

COMMENTARY

Night of the Iguana (1961)

Tennessee Williams

(1911-1983)

“[Williams] spent his first six years or so in his Episcopal grandfather’s rectory... Williams went on a summer tour of Europe conducted by his grandfather. There in Cologne Cathedral he had some sort of mystical experience, or so he thought, which anticipated by several years his joining the Catholic Church.... *Night of the Iguana* takes place in a decrepit ‘Bohemian hotel’ in an out-of-the-way Puerto Barrio on the Pacific Coast, but the central figure here is a defrocked Episcopal priest, Shannon, leading a group of Texas Baptist ladies on a near disastrous tour of Mexico. One is tempted to see much of the rebellious Williams in the priest and much of his grandfather in the aging poet he encounters, who dies in the course of the play. One is hard put, however, to find a parallel for the remarkable Hannah Jelkes, spinster granddaughter to the aging poet, who by precept and example shows Shannon what calm acceptance of life means and why acceptance is infinitely preferable to the rebelliousness he seems to find necessary.”

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