damaged regimental uniform of her defeated husband as though it were reminiscence from an old love. The offstage sound of the military march of soldiers foreshadows Con's continual commemoration of the battle of Talavera; a fake dream he will cherish forever. With his romantic submerged brogue, Cornelius Melody seems quite the gentleman, the war hero and even the romantic poet, but beneath his tragic bluster and fake nobility lies the hostile hypocrite, bigot, and deluded escapist of pipe dreams and liar. This becomes clear when he howls at his inn guests who listen attentively to his stories of glorious past "So may you go on fooling yourselves that I am fooled in you". He even does not hesitate to lash verbal attacks on his wife and daughter for merely refusing to believe his illusions and destructive gullibility. Frank Leahd (1985) contends that Con's entire life has become a mask to hide the truth of his low social station and his doubtful skills as a soldier - not only from the world, but also from himself."

In Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* James Tyrone is a representative of the successful Irish immigrants who achieved economic prosperity and an outstanding social status in the American society. The play portrays the Irish immigrant's pride in his cultural heritage despite becoming an American citizen. Through determination and hard work his father became a matinee idol, thus boosted the confidence of the Irish lobby in America to achieve assimilation and acculturation. The way these Irish immigrants stick together in a diaspora community help preserve their national identity from being wiped out. Glenda Frank (2001) states "This desire for distancing and acceptance through assimilation-coexisting with a pride of heritage- is common to all immigrant groups" (2). Martha Bower (1995) argues that as the son of Irish Catholic immigrants, Eugene O'Neill was afflicted with an inferiority complex that was endemic to the majority of Irish families who emigrated from Ireland to America, a complex that involved a vacillating tension between the shame of being a peasant descendant and the ambition to become part of the established Protestant ruling class, and belong to the American mainstream culture (111).

Tennessee Williams's *The Rose Tattoo* (1951) tells the story of a Sicilian seamstress making a living by sewing in an immigrant community living along the Louisiana Gulf Coast. In the beginning, Serafina delle Rose is portrayed as a voluptuous, buxom Sicilian woman whose idolatry love for her husband Rosario, a descendant of a Sicilian nobility, but in the States is merely a smuggler truck driver, is transformed into a tragedy after his death. Rosario is portrayed as a sensual man with a rose tattoo on his chest. After his death, Serafina's romantic love for her stallion husband is destroyed and as a result she retreats into a feeble world of illusions, melancholy and paranoia. Her life is only revived three years later by a new love story with another Sicilian truck driver. Alvaro is portrayed as a sensual man who has a sweet, loopy charm, but still he is a few nuts short of a biscotti.

The play portrays the Sicilian immigrants as comic figures who believe in superstitions and witchcraft. In this ethnic community gossip is rampant with Serafina being the target for much of the gossip in the village. Early in the play Serafina tells her neighbour Assunta that the morning after her daughter Rosa was conceived, Serafina woke up with a blazing pain on her breast and there was a copy of the tattoo on her, "I did know, when I seen it, that I had conceived, that in my body another rose was growing!" (*Tattoo* 5). Assunta jokingly mocks Serafina for boasting that her husband is of Sicilian nobility, "in Sicily everybody's a baron that owns a piece of land and a separate house for the goats!" (*Tattoo* 6). Serafina seems ignorant of the fact that her husband smuggles drugs for the mafia under the guise of delivering bananas. Her neighbour Estelle, a card dealer, comes in with pink silk for Serafina to make her a man's shirt. She needs it done overnight, and offers Serafina triple the normal cost. The Strega, an old woman with rheumatism in her hands and cataracts in her eyes and looks after the family goats, is believed to be a witch. Serafina also believes in witchcraft and during the goat chase around the yard, she warns her daughter Rosa not to make eye contact with the Strega's evil eye.

It is ironically enough the mourners, De Leo, and a doctor, get into a futile debate as whether or not Rosario's body should be cremated though they know for sure that that he was burned in the car crash. They know for sure that Rosario's truck caught fire after being fired at by the police and that his has been disfigured beyond recognition. It is still debatable whether or not Williams intentionally ridiculed the mentality of these Sicilian immigrants. Since all mourners including the doctor suggested cremating his body though they know that his body has been burned and there is no need for any further cremation. Sarcastically and jokingly the doctor, the supposedly most intelligent member of this Sicilian immigrant community, addresses De Leo and the other mourners "you love your people but you don't understand them. They find God in each other. And when they lose each other, they lose God and they're lost. And it's hard to help them" (*Tattoo* 18). Though these Sicilians pretend to be religious, they ironically decide to cremate the corpse of their fellow countryman instead of honouring him with a Christian burial. The most humiliating remark about members of this Sicilians community is uttered by the Strega who boldly announces to the rest of the neighbourhood that all Sicilians are unrefined, "In the old country they live in caves in the hills and the country's run by bandits" (*Tattoo* 24). The incident in which the traveling salesman knees the legal truck driver Alvaro in the groin and hurls ethnic slurs at him shows that such ethnic minorities were still discriminated against. Alvaro complains to Serafina that he is upset by the incident because he knows he is going to be fired from his job and he has three derelict relatives to worry about.

In most American canonical plays minority characters have a minimal verbal capacity in the plays' narrative and they are not even considered part of the play's main discourse, but remain outsiders to the play's main text. For instance, in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* many hovering voices such as the voice of the Tamale vendor selling "Red Hots", and the voice of the old Mexican woman selling "Flores para los muertos" flowers for the dead creep from the street towards the Kowalski apartment and are echoed inside Blanche's dizzy head. Such hostile impressionistic sound effects are meant to portray the vulgar and shabby social environment in which the refined Southern Belle Blanche will find herself imprisoned and they are intended to provide a mocking comment on Blanche's turbulent state of mind (Brandt 177). The terrifying, melancholic voice of the old Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead is associated with the scary inhumane cries of the jungle, the furious noise of the approaching locomotive, the nostalgic and remorseful polka music played in the background, the pistol shot that exploded the back of her homosexual husband's head, and many other horrible floating voices that drift in the apartment from the street all reveal the subjective mental state of the feeble Blanche while being driven to the brink of insanity. Britta Kallin (2000) states that mainstream playwrights often assign minority characters a limited verbal capacity that excludes them from discussions and depict them as inarticulate characters who fail to express their thoughts (66). Such minority characters, Kallin maintains, are also stereotypically reduced to function as catalysts that cause tumult in a harmonious community (79).

In *Constituting Americans* (1995) Wald remarks "The narrative of even successful assimilation is plagued with incomplete conversion, discomfort, contradictions and rhetorical disjunction" (243).

George Crandell (1997) pointed out that in many of Williams's plays set in the South Afro-American characters do not exist (337). Bigsby (1992) has remarked upon this absence, "scarcely a black face is to be seen in Williams's South" (37). African American characters who are given presence in other Williams's plays mainly *Orpheus Descending* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* are given menial roles, limited dialogue, and disparaging names, in most cases are left nameless as the Negro Woman in *A Streetcar Named Desire*; all attest to their marginal status in Williams's dramatic world (Crandell 337). Even the very few African American characters who are given stage presence in Williams's plays are assigned unimportant acting roles merely acting as servants, porters or street vendors, for instance, Lacey and Sookey in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Fly in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and the hotel porter in *The Last of My Solid Gold Watches*. Some of these African American characters are sometimes kept offstage and are denied a stage presence, but are rather kept uttering frightening inhuman cries for instance, the "barking sounds" of the Conjure Man in *Orpheus Descending*. These are not only derogatory images of these characters, but also establish a racist discourse in Williams's dramatic world and deprive such characters of their social identities. This namelessness marginalizes these characters and deprives them of any chance of expressing their ethnic identities. Lionel Kelly remarked that the "social identity of the unnamed Negro woman in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is predictably marginalized through her namelessness" (qtd. in Crandell 338).

In Tennessee Williams's drama, like most American mainstream plays, immigrants are depicted as the racial Other most frequently portrayed as a black male whose presence excites both fear and desire in the mind of an observing narrator or character (Crandell 340). For instance, in *A Streetcar Named Desire* Williams ascribes to Stanley Kowalski the features of the racial Other (Crandell 339). This otherization of an immigrant engulfed in an anti-immigrant, xenophobic rhetoric is not only dehumanizing, but also reduces a human to a marginalized figure. In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison (1992) pointed out that the paucity of fully developed black characters in American literature meant that "black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writers" (15). Williams draws upon a historical, if not stereotypical, model to represent his black and immigrant characters. Williams, as Crandell pointed out "obscures and confuses the boundaries between ethnic and racial groups, at the same time debunking the notion that race, ethnicity, and identity are unified, stable, and immutable features of the Self" (340).

Americans' perceptions of immigrants are contradictory ranging from attraction to repulsion. Some nativists even looked down on immigrants taking them to be a form of a contagious disease. Kathy Jurado (2008) states that the United States is a "nation of immigrants" that has always struggled with its master narrative that simultaneously romanticizes its immigrant roots while maintaining xenophobic assumptions about foreigners (25). June Dwyer (2003) notes that the eugenics movement that dominated much of the nativist rhetoric in the American master narratives during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed immigrants as "deformed, diseased and deviant" (107). While Tzvetan Todorov (1986) defines racism as a feeling of "contempt or aggressiveness toward other people on account of physical differences (171), Henry Gates (1986) states that racism also reflects other feelings towards the other including benevolence, paternalism, and sexual attraction (204). These negative perceptions of an important sector of American society are very harmful to the American welfare. Frank Bean and Gillian Steves (2003) observed that the modern American welfare state was born on the heels of what was then the largest surge in immigration in American history.

Some immigrants are defined as Africanists though they are not Afro Americans, but are ethnic minorities of different colors including whites. Though Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* is an immigrant of Polish descent rather than an Africanist American, to Blanche he acts as the fearful and desirable ethnic Other.

In the ethnocentric discourse of both Blanche and Stella, Stanley is given attributes of the African American black (Cardell 344). Blanche and Stella's ethnocentric perceptions of Stanley are dehumanizing as he is continuously referred to as a beast who poses a physical threat to Blanche's delicate and fragile world of gentility and Stella's aristocratic birth long forgotten in New Orleans. Blanche reveals such threat to Mitch: "The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner!" (Streetcar 351). In Blanche's racial discourse Stanley is given the attributes of the African American stereotypically imaged as someone who is physically menacing, lacking intelligence, eloquence and gentility, someone full of sexual ecstasy and eroticism. For Blanche, Stanley is merely a crude, bohemian immigrant who does not appreciate poetry, music and art. Despite her fascination of Stanley's sexual charisma, Blanche deceives Stella and even herself by claiming that he is a brute, hardly subhuman.

When Blanche asks Stella why she adores Stanley though he mistreats her and even sometimes beats her, Stella boastfully tells Blanche "But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark –that sort of make everything else seem-unimportant" (A Streetcar 70). Filled with jealousy and envy, Blanche bursts out "What you are talking about is brutal desire-just-Desire!" (A Streetcar 70). Crandell argues that Blanche's remarks "brutal" and "desire" associate Stanley with black characters whose fearful and desirable presences reflect the ambivalent feelings of the Self (344). In fact, this brutal desire linked with the immigrant is what makes Stella accept to live with Stanley even though she knows that he has raped her sister. Gerald Berkowitz (1992) argues that Blanche's account that Stanley took her to bed by force shocks Stella, but being magnetized to her husband's intense sexuality, she convinces herself that the rape story is merely the fantasy of a broken mind (91).

Blanche's perception of Stanley as the desirable and exotic other is revealed when she tells Stella, "Maybe he's what we need to mix with our blood now that we've lost Belle Reve" (Streetcar 45). Nina Bjornsson (1999) asserts that the fear, at times bordering on hysteria, of immigrant blood tainting the national body of the white, Anglo-Saxon majority is an unreasonable response to an illusory threat (22). Polster argues that "the definition of citizen in the narrative of American exceptionalism comes with a host of assumed norms such as" white, Anglo Saxon, Protestant, male, middle class, and heterosexual. Without acceptance of these personal norms, we feel alienated from the nation" (5). Bjornsson argues that illegal immigration breaches the boundaries of a distinct national body in away that parallels fears of the invasion of a contagious disease into the individual body (169). For instance, the mainstream Americanist discourse on immigrants, in particular Mexicans, characterizes such alien citizens in a language replete of references to disease and blight (Bjornsson 171). Many nativists and purists even have considered immigrants as intruders and aliens who do not have anything in common with the native Americans. Stuart Hall (1997) states, "The retreat of many cultures towards "closure" against foreigners, intruders, aliens, and "others" is part of the same process of purification" (236). Patrick Buchanan (2002), an American anti-assimilationist, holds the same opinion.

He states, Uncontrolled immigration threatens to deconstruct the nation we grew up in and convert America into a conglomeration of peoples with almost nothing in common- not history, heroes, language, culture, faith or ancestors (3).

Throughout the play Stanley is described in terms of animal imagery which has always been linked with black characters in early literatures. Stella reminds Blanche that Stanley belongs to a "different species," and following the poker night Blanche remarks, He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something- subhuman- something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something-ape-like about him (Streetcar 72).

This racial discourse not only eradicates the Americanness of an immigrant American citizen, but also marginalizes him, thus treating him as the insignificant, marginalized Other. This problematizes the entire concept of Americanness and what it means to be an American.

Characters of diverse ethnic origins in modern American drama form a collective American ethnic identity treated as the marginal other that have problematized the notion of American citizenship. In *Margins and Mainstreams*, Gary Okihiro (1994) states that in immigration literature principles of American citizenship are clearly demonstrated (175). Okihiro writes:

Although situating itself at the core, the mainstream is not the center that embraces and draws the diverse nation together... it derives its identity and integrity from the representation and thus exclusion of the other. [It is instead], the margin [that] has held the nation together with its expansive reach; the margin has tested and ensured the guarantees of citizenship; and the margin has been the true defender of American democracy, equality and liberty (175).

The racial discourse against any ethnic minority entails dehumanizing that minority group. Patrisia Gonzalez and Roberto Rodriguez (2001) state that "to racially dehumanize an ethnic minority for reasons of color, and race means to degrade, stereotype, caricaturize, trivialize, devalue, humiliate, invisibilize, alienize, scapegoat, criminalize and demonize such an ethnic minority." By comparing Stanley to an ape or a beast heaping a chunk of meat, Blanche and Stella link this immigrant to the animal kingdom; an image that has traditionally been associated with Africanist characters in early, European racial literatures. Henry Gates (1985), writing of the early racial historical records, states that "Blacks were most commonly represented... either as the lowest of the human races or as first cousin to the ape" (12). Josephine Lee (1997) observed:

Dramatic histories also contest preconceived assumptions about America as the melting pot where immigrants assimilate by some natural and inevitable process, and instead draw attention to inequalities manifested in the social and legal history of Asians in the United States (31).

In American popular culture immigrants regardless of their color are associated with images of blackness. Jan Pieterse (1992) pointed out that in American popular culture Irish immigrants are frequently likened to blacks (214). In the same line of argument, Toni Morrison observes how immigrant communities understood their Americanness as an opposition to the resident black population (47). Morrison argues that "the American identity" is associated with the concept of "race," and that in the United States, "American means white" (47). Winthrop Jordan in *White Over Black* (1968) has pointed out that as America grew from a colony into a republic, the dichotomy of slave versus free, black versus white started to emerge and European immigrants started to see themselves in opposition to "black" and "slave." Karen Polster (2000) argues that immigration literature is characterized by the same criteria for "if the discovery of self makes the other, then "white" is dependent on "black" and "citizen" is dependent on "immigrant" (3).

American drama is also replete with disparaging jokes about ethnic minorities. These jokes serve several purposes. They are meant to assert the Americanness of the nativists who makes these jokes and to dehumanize and humiliate the immigrants who are considered the marginalized other. The way Blanche and Stella in Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* make jokes about Stanley's ethnic origins is not only racial, but also humiliating. When Stella remarks "Stanley is Polish, you know," Blanche jokingly replies, "Oh yes. They're something like Irish, aren't they?...Only not so- highbrow?" (*Streetcar* 256). These racial jokes, followed by the hysterical laughter of the two women, tarnish two ethnic minorities; the Polish and the Irish. Blanche's ethnic remarks show that ethnic minorities occupy different rungs on the ethnic ladder in America with the Polish immigrants being on the lowest rung only one rung or two below the Irish immigrants; an ethnic minority already treated as subjects of ridicule in early American literature. John Lowe (1986) pointed out that ethnic jokes have played important roles in society to address interethnic conflicts in American drama for several reasons. Such humorous ethnic jokes raise a social critique of ethnic minorities. Jokes can be shaped and reshaped to fit any potentially dangerous intergroup situation for humour dispels animosity by bringing cultures together using shared human failings as a common denominator (441-42).

Kenneth Cerniglia (2001) argues that ethnic jokes function as a catalyst for understanding the other. By laughing at other people's shortcomings audiences across ethnic divides may breach an emotional barrier that allows empathy to flow when more universal situations are presented (28).

In Williams's *Streetcar* Stanley's response to the two sisters' continuous humiliating remarks about his ethnicity takes different forms ranging from assertion of his American identity to aggressive brutality that culminates in raping the lunatic Blanche. Like many immigrants and sons and daughters of immigrants have always done, Stanley asserts his Americanness in front of those who claim to be native Americans. In retaliation to Blanche's attack, Stanley stresses his Americanism by telling her that he is a true American national regardless of the origin of his parents as he was born and brought up in America, and she and nobody else has the right to deny his Americanism and his sincere love for America. Outraged, Stanley retaliates:

I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not Polacks. But what I am is a one-hundred-percent American, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and proud as hell of it, so don't ever call me a Polack (*Streetcar* 374).

Like nearly most immigrants, Stanley considers America the best country in the world or the "Promised Land" which every immigrant should be proud of being one of its citizens. Gilbert Muller (1999) argues that for immigrants the United States is the "promised land" where dreams come true and where such new comers "embrace democratic vistas and transcend national meanings: opportunity, social mobility, self-reliance, the dreams inherent in their new Promised Land" (238). As the son of Polish immigrants, Stanley struggles to assert his American identity excluding both his Polish heritage and the black lineage which he is associated with by means of animal imagery and ethnic jokes. This portrayal of Stanley, a Polish immigrant descendant, with attributes traditionally associated with blacks proves Morrison's hypothesis that "Even, and especially, when American texts are not about Africanist presences or characters...the shadow hovers in implication" (46-7).

Stanley's heaving the package of blood-stained meat to his wife like a caveman coming from the hunt reveals his apelike animal behavior. Like a predator animal defending his prey, Stanley perceives his household, his possessions including his wife as his own territory and is ready to eliminate any one threatening to deprive him or even share him with his own possessions. Williams portrays Stanley as a man who has fallen in love with his possessions. This justifies his hatred of his sister-in-law, Blanche, who has come to share him his flat, his food, his bathroom, his liquor and even his wife's love. To assimilate with the American whites and to get out of the circle of the marginalized otherness, Stanley, the white immigrant treated as black, is ready to give up his Polish ancestral heritage and assert his Americanness. If this assertion strategy fails, he will resort to its opposite aggressiveness.

In Some American plays immigrants are portrayed in a favorable image as successful people, though not necessarily financially but maybe socially as well and many of them have assimilated perfectly with the American society. A good representative example of such immigrants is Jim O'Connor of Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*. In this play, though one of the main characters is an Irish American, the topic of ethnicity is not tackled and the discourse of the play is not racialized. The only reference to the Irish ancestry of this second generation immigrant is when Amanda comments on his surname O'Connor, "Irish on both sides! Gracious! And doesn't drink?" (*Menagerie* 34). The narrator Tom describes Jim O'Connor favourably and speaks highly of him as if he were a celebrity:

In high school Jim was a hero. He had tremendous Irish good nature and vitality with the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware. He seemed to move in a continual spotlight. He was a star in basket-ball, captain of the debating club, president of the senior class and the glee club and he sang the male lead in the annual light operas. He was always running or bounding, never just walking. He seemed always at the point of defeating the law of gravity.

He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty (*Menagerie* 38).

Unlike Stanley of *Streetcar*, Jim O'Connor is proud of his Irish heritage and does not even bother about asserting his American identity. Sarotte (1995) described Jim as "a complete American male, both artistic and athletic" (142). He even favours to marry a girl of Irish origin. He confesses to Laura:

I've got strings on me. Laura...I go out all of the time with a girl named Betty. She's a home-girl like you, and Catholic, and Irish, and in a great many ways we - get along fine (*Menagerie* 69).

Ethnicity and the marginalized cultures of immigrant minorities in the united States of America came into prominence with the emergence of postmodernism with its concepts of the center and the margins. Postmodernist critique holds the view that the center, in this sense the white American mainstream culture, no longer holds, thus introducing the notion of marginalization (Cooperman 2). Lee Josephine (1998) states that immigrant and hyphenated theatres have produced theatres of difference and sameness which are concerned with the prospect of inclusion and seclusion of ethnic minorities within the mainstream culture (47). Ethnic minorities in America are no longer marginal, but have become active citizens and have mixed with the country's melting pot through the persistent process of assimilation and cultural diversity. Polster states that the ethnic self is no longer marginal, but is an active and intervening agent in the geographical and ideological boundaries of the United States of America (4).

Deconstruction has further intensified the notions of decentralization, the ex-centric and marginalization. Deconstruction not only called for the logocentrism inherent in Western thought, but also gave marginalized minorities free space to express their cultural identities in canonical texts that were formerly dominated by American mainstream culture. Some critics such as Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd (1987) have called for the recognition of minority discourses in American literature that can be defined in political terms for such ethnic rhetoric is caused by economic exploitation, political disfranchisement, social manipulation, and mainstream ideological domination (11). In her anthology *Ethnic Theater in the United States* Maxine Seller (1983), pointed out that ethnic theaters in America strengthen the cohesiveness of ethnic communities in America; while at the same time facilitate the process of assimilation and adaptation in the mainstream culture (6). She further elaborates:

One of the most popular subjects for comedy on European immigrant stages was the new arrival, the green one, who made ridiculous mistakes and was victimized by his own countrymen as well as by native-born Americans (8).

Ethnic theaters for minority audiences serve as a catalyst for the audiences to enact their own processes of becoming American. Seller further asserts that language played a vital role of the Americanization of some minorities throughout the United States. English expressions including contemporary slang and street talk slipped into ethnic language plays, reflecting the changing speech of immigrants who were becoming Americanized and stimulating such change among the most recent arrivals (7). For the process of assimilation into the mainstream culture to succeed, immigrants have to speak with an American accent. Lisa Lowe (1996) asserts in *Immigrant Acts* "the imposition of...language and its cultural institutions...demands the subject's internalization of the superiority of the dominant cultural narrative (97). Mastery of the American accent among disfavoured ethnic minorities significantly helps improving their image in the country's national imaginary. Differential racialization, a legal term coined by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), denotes that racializations of any disfavored ethnic minority vary at different historical periods and that the racial and ethnic image of a minority group keeps changing in the national imaginary (69).

In some plays the stage immigrant is seen as the erotic and exotic other or even a cultural product created in the national imaginary. As Lisa Lowe (1996) has argued, "cultural productions emerging out of the contradictions of immigrant marginality... would illegitimately locate the immigrant before history or exempt the "immigrant from history" (9). The Chinese American David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1989) is based on a true story in which a French diplomat for twenty years thought that his male Chinese mistress to be a woman. Robert Cooperman (1995) claims that the most notable American immigrant play that has questioned the political, social and cultural identities of the West at the turn of the twentieth century was *M. Butterfly* (201).

The fictional dramatization of the play involves a Chinese spy and her twenty-year love affair with a French diplomat. Cooperman further elaborates that *M. Butterfly* defies the Western distorted stereotypical images of Eastern cultures particularly those propagated by the myth of Orientalism that stressed sexual eroticism, postcolonialism, gender, and supremacy of cultures (201). The stereotypical image of the East is that of the exotic, erotic and the submissive alien that should be controlled and dominated. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a term used by many Western ideologists to construct an ontological stable body of knowledge about a civilization from its prime to its decline. Said states, "The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny... To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it, to create this culture and define its limits" (32).

M. Butterfly deploys myths of the submissive Oriental to explore how mistaken distorted stereotyped identities could occur (Cho 99). The French diplomat has not actually fallen in love with an exotic alien woman, but rather with an ethnic fantasy stereotype. In this play Hwang uses Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* as a perfect legendary music or frame text to portray the Western fictions about passive Eastern butterflies abandoned by their Western lovers. Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* was based on an American play *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco that portrays the romance between a delicate Oriental and an aggressive Westerner. Gallimard's mistress, Song Li Ling, is a performer in the Chinese opera and a diva who performs *Madama Butterfly* to entertain foreign diplomats. Unaware of the Chinese conventional opera where a man plays the part of a woman, Gallimard is attracted to Song taking him to be a woman. Gallimard does not only find Song to be an exotic woman, but also loves her for being seductive.

The love affair ends with a fiasco as at the end of the play as Song turns out to be a spy for the Chinese government during the Vietnam War. Gallimard's fantasy with the exotic oriental makes him deny the true identity of his lover even though her identity as a male spy has been revealed to him. Still filled with fantasy and ecstasy, Gallimard remarks "I'm a man who loved a woman created by a man. Everything else... simply falls short" (*M. Butterfly* 90). Gallimard dresses himself in the Chinese costume and commits a ritual suicide, thus confirming that the roles of the victor-victim have been reversed and stressing that he is the lost butterfly not Song. Though Song is wearing a Western suit, his Asian body is still visible in the Western costume. The message of the play is that an Asian wearing a Western costume does not by any way make him a Westerner. By the same token, an Asian immigrant will remain Asian regardless of becoming an American citizen, and therefore should not Americanize himself by shedding his true Asian identity. In this context, the word Asian is inclusive of all immigrants whether they are Africans, Asians, Mexicans or even Europeans. George Sanchez (1993) states "ethnicity was not a fixed set of customs packed in a suitcase with other belongings brought from the mother country, but rather a collective identity that emerged from daily experience in the United States" (4).

Until recently most renowned Jewish playwrights have not discussed Jewish identity in their plays and as Glenda Frank (1995) observed "have kept ethnic issues at arm's length. Their characters and themes were as American as blue jeans and apple pie. Their protagonists were Melting Pot Everymen, even when identified by ethnic surnames" (245).

Herb Gardner's memory play *Conversations with My Father* tells the story of a Jewish Russian immigrant Eddie Ross, a Canal Street bartender, and his son Charlie, who strives to make peace with his contentious, abrasive and verbally abusive father. Eddie has spent forty years in America's melting pot trying in vain to reject his heritage. The play portrays the saga of a first generation of American Jews who settled in America during the Depression era and were assimilated with great difficulty into the American society. Beneath its ethnicity the play explores the disparaging influence of a thunderous, frustrated, funny failure of a patriarch on his son. The whole play is set in a New York City bar run by Jewish immigrant Eddie Ross in the 1930s and 1940s and his two sons, Jussel and Chaim, who opted to Americanize their former names to become Joey and Charlie respectively. Though the play celebrates the Jewish heritage of this Jewish Americanized family, it contains unjustified ethnic slurs directed against Italian Americans. Alvin Klein (1993) argues that although Eddie has changed his surname from Goldberg to Ross, his attitude toward his religion remains disoriented, ranging from coercive to dismissive.

Eddie is a hypocrite for he forces his younger son, Charlie, to attend a Hebrew school, but he himself refuses to go to synagogue. He declares that his way of life is "go-getter," not a "ground-kisser" like his father. Klein argues that Eddie is a tough, eccentric Jew who is incapable of showing affection to a son or a wife, and in the end he rationalizes his failures. Throughout the play Charlie helplessly tries to be accredited by his tough father and frequently relives a difficult past replete with more rows than constructive conversations with his father. He finds solace only in becoming a novelist in whose novel he has converted his tough father Eddie into the character Izzie, the loveable protagonist of a series of best sellers called the Izzie series. Both Eddie and his son Charlie have failed to realize that in giving up their Jewish identity and adopting the American mainstream culture, they have not identified themselves with Americanness, but have rather created an identity of their own. In *Constituting Americans* (1995), Priscilla Wald states "immigrant narrators who spell out their changes of being-or conversions- into Americans... bear witness to an American identity, and they specify the terms of that identity (243).

The image of the Jews in this play is rather distorted as they are portrayed as tough and greedy. In the 1920's, Eddie's father and relative Jews were smugglers as Eddie remarks "never got the message about bootleggers." Now in the 1970s Eddie wonders where the "big bucks" went. Charlie's sporadic use of Yiddish idioms that seem not to have an English equivalent is meant to be funny, but at the same time establish his Jewish identity that his father gave up. Charlie boastfully claims that these untranslatable Yiddish expressions "do the job" in ridiculing other people. Hyphenating the immigrant and reducing him or her to an insignificant figure threatens the social and political stability of the dominant mainstream culture. By reducing an immigrant to the other, he or she is dehumanized and disfigured beyond social recognition. Patricia Schroeder (1993) asserts that the tendency to hyphenate the other, to consider him/her by reference to the dominant culture constitutes a serious threat to society (81-83).

Plays featuring characters of diverse ethnic origins exhibit the nativists' attraction to and repulsion of these people to deconstruct and construct a collective heterogeneous American identity. The rhetoric on American multiculturalism oscillates between support of and resistance to the notion of amalgamation of ethnic groups into the American society. Cooperman states that cultural pluralism defies and accepts otherness, deconstructs American universalism and liberal humanism, and offers multicultural or feminist revisions of reality in the U.S (2). Speaking of the current status of immigrant minorities in the United States Richard Schechner (1991) sheds light on the immigrants' impulses towards fusion, which he calls "American universalism" or "multiculturalism" and even "interculturalism" which all presuppose their interaction and integration into the dominant American mainstream culture (30). The phenomenon of cultural pluralism in American drama is three-fold. It manifests itself in performance; it has its origins in the canon of American drama and flourishes in the new contemporary multicultural drama (Cooperman 3).

Cooperman argues that the dramas of canonical American playwrights like Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams have all staged ethnicity to revision American cultural pluralism, even though in an indirect or oblique manner (4).

Mexicans, in particular, are the subjects of much of the racial alienating discourse in American drama and theater. Jurado (2008) argues that "in the Southwest, the bodies of Mexican im/migrants remain discursively constructed as beasts of burden; a workforce that is at times either invisible or anonymous while at others conspicuously criminal, but always foreign and alien (3). Imagination literature introduced social texts that document the ideological and cultural moves of immigrants from assimilation, and cultural pluralism of hyphenated identities to the postmodern diaspora of borderland theory developed by Mexican American writers. The borderland theory abandons the traditional immigration tropes of passing from one nation to the other (Polster 11).

In some American canonical plays the nativist does not only show disrespect of immigrants, but is also aggressive and hostile towards them. Such hostile nativists fear immigrants, consider them a threat to their social stability and eventually seek to deport them out of the country. The events of Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge are set in 1950s America, in an Italian American neighborhood near the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. At the beginning of the play, Eddie Carbone, an Italian American longshoreman, is protective of and shows more than avuncular kindness toward his orphaned niece Catherine. He even develops a sexual attraction toward her. He finds her sexy, and thus seems sexually drawn to her. His sexual ecstasy toward her is troubled by the arrival from Italy of his wife's two cousins, Marco and Rodolpho, two illegal Italian immigrants who have come to America seeking employment and a better life. Catherine falls in love with Rodolpho whom she finds charming, young, good-looking, blond, and single. Catherine soon starts dating with him. Marco is a married man with a starving family back home. Having become jealous and suspicious of Rodolpho, Eddie starts pointing out all of his flaws to Catherine and his wife Beatrice. Eddie claims that Rodolpho is not right, and that he is a man of effeminate qualities such as sewing, cooking, singing, and dancing. He claims that Rodolpho is very soft and lacks masculine qualities.

Having known that Catherine is determined to marry Rodolpho, Eddie becomes more jealous and his frustration leads him to consult his lawyer, Alfieri to find a way to deport the two illegal immigrants out of the United States. Alfieri assures Eddie that both illegal immigrants can be easily deported out of the country by informing the Immigration Bureau of their illegal presence in the country. At first, Eddie refuses Alfieri's plan as he himself earlier told the two illegal immigrants that it's an honor to give them safe refuge. However, filled with jealousy for seeing Rodolpho courting Catherine; Eddie, though he himself an Italian American immigrant, hastily calls the Immigration Bureau. Eddie is shocked to learn that Catherine and Rodolpho are engaged and are about to get married, and Beatrice informs him that two more illegal Italian immigrants have moved into the upstairs apartment. Within hours, the Immigration Officers arrive and detain the four immigrants. As the detainees are being lead out of the tenement, Marco breaks free from the immigration officers, goes back to Eddie's apartment and spitefully spits in his face. Enraged and unable to control his anger Eddie traces Marco out into the street and lashes racial insults at him and all Italian immigrants.

During the row between Eddie and Marco in the street outside the tenement, one of the neighbors accuses Eddie of being a traitor for informing the immigration authorities about the four immigrants. While being lead to prison, Marco accuses Eddie of being a murderer for causing his family back in Italy to starve to death. Being married to an American citizen, Rodolpho is allowed to stay in the country, but poor Marco faces immediate deportation. Filled with jealousy and fury Eddie refuses to attend the wedding. He even rejects Rodolpho's offer to reconcile and refuses to leave the house when he knows that Marco will attend the wedding. At the end of the play, Eddie and Marco fight in the street with a lot of people watching. Eddie attacks Marco and brandishes a knife close to his face, but misses his target. In self defense, Marco turns the blade onto Eddie, unintentionally killing him.

In conclusion, American theater has not only served as a vivid register of the Americanization of ethnics, but it has also served as a graphic account of how racialized ethnic minority groups have been denied full assimilation into the American mainstream culture. Beverly Smith (1995) states, "Though theatre is not mentioned in the list of institutions usually associated with the spread of nativism, plays of this era become a demarcation of society's absorption with defining what an American was and what it was not, since they encapsulate verbal and nonverbal coding systems that helped to determine and maintain relationships, social divisions, and inequalities (19).

In such a context, the theater served as a vehicle for historicizing racial stereotyping on the stage. To assert the supremacy of the American mainstream identity and to give a national character to their plays some canonical playwrights have presented American settings or introduced specifically American stereotypes like the Yankee, Indian or Negro" (Grimsted 156). In the same line of argument, Sander Gilman (1991) states, "Stereotypes arise when the integration of the self is threatened. They are therefore, part of our manner of dealing with the instabilities of our perception of the world... We can and must make the distinction between pathological stereotyping and the stereotyping we all need to do to preserve our illusion of control over the self and the world (13).

In most canonical modern and contemporary American plays racial stereotyping of ethnic groups is distorted and bears little or no resemblance to the nature of immigrants in society. Such theatricalization of ethnic marginalization of immigrants, though assures the supremacy of the native born American over the stage immigrant, it problematizes the entire notion of American citizenship and identity, and poses a threat to the process of acculturation in the United States. Therefore, to create a heterogeneous, multicultural and multiethnic American melting pot, immigrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds should fully be assimilated into the mainstream culture and such distorted stereotyping of immigrants on stages should cease to exist.

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Immigrants who favor the salad bowl assimilate into the new world culture, but at the same time keep certain cultural practices of their old world. Some, however, do not assimilate, but choose to live a life on the margins, in ethnic enclaves where they can stick to their old world culture. (Irene Mata 7). Payant and Rose (1999) argue that the dichotomy of the old, new worlds constitutes a dilemma to every immigrant to the United States as all immigrants are perplexed by the dilemma of assimilation into the mainstream culture of the new world and maintaining their diasporic identity in a multicultural society. This study is quite different from previous studies on the perceptions of immigrants in American drama in particular Lewis Marcuson's *The Stage Immigrant: The Irish, Italians, and Jews in America a Melting Pot or a Salad Bowl?* Culture Blog / By Stephen Morin. The melting pot vs. salad bowl metaphors. Many people want to move to the U.S.A for work or school. The salad bowl model allows for more tolerance of other cultures, and while problems like racism and xenophobia still exist, the education system is generally doing a better job of informing students about different cultures and embracing(10) differences rather than holding onto prejudices. The U.S. isn't a perfect country by any means, but it's a unique multicultural experiment with a lot of great aspects. Together, people from around the world are showing us that the future can be a salad bowl full of tolerance, diversity, and unique flavors that can only be discovered by embracing our differences. To sum up with, immigrants became more American, but they changed what American meant along the way. However, experts seem very anxious about the United States societal shift from the traditional melting pot model to be totally a salad bowl or mosaic, meaning that society could fall apart into distinct ethnic, religious, cultural and language communities. *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama* Marc Maufort Using O'Neill on the Immigrant Experience in the American Literature Classroom *The Eugene O'Neill Review* 25A Touch of the Poet: An American Tragedy Editor's Introduction: Writing Race and the Difference it Makes. Jan 1985. 245-57. Glenda Frank. Frank, Glenda. "The Struggle to Affirm: The Image of Jewish-Americans on Stage," *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama*. Ed. Marc Maufort. Marcuson, Lewis. *The Stage Immigrant: The Irish, Italian and Jews in American Drama 1920-1960*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990. *A View from the Bridge: Two One-Act Plays*.