I. Introduction

Development of American Drama and Its Trends

In the Colonial period, America lacked the large centers of population necessary for the support of the theater, and the Puritans were hostile to plays. In New England plays were completely outlawed. The cavalier spirit of the South, however, was more hospitable to the drama. The first theaters were built in Willamsburg, Virginia in 1716 and in Charleston, South Carolina in 1735. To these theaters, Lewis Hallam brought his "American Company", a theater group in 1752. He found his main support in the Southern towns than New York and Philadelphia. But even though theatrical history began in America with the coming of the "American Company", native drama was a long way off. The repertoire of this company consisted of some twenty plays. Robert C. Pooley attributes the reasons behind this phenomenon to "common language and the ready availability of British plays than American ones" (641).

After the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), there was a noticeable lessening of prejudice against the drama. In 1789, Philadelphia repealed its old law against stage plays, and in 1794 Boston had its first theatre. The effect of this change in attitude was almost immediate. And, native-born Americans began to take over the show business and to use the drama as a "means of expressing American charter" (Pooley 641). The most famous as well as the best constructed of the early American plays is known as *The Contrast*, by Royall Tyler (1757-1826). Throughout this play Native American qualities were contrasted with foreign. Then stage "Yankee", a character that for the next hundred years was to make his regular appearance in American plays to outwit the foreign and the sophisticated with his shrewd horse sense was introduced.

After Tyler, there appeared in the American theater scene two professional dramatists, William Dunalap (1766-1839) and John Howard Payne (1791-1852). They were both prolific writers, but they relied heavily upon foreign themes and models, so they soon disappeared from the theater.

Although American drama of the 19th century usually followed European models, its subject matter often came from specifically American situations. *Superstition* (1824), a romantic tragedy by James Nelson Barker, for example, was set in New England of 1675. It discussed conflicts between Native Americans and white settlers, British interference in local affairs, Puritan xenophobia (fear and dislike of foreigners), and the idea of witchcraft. Superstition, in which the hero is tried and executed for witchcraft, was the first of many American plays to explore themes of isolationism, bigotry, and intolerance. Barker's *The Indian Princess* (1808) was the first professionally produced play to explore Native American characters and themes.

As the years passed, drama moved westward with the Frontier. By 1830, the American theater extended to the river towns along the Ohio and the Mississippi. New Orleans, St. Louis, and Chicago provided theatrical centers and a frontier audience whose influence upon American drama was felt until the end of the century. Authors as well as managers become very conscious of the box-office. The "star" system, familiar in moving pictures today, began to replace the repertory company. Managers began to bid for the most sensational devices of the drama. Actors ranted and swaggered and outdid even the thunders and impassioned oratory of the day. The successful author had to use all the devices of melodrama that he could command and to write for the star because the

American public demanded "entertainment rather than art" (High 223). So, most plays at the time were melodramas.

Melodrama was the most pervasive dramatic genre of the 19th century. Melodramas were typically overflowing with emotion, set in mysterious locations, and peopled with stereotypical characters: heartless villains, heroines in distress, and strong heroes who faced almost insurmountable odds in rescuing those heroines.

Frontier melodrama enthralled audiences in the first half of the 19th century. *Nick of the Woods* (1838) by Louisa Medina capitalized on the spectacle, romance, and danger of the frontier. Playwrights repeatedly glorified backwoodsmen and moved toward making Native American characters into villains. One of the most successful frontier melodramas, *Davy Crockett* (1872) by Frank Murdoch, featured the so-called natural gentleman.

Another form of melodrama was the temperance play, which illustrated the evils of alcohol and supported a ban on its sale. An example is *The Drunkard* and *The Fallen Saved* (1844) by W. H. Smith. Such plays had American locations and were staged frequently from the 1830s until the Civil War (1861-1865). Most of these plays included scenes of the acute stages of alcoholism; featured protagonists who are lured into alcoholism by villains; and showed the victims losing everything until the play’s climax, when they convert to abstinence and regain their life and family.

Melodramatic comedy appeared frequently in the 1800s, while comedies of manners, so popular in the previous century were rare. One of the most successful and well-written plays of the 19th century was *Fashion* (1845) by Anna Cora Mowatt. Yet what most tellingly distinguished *Fashion* from earlier

American comedies, such as *The Contrast* was its melodramatic subplot and its heroine in distress.

Racial, social, and economic tensions in American society before the Civil War period found a way into popular drama, most successfully in stage adaptations of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Sentimental versions of the novel filled so many professional stages that this material was performed more often than any other American play of the time. An 1852 adaptation by George Aiken was the most enduring version. Stage adaptations of novels proliferated from the 1850s until motion pictures took over the tradition in the 20th century. Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859), a stage adaptation of the novel *The Quadroon* (1856) by Mayne Reid, is the most well-crafted melodrama on the subject of slavery and racism in the mid-19th century

Modern Issues and Dramatists

As the technology of theater productions advanced and people began to watch real-life situation at the theater, the drama became more and more realistic towards the end of the nineteenth century. Realism continued to be a primary form of dramatic expression in the 20th century, even as experimentation in both the content and the production of plays became increasingly important. As the century progressed, the most powerful drama spoke to broad social issues, such as civil rights and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) crisis, and the individual's position in relation to those issues. Individual perspectives in mainstream theater became far more diverse and more closely reflected the increasingly complex demographics of American society. Generally three significant dramatic trends gave promise of a new era:

> (i) Authors began to develop realism in setting, character and action. (ii) They began to discover the drama in real-life problems and to deal with it in their plays. (iii) They began to use characters and settings as symbols of ideas and to interpret life by this means. (Richardson 642)

However, the movement toward realism in the story of the play was far slower. Bronson Howard (1842-1908) was the first important realist in American drama. In such plays as *The Banker's Daughter* (1878), *Young Mrs. Winthrop* (1882) and *The Henrietta* (1887), he carefully studied two areas of American Society: business and marriage. He made audiences at the time "think uncomfortable thoughts" about both of these (High 223). But Howard's dramatic techniques were still the old fashioned techniques of melodrama.

William Dean Howells was a realist novelist who was also active in modernizing the American theater. Though he wrote three dozen plays, only one of them was really successful and that was *A Counterfeit Presented* (1887). In 1892, Howells and Hamlin Garland established the First Independent Theater in Boston. Their purpose of establishing this theater was "to encourage truth and progress in American Dramatic Art" (qtd. in High 283). It was also a model for the "Little Theatre" movement which began around 1912 to revolt against the big theatres in New York City, whose main interest was making money.

The modern American drama came into prominence with such renowned American playwrights as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller and others. With them drama reached profound new levels of psychological realism, commenting through individual characters and their situations on the state of American society in general.

Eugene O'Neil and Susan Glaspel dominated the American theater in the first half of the twentieth century and Arthur Miller, Edward Albee and many other dramatists led the second half of the twentieth century. Tennessee Williams is seen as a dramatist of the middle twentieth century, who will be discussed under separate heading as part of the present research on his famous play *The Streetcar Named Desire*.

Eugene O'Neill was the first American dramatist of international repute. His plays were written from an intensely personal point of view, deriving directly from the scarring effects of his family's tragic relationships – his mother and father, who loved and tormented each other; his older brother, who loved and corrupted him and died of alcoholism in middle age. And, O'Neill was himself caught and torn between his love and rage for all the three.

O'Neill's career as a playwright consisted of three periods. His early realist plays utilize his own experiences, especially as a seaman. In the 1920s he rejected realism in an effort to capture on the stage the forces behind human life. His expressionistic plays during this period were influenced by the ideas of philosopher Frederick Nietzsche, psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and Swedish playwright August Strindberg. During his final period O'Neill returned to realism. These later works, which most critics consider his best, depend on his life experiences for their story lines and themes.

In the beginning, he expressed his contempt for the theatre as he writes, remembering his childhood, "my early experience with the theatre through my father made me revolt against it. I saw much of the old, artificial romantic stuff that I always had a sort of contempt for the theatre" (qtd. in High 225). As a result, he turned away from his family. He became heavy-drinking sailors' bars.

All this indicates that O'Neill suffered from existential problems even as a child. When he began to write plays these experiences were his first material. They helped him to change the old characters of melodrama into realistic characters.

O' Neill's plays are an exploration of human condition and predicament. *His Bound East for Cardiff* (1916) describes a sailor dying on board the ship *S.S. Glencairn*. In this "S.S. Glencairn series of three plays, the mood is dark and heavy. The theme of each play goes beyond the surfaces of life to study the "forces of behind life" (High 225).

In all of O'Neill's works, human existence and fate are one of these forces. In *Anna Christie* (1920) and in many other plays, fate is symbolized by 'that old devil' sea. Psychology is another of these 'forces behind life'. In fact, O'Neill often uses the new psychology of Freud to deepen his dramas. According to Peter B. High, O'Neill was one of the first playwrights to study "the struggle inside a character's mind between conscious motives and unconscious needs" (225). While most of his plays are realistic in form, he experimented with anti-realistic techniques as well. He sometimes 'distorted' reality in order to 'express' the inner meaning or problem in a play. The *Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1992) are important examples of this "expressionism." In order to show the sailor in *The Hairy Ape* as caged animals, prisoners and robots, O'Neill calls for an expressionistic setting:

> The treatment of this scene, or any other scene in the play, should be by no means be naturalistic . . . . The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright. This accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal . . . has given them.

> The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. (qtd. in High 226)

The form of each play of O'Neill is based upon the special dramatic needs of that play. As D. V. Falk notes, "he never echoes himself" from play to play. In *Strange Interlude* (1998), the play's most important action happens inside the minds of the main characters. We listen to them thinking. O'Neill takes the stream of consciousness technique from the novel and uses it. The characters allow the audience to hear their inner thoughts. O'Neill has also used themes and technique from Greek tragedy in such plays as *The Great God Brown* (1926) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Similarly, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1952) explores the spiritual problems of the American family. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) is considered to be a "triumph of realistic play" as it explores the human responsibility. This is the evidence that O'Neill explored existential themes in his writings.

After World War II, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller (1915) brought new life into American drama. It was an especially difficult time for artists and intellectuals. During the thirties, American plays often showed individuals as "types" (the immigrant, the "average citizen", the rich man, etc.). Starting in the late forties", however, the individual began to be shown in a different manner. He was an" "alienated" person: he had the feeling of not belonging to any group. He was a lonely person, separated from society and other people. The most famous plays of both Williams and Miller take the alienation of modern man and their basic theme.

The world of Tennessee Williams is ruled by irrational forces. The world of Arthur Miller, another famous contemporary playwright, however, is quite rational. He believes that

> [. . .] things happen for a reason. Unlike Williams, he believes that 'life has meaning'. This makes his plays seem more intellectual than Williams's. The past has a direct influence on the present in Miller's plays. 'We live in a world made by men and the past,' he says. 'Art makes the interconnections palpable. People are connected to each Other through responsibility.' Often in his plays, characters learn to take responsibility for their past actions. (qtd. in High 229)

This is the theme of Miller's first Broadway play, *All My Sons* (1947). Miller's plays are rather similar to the plays of Henrik Ibsen (the great nineteenth-century naturalist playwright). They often set up a dramatic situation in order to prove an intellectual point. Miller himself says that he has been strongly influenced by Ibsen. Miller learned from Ibsen the technique of giving the audience information about past events little by little. The new information (like the dead son's letter) changes the way we see the present situation. Little by little, false ideas of reality are erased and the underlying truth comes out.

All of these elements can be seen in Miller's best-known play *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Willy Loman, an ageing salesman, cannot understand his lifetime of failure. His business is failing and his favorite son hates him. The play shows that all of these failures are caused by false dreams. Clearly, one of these false dreams is the American Dream of financial success. Willy judges his

own value as a human being by his own financial success. In order to succeed, he must "sell" himself.

The theme of *The Crucible* (1953), which is set in seventeenth-century New England, and *View from, the Bridge,* (1955) is that social evil is caused by individuals who do not take responsibility for the world they live in. All Miller's plays show a deep faith. They show that moral truth can be found in the human world. In 1979 he wrote: "my effect, my energy, and my aesthetic lie in finding the chain of moral being in the world . . . somehow" (Roundane 3).

In 1958, the American theatre was in a period of crisis. O'Neill was already dead. And the most successful years of both Miller and Williams seemed to be over. Drama critics of the major newspapers, therefore, started to look beyond the huge theatres of Broadway for good drama. They found it in the much smaller "theatre-like spaces" of Off-Broadway. The big discovery of 1958 was *The Zoo Story by* Edward Albee (1928). By the early 1960s, Albee was widely considered to be the "successor" to Miller and Williams.

Many of Albee's plays seem to be influenced by the European "Theatre of the Absurd" movement of the fifties and sixties. The basic philosophy of this movement was that traditional realism only shows life as it "seems to be"; and that in fact, life is meaningless (absurd). Art should reflect the meaninglessness (absurdity) of life. In the theatre of the absurd, therefore, dramatic action shows this meaninglessness. The style of *The Zoo Story* is "absurdist". The conversation between the two characters, Peter and Jerry, shows the great difficulty which people have communicating. They simply don't understand each other.

Although Albee often uses the methods of the Absurdist, he is really a social critic and satirist. This is clear in his next important play, *The American*

Dream (1961). It is an attack on the false values which have destroyed the real values in American society. The American Dream (represented by the handsome but somehow inhuman Young Man) speaks of its emptiness. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), Albee's most famous work, has a similar theme. Albee's later work, however, is far less hopeful. About his play *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (1968), he says: "I am becoming less and less certain about the resiliency of civilization. Maybe I am becoming more and more depressed by the fact that people desire to live as dictatorships tell them to" (43).

In this extremely experimental play, one character is Mao. He does nothing but quote himself from his famous little red book. Another character does nothing but quote lines of sentimental poetry. Each character is caught in his own little world. Their words seem unconnected to any real meaning. In his *Counting the Ways* and *Listening* (both 1977), even the word "reality" has lost its meaning. The characters spend their time remembering a "past" which probably never happened. In all of his plays, Albee's language is wonderful. But in his recent plays, he seems to doubt the reliability of language itself. He says: "We communicate and fail to communicate by language . . . My characters tend to be far more articulate than a lot of other people's characters. That is one of the problems, I suppose" (qtd. in High 233). Like the novelist Thomas Pynchon, Albee seems to doubt that art can explain life.

Jack Gelber (1932) is another important recent playwright of modern times. He writes about modern pressing issues. His modern play *The Connection* (1959) deals with the life of a drug addict. The audience takes an active part in the play itself. The rich language of *Texas Trilogy* (1973-1975) by Preston Jones (1936-1979) and the dramatic metaphor imagery of Sam Shepard (1943)

Cowboys, (*1964*); *Seduced,* (1979) have also been widely praised. Black writers like James Baldwin *(Blues for Mister Charlie,* 1965), Leroi Jones (*The Slave* and *The Toilet,* 1964) and ED Bullins (*Coin' a Buffalo,* 1968) have had a great influence on serious American drama. By the 19805, other African-American writers were beginning to cross from "black theatre" to mainstream Broadway theatre.

In this way, the modern dramatists concerned themselves with the major issues of their time – religion, philosophy, psychoanalysis and scientific thought.

Tennessee Williams and His Concern

Tennessee Williams inhabits a central place in American theatre. The centrality of Tennessee Williams theatre however, has less connection with chronology and more with the original nature of this theatrical imagination. Eugene O'Neill was known as a tragic dramatist. Arthur Miller is known as an ethnical dramatist but Tennessee Williams as a poet of the heart.

Tennessee Williams was one of the most celebrated dramatists of his time. His craftsmanship combines lyricism and experimentation which revolutionized American drama after the Second World War. Hart Crane directly influenced Tennessee Williams. Williams took the imaginaries of repressed desires, of an inscribed sexuality that is at once visible and thinly veiled in Eugene O'Neill and he inherited the imagery of expression, which helped him restructure the stage. He was also influenced by Sartre, Rimbaud, and Strindberg

From Anton Chekhov, Tennessee learned the importance of setting, and replicated the particular milieu of Belle Reve, New Orleans, St. Louis while simultaneously transforming those localized setting to the level of symbol. His language in his play is very much poetic and that turns the world into flesh and

creates an alluring stage ambience that becomes a visible means for performance. Williams reinforced his language, by refining what he termed "Plastic theatre", the use of lights, music set and other forms of non-verbal expression that would complement the text of the play. The willingness to open up his theatre into traditional realism, then the dominated mode of theatrical expression in America, allowed Williams to create lyrical drama, poetic theatre, stage symbol and scenic image that his character articulated to the audience.

Tennessee Williams liked to explore individual, social as well as his own familial experience in his creations. The influence of Anton Chekhov, whose main intention was to explore past experiences is prominent. Mathew Roundane suggests that Williams like Anton Chekhov explores: "a world of private need beneath the routine of social performance a private need poignantly revealed through Tom Wingfield's poetic re-construction of past familial experiences" (4). So both Blanche in *The Street Car Named Desire* and Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* reveal their past familial experience. Both of these characters are victims of time and fate as well as destructive reality. Victimization is another feature of Williams' writing because in this play, Blanche is the victim of patriarchal order, physical violence and sexual dominance. It reflects private experience as well as social experience which is inseparable from autobiographical writing.

Though he borrowed from the past, his originally stands out in the use of set, light, music and screen projection which coalesce. Gilbert Debusscher writes about the originality of Williams:

> Williams borrowed from the past and refurbished the present through his original plays and left his unmistakable imprint on a

> future generation of playgoers and playwrights. He insists on the originality of the playwright 'Williams is not a derivative artist'. (7)

Because of the mismatched relationship between parents Tennessee was adopted and cared for by his overprotective mother, Edwina Williams. Tennessee felt trapped at a very early age. Because of this situation, the theme of the trap is a pervasive in his plays. Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* is a trapped character. In the sense of theme, sometime the author himself was not clear about the theme of his writing. He himself says, "I have never been able to say what was the theme of my play and I don't think I have ever been conscious of writing with the theme in mind" (Unger 384).

The use of poetic language and southern dialect made his drama popular and established him as a southern playwright. The settings of the plays are mostly southern society and reflect the southern culture, where he lived. Mississippi, ST. Louis, New Orleans, Missouri, Columbia are places that figure prominently in his plays. The University of Lowa, where he finished his final education is milestone for his professional career. University of Iowa helped him find himself as a 'Southern playwright'.

Williams' *The Street Car Named Desire*, on which the present research work is based, has received several critics' attention since its publication and performance. William's plays are by no means restricted to characters who echo his past, not are they merely autobiographical even with respect to characters who are based on his personal experience, for Williams, as Thomas Peter views, has always "shaped his characters and plots to reflect and explore the enduring problems of loveliness and illusion in human experience" (224).

Similarly, William T. Stafford views the play, *A Streetcar Named Desire* as a "sensitive picture of an illusion-ridden woman, which depicts a brutalizing hero, brazenly exploits violence, and introduces candid suggestions of sexual aberrations" (999).

In this way, these critics have studied the play from the perspectives of "Southern Experience." However, I would like to explore the nation's trouble in transition in this drama.

II. Theoretical Framework

Nation, Narration and Literature

In his landmark study in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson opens what has become a continuous debate on the idea of the nation and nationalism by defining the nation as "an imagined political community--and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (15). He explains: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (15). In fact, he adds, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact and perhaps even these are imagined" (15). To imagine the nation that way is to focus on its physical structure, that is, as a landscape with fixed boundaries, rather than as an inscape, amorphous and fluid. As Anderson contends, the nation is "imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lies other nations" (16). This is a very limited perspective of looking at a nation because a nation encompasses more than physical space.

To think of the nation as sovereign, that is, an independent, self-governing entity modeled on monarchies at a time of great historical and intellectual changes in Europe, a period of increasing religious pluralism, adds yet to that false notion of the nation. Yet the question remains: how can such a recent, false notion as nation cause so many to be willing to die? Or, as in the case with some African writers, be willing to create works that offer blueprints of national formation? The answer lies perhaps in the political leaderships' or,

indeed, pseudo-sovereigns' abilities to dictate this false notion to his people as truth.

In recent years, however, writers like Sony Labou Tansi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah, disillusioned by the broken promises and betrayed by postcolonial rulers who have appropriated national discourses, conscious of dictators' human rights abuses within their imagined sovereign space, have turned their creative endeavors into weapons to challenge, indeed to deconstruct what Jean Franco has called in another context "any signified that could correspond to the nation" (204). Such subversive activities of de-centering the nation, of questioning established national boundaries, have taken various forms. Some of the writers have created grotesque, ubuesque, composite political figures and endowed them with larger-than-life qualities that transcend national boundaries while undermining their flattering attributes by also endowing them with self-destructive tendencies as well, tendencies that together nullify their existence.

For many women writers, who, to borrow from Homi Bhabha, "have always been placed on the limits of [their] nations' narratives"(302), contesting various boundaries has often come through their way of framing what might be considered personal, individual, local issues, everyday life stories in ways that transcend the boundaries of their imagined communities. Indeed, for all those writers and critics, the nation can no longer be interpreted as Walker Connor puts it simply as "a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs, and a sense of homogeneity" (333), but must be seen in its complexity as "a contested referent" (Esonwanne), a "shifting referent" (Cobhan), "imagined communities" (Anderson), an "imagined construct"

(Paredes), or, indeed, a contested construct. These competing descriptions of the nation reflect scholars' and critics' fascination with the concept and represent current debates on the idea of the nation in the American academy.

In the opening paragraphs of his essay "The Nation as a Contested Referent," Uzo Esonwanne makes a "tour d'horizon" of that debate prompted by Fredric Jameson's article "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" in which he characterizes all "Third World" texts as "national allegories." As he explains, "Third world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic necessarily project a political dimension in the term of national allegory" (143). The story of the private individual destiny, he adds, "is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (69). Jameson's assertion may have some validity in that studies by Walter Benjamin, the allegorist par excellence, have led the latter to conclude that allegory reflects a cultural situation in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (175). In the field of allegorical intuition, Benjamin contends, "the image is the fragment, a rune" (176).

Patrick McGee's reading of Benjamin in the light of African literature seems to explain Jameson's contention. Allegory, he argues, "arises from a culture in which the real world has become meaningless, devoid of intrinsic value, fragmented yet mysterious" (241). McGee's comments clearly depict the colonial situation that had disrupted the coherent picture of pre-colonial reality. It had also distorted the African past and in its place had introduced a copy of the colonialist's own traditions, or simply invented new ones. In either case the result was the fragmentation of the Africans' perception of their own world, making

that world meaningless for them. The allegorist, according to McGee, "merely arranges the fragments of this world, its images, to produce a meaning the fragments could not produce by themselves--a meaning not identical to the intention of the allegorist but reflecting his or her relation to the given historical context" (241). Jameson's qualification of allegory as "national" places the individual allegorist in the larger context of the nation which in this case, should be understood as what Homi Bhabha calls that "curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance" (2). Bhabha's "realm" is today being undermined and abused by dictators who have arrogated the imagined national space for themselves by inscribing their personal stories in the narrative of the nation in the guise of collective history.

Jameson's assertion has other implications. It seems to pigeonhole all 'Third World Writings,' keeping them from transcending the conceptual boundaries of their imagined national communities. Guy Ossito Midiohouan's comment about national literatures is appropriate here. He decries "many a practitioner of nation-specific criticism [who] has stumbled when attempting to determine the locale and context of a number of African novels; so much so that we can claim that quite a few writers have found themselves pigeonholed, against their will, within air-tight mythological constructs which have very little to do with their work" (37). Moreover, it does assume, and falsely so, that the writer in these so-called Third World societies can always, and does indeed, recapture the collective memory of the people since his/her own individual memory is always subsumed. Furthermore, Jameson assumes that the concept of the nation from which he derives the adjective "national" is in itself a fixed, stable and an easily definable entity.

Literary and cultural critics such as Jean Franco challenge assumptions and broad generalizations of that nature in other contexts. She questions whether "national allegory" "can be any longer usefully applied to a literature in which nation is either a contested term or something like the Cheshire Cat's grin -- a mere reminder of a vanished body" (204). Her reading of contemporary Latin American literatures leads to the conclusion that "not only is 'the nation' a complex and much contested term, but in recent Latin American criticism, it is no longer the inevitable framework for either political or cultural projects" (204). Going back to the forties and fifties she adds, "[T]he novel more and more became a skeptical reconstruction of past errors. The novel made visible that absence of any signified that could correspond to the nation. [. . .] In place of an identifiable microcosm of nation, such works offer a motley space in which different historical development and different cultures overlap.

In her lucid and thought-provoking chapter "Women and the Nation," Partha Chatterjee searches for a theoretical framework to analyze the women's question in Asia and Africa, introducing the concept of inner/outer, home/world, and spiritual/material. Her discussion of those dichotomies indirectly provides an answer to those critics. As she explains:

> Applying the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into ghar and bahir, the home and the world. The world is external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests where practical consideration reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence

> must remain unaffected by profane activities of the material world--and woman is its representation. (120)

Indeed, the space and role assigned to women in the preceding quotation is typical of "gender roles in traditional patriarchy." According to R. Radhakrishnan, such nationalist rhetoric makes women "the pure and ahistorical signifier of 'interiority'" (84). "Ahistorical" here need not be negative in that it is on the fringes of historical processes that these signifiers generate antihegemonic, anticolonialist discourses. For as women writers point out in an interview conducted by Margaret Busby, they have had "to struggle against colonisation by their own men and by those traditional attitudes that reserved formal education for male children"(33). Moreover, conscious of the fact that what truly matters in the life of the nation are practices in the inner space, the domains of women, some women writers have used their insider position to subvert nationalist discourses by challenging their objectification and the roles that they have been conditioned to play; to question what Kenneth Harrow calls "their subordinated position in the emergence of new patriarchal structures or the revalidation of old ones" (23).

The boundary between literary study and political praxis has dissolved for the poststructuralist postcolonial theorist. For this to happen, both the subject and its products and the material and social world must be theorized as texts (or discourses). Literature and political and historical discourse must be held to be equal. Accordingly, Azade Seyhan identifies literature "as one signifying system among others" (152). To do so, all texts and cultural phenomena must be seen as signifying constructs, a point of view based on a very peculiar interpretation of a linguistic theory formulated almost a century ago by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand

de Saussure. For most poststructuralist postcolonial theorists and cultural studies practitioners, to act against, say, colonialism, or to unseat, say, Western ontology, it would suffice simply to decode their signifying systems: to decode the discourses that naturalize hierarchies of difference (Western as civil vs. non-Western as primitive, for example). Consequently, if both text and world are nothing but a signifying system, then *A Streetcar Named Desire* is as real as the reality outside the text, so the mere act of interpreting the play not only destablizes exoticist narratives of difference but generates a counter-narrative with the power to disrupt those master signifying systems that make colonialism mean in the real world.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha proposes a number of these decodings--variously identified as "mimicry", "radical hybridity", "colonial nonsense," "politics of asavagism", to name a few--of novels such as V.S. Naipaul's *House for Mr. Biswas* and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. For example, he identifies the "mimicry" in the postcolonial novel as a sign of "double articulation" (86) where the text (the written text of the novel and the spoken text of the character) both exist within and uncritically replicates as well as threatens to disrupt the regulative rules of a disciplining colonial signifying system that imposes the English language as the standard and that exercises a close surveillance of subaltern bodies and knowledge systems. To confer to a novel like *House for Mr. Biswas* such power to resist and/or conform to a colonial hegemony, Bhabha, taking his lead from Derrida's différence, must muddle up Saussure's linguistic theory. Saussure consideres that a sign is an indivisible (psychological) unit formed by a signifier (acoustic image/phoneme) and a signified (mental image/concept), representing such and such aspect of

reality (referent). To repeat: according to Saussure, the two components of the sign (signifier and signified) are psychological entities and they are not separable, and the sign is the most basic element for communication to take place within a given linguistic community (Spanish or English, say). When Bhabha mistakenly identifies a slippage between the signifier and signified, he is speaking nonsense in any accurate interpretation of Saussure's theory of the sign. Within this slippage, Bhabha considers meaning deferrable, and the subject and world experienced by the subject unstable and fragmented. However, according to him, in order to make the subject and the world seem coherent and whole, those with power construct master narratives of wholeness that ideologically manipulate the sign to naturalize difference.

Homi Bhabha theorizes an "interstitial gap" between signifiers (mistaking acoustic image/phoneme for the sign) where resistance to meaning can take place ("meaning" as Derrida formulates, not in the presence of the signifier and the referent but in the aporias between signifiers). He also theorizes the subaltern subject's formation by and through a colonial discourse, but one that can resist "inter dicta" (89). Therefore, to identify the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" (4) is to re-form dominant signifying systems. To inhabit such interstitial passages with a "radical hybridity" is to radically alter the master narratives of oppression and subjugation. At the end of *Location of Culture*, Bhabha positions postcolonial discourse generally--textual texts and textual subjects--not just in said gap that is "neither signifier nor signified" (181), but also "outside the sentence" (181) and therefore outside of discourses of power. To posit such an esoteric resistance strategy, Bhabha must not only mistake the signifier for the sign (the part for the whole), but also quite simply distort the

nature of the relationship between signifier and signified in language, as conceived by Saussure.

To say that there are gaps between words is true and to say that it is often difficult to find the right words to express a concept is also true. However, to say that meaning is made in a gap between one acoustic image or phoneme and another acoustic image is plain nonsense from any linguistic point of view, and to say that the signifier and signified can be separated and then manipulated to change reality is more than absurd. If somehow one were able to rip apart Saussure's signifier and signified, words within a given language community would become mere meaningless sounds. Absolute nonsense (better still, muteness) would preside. No communication could take place and there would be no possibility for exchanging information, say, concerning oppressive conditions, and that would impede the necessary organization of people in need of a real social transformation.

In order for subaltern subject/text to resist or destablize hegemonic signifying systems "inter dicta", not only must Homi Bhabha muddle a very simple and primitive linguistic theory, but he must add to this a misconception of how power functions within colonial rule and, more generally, within capitalism and the capitalist nation-state. According to Bhabha, who takes his lead from Michel Foucault's conception of power, there is room for contestation and resistance because colonialism is an unstable system of signification. The subaltern subject as a construct of colonial discourse is, for Bhabha, a "repertoire of conflictual positions" (204) that can intervene or not in the struggle against colonialism because this form of domination is constructed through discourse and therefore is uneven and incomplete. Thus, the moment colonialism exerts its

force is precisely the moment that resistance forms in its interstices. But why even posit such an intervention if, by a logical extension of Bhabha's formulation, colonialism by its very existence as an unstable entity of power, will ultimately fail? It is the same question we might ask of Foucault, who identifies a "plurality of resistances" (Bhabha's "radical hybridity") that is de facto formed within a dominant power structure (a capitalist surveillance system that normalizes heterosexuality, for example). By this token, we no longer need to locate power in the ruling class or the State it controls or the institutional structures it creates and handles, nor do we need to look for the "source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary" (History of Sexuality 96).

Bhabha, following Foucault, considers that power is everywhere, but if that assertion were true, then power would be nowhere. Also like Foucault before him, Bhabha must theorize the simultaneity of power with resistance in order to make his "radical hybridity" work; to this end he must theorize out of existence the "real" exploitive and oppressive systems of colonial rule. This self deconstruction of an oppressive and exploitive social structure, however, does little but promote a lack of real social mobilization and resistance; it ultimately celebrates symbolic forms of resistance in cultural phenomena and literature and dangerously dislocates and permanently erases the real site (the State apparatus) of the real ruling class (the private owners of the means of production and distribution) asserting its power through its all too real institutions (mainly the executive, legislative and judicial powers) that are used to dominate, oppress and exploit the very real subaltern subjects.

If colonial power is a discursive construction and its simultaneous resistance textual, then it is not surprising that Bhabha considers that a nation is

itself a narration--and concomitantly, that narration is nation. In the introduction to his edited collection of essays, Nation and Narration, Bhabha defines the nation as formed by "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative stratagems" (2). To confront the nation, then, is to encounter it "as it is written" (2). Again, like his formulation of colonialism as signifying system, the nation is fragmented. Bhabha must formulate the nation as made up of "scraps, patches, and rags of daily signs" (297) in order for him to identify a resistance in the "language of metaphor" (291), for example, that makes up postcolonial narratives (especially the novel's "double-writing") that counter the nation ("dissemi-nation") with their hybrid histories and "displacement of narratives" (319) that promise the re-imagining of postcolonial "nation-people" (291).

While Bhabha theorizes the form of the novel ("double-writing") as the site for contestatory acts of "dissemi-nation", other poststructuralist postcolonial theorists identify localized epistemological spaces as resistant sites. In his essay "Postmodernism and the Rest of the World" R. Radhakrishnan, for example, celebrates the "embattled rhetoric of home" (39) as just such a resistant site to a homogenizing global capitalist nation-state. The rhetoric of home opens up the possibility and identification of a localized subjectivity and epistemology that can be "deployed strategically to resist the economic impulse toward sameness" (39). Again, however, for R. Radhakrishnan to posit a postcolonial rhetoric of home as "radical epistemology" (48) that resists such oppressive paradigms as the Western postmodern disdain for "the category home" (48), he must confuse language for cultural phenomena; he must repeat the postructuralist systematic

muddling up of signifier with sign, the home of postcolonial fiction with the homes made and inhabited by real subaltern peoples.

In fact, in modern times the nation has represented the most positive drive towards democracy. Without the nation as a political framework in which wage workers can struggle to obtain and to protect their basic rights, exploitation and oppression would be complete. So, when Bhabha et al. propose that a "radical hybrid" narrative actually destabilize and transform the nation, even if it is no more than hot air or perhaps utopian fantasy, the proposal itself is politically dangerous; it would entail the application of the policy that the Bush administration and the American ruling class is seeking to apply today worldwide: the destruction of all institutional structures and laws that protect the working classes and the exploited and oppressed populations in every country. The only way they can hope to fend off exploitation and oppression is to continue the fight that they have been fighting for some two centuries: the organized struggle for the right to build their own politically independent parties, to build their own independent unions, to obtain and preserve the equal right to a secular education, to free medical care, to public transportation services everywhere, to the total freedom of organization, expression and representation for the all. In short, to fight for and to maintain those institutions and laws that make for a democratic nation and that are being eroded by the bourgeoisie in India and the United States, in Asia and the Middle East, in Africa and Australia and Latin America. The destruction of nation-states without the destruction of capitalism would not translate into a utopian world filled with radical hybrid subjects, but rather into the worldwide spread of barbarism, of the warlordism and slavery that we have already seen in places like Somalia and the former

Yugoslavia. Moreover, to theorize a utopian third space resistance that supposedly exists between the lines of signification is to disrespect the memory of the millions of people that struggle and have been struggling for generations with massive costs to lives in order to establish and maintain the democratic rights that they have forced the nation to adopt and to uphold.

Because capitalism cannot do without its own foundational principle--the right to privatize property--the bourgeoisie has had to accept reluctantly the existence of laws generally, including those that protect the laboring class. Hence, the importance of the nation not as enemy to subaltern struggles worldwide, but as the very political framework in which all the wage-earners and the oppressed peoples can fight to obtain and preserve--even against the most violent opposition of the ruling classes--their democratic rights. So, in the name of radical hybridity and revolutionary "third space" narrations, Bhabha et al. could be actually positing the destruction of a most fundamental barrier that remains between the working class and peasants and their complete and total enslavement.

Of course, Bhabha's formulation of postcolonial narrative as counter-nation relies on the highly speculative idea that the nation is made up of narratives that gel together and create "imaginary communities". One might simply ask, what has literature actually done to create the nation of India, or even closer to home, the nation of Mexico? How have narrative fictions altered or contributed to alter the northern boundaries of the territory of Mexico in 1836 and after the U.S. invasion in 1846-48? How did narrative fictions alter the way Spain viewed Mexico during the eleven year war of independence that led to Mexican sovereignty? What did literature have to do with the middle and

working class uprisings that led to the American war of independence from the ruling British class that had imposed tax levies and prohibited trade on its colony to force it to be a territory that would consume only British goods. How have narrative fictions created nations in Africa, when the continent was mostly divided up by lines traced with rulers on maps in political drawing rooms in France, Belgium and England? What does narrative fiction have to do with the creation of nations in central Europe, including Yugoslavia? The main problem with the highly speculative statements made by Bhabha et al., is that they not only cover over the harsh facts of material reality--among them, the blood shed in the creation of nations and the millions of people involved in that process. Namely, that literature has never been a material force in the formation of nation.

Narrative fiction, then, for Bhabha et al. doesn't just reflect or recreate reality and bring to the table things that happen, but they invest it with a god-like power to create and transform reality. At best, this can be read as a response to our contemporary world that promises little in the form of real social change; to that extent, the utopian impulse can be justified. At worst, this is an extremely dangerous promotion of an arm-chair political praxis that denies the real need for class struggle against concrete, actual, present day problems that have plagued the working classes worldwide since the rise of capitalism. As Antony Easthope writes of Bhabha's "radical hybridity" and its destabilizing of discourse, knowledge, and power, this "theorizing" coincides "with one of the more pervasive fantasies of our time: that reading texts otherwise changes the world" (Privileging Difference 60).

It is not simply the beliefs of the authors that interest him, but the way those beliefs are manifested in the act of narration. For him, the actual telling of

the tale constitutes a sort of moral conduct. Telling a tale is an action. It's not merely the reflection of an event happening in the world outside which then comes to be reflected in literature. The very act of narrative raises questions of identity, location, action, forms of conduct, and acts of judgment. The following chapter analyzes the play focusing on such above discussed issues.

III. Textual Analysis

Nation's Trouble in Transition in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), a Pulitzer Prize winning play, is considered in modern society as in icon of its era, as it deals with a cultural clash between two symbolic characters, Blanche DuBois, a pretentious, fading relic of the South, and Stanley Kowalski, a rising member of the industrial, urban immigrant class. As William's most of the plays are connected with the new America taste for realism that emerged following the Depression and World War II, the characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* are trying to rebuild their lives in postwar America: Stanley and Mitch served in the military, while Blanche had affairs with young soldiers based near her home. So, as the country moved towards reconstruction after the war, people passed through serious transitional period because they experienced hardships. They no longer believed in old values, nor could they embrace changes wholeheartedly during the transitional period. Thus, the play beautifully portrays the burning issues of the time. In this sense, the present research is the study of nation's trouble in transition.

The play presents a mix of characters and social elements around Elysian Fields, New Orleans, where the setting of play takes place. This mix shows the way New Orleans has historically differed from other American cities in the south. It was originally a Catholic settlement (unlike most southern cities, which were Protestant) and consequently typical Southern social distinctions were ignored. The neighborhood is mixed-white, black and brown one of the Stanley's poker companies is a Mexican. This shows a move towards equal society. Hence, blacks mingle with whites and members of different ethnic groups "play poker

and bowl together" (10). Here, playing poker shows that people in America have had difficult life due to war, so they now freely indulge themselves in such activities. Equally women folks observe and enjoy the game Williams writes the conversations between Stanley and his wife, Stella:

> STELLA [calling after him]: Stanley! Where are you going?
>
> STANLEY: Bowling!
>
> STELLA: Can I come watch?
>
> STANLEY: Come on. [He goes out]. (11)

Stanley lets his wife do whatever likes except for certain things when she orders him to do household things.

One of the representative Southern characters, Blanche, after leading a miserable life in Laurel, Mississippi, arrives at New Orleans to join her sister Stella and her brother-in-law Stanley. Her appearance in the first scene "suggests a moth" (10). In literature a moth represents the soul. So it is possible to see her entire voyage as the journey of her soul. Later in the same scene she describes her voyage: "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at Elysian Fields" (11). Taken literally this does not seam to add much to the story. However, if one investigates Blanche's past one can truly understand what this quotation symbolizes. Blanche left her home to join her sister, because her life was a miserable wreck in her former place of residence. She admits, at one point in the story, that "after the death of Allan (her husband) intimacies with strangers were all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with" (79). She had sexual relations with anyone who would agree to it. This is the first step in her voyage-"Desire". She said that she was forced into this situation because death was immanent and "The

opposite (of death) is desire" (179). She escaped death in her use of desire. However, she could not escape "death" for long. She was a teacher at a high school, and at one point she had intimacies with a seventeen year old student. The superintendent, "Mr. Graves", found out about this and she was fired from her job. Her image was totally destroyed and she could no longer stay there (12). This reflects American people's inability to cope with the changes in the face of growing individuality, personal freedom, which is inalienably associated with nation's freedom.

The old South becomes the place of the living dead because the war has brought about physical as well as cultural, social and moral destruction. Blanche came to Elysian Fields to forget her horrible past, and to have a fresh start in life. Blanche admits her situation to Stella. She says:

> . . . Have got to be seductive – put on soft colours, the colours of butterfly wings, and glow – make a little – temporary magic just in order to pay for – one night's shelter! That's why I've been – not so awf'ly goods lately. I've run for protection, Stella, from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof because it was storm – all storm, and it was caught in the center . . . people don't see you – men don't even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. (51)

In fact Blanche even admits in the fourth scene that she wants to "make myself a new life" (42).

By understanding the circumstances that brought Blanche to Elysian Fields it is easy to understand the motives behind many of Blanche's actions. One such action is that during the play Blanche is constantly bathing. This

represents her need to purify herself from her past. However, it is important to note that Blanche's description of her traveling came before she actually settles into Elysian Fields. The description therefore represents the new life Blanche hoped to find, not what she actually did find.

From the beginning we see that Blanche does not fit in with the people of her new community, nor her physical surroundings in her new home. We can see that she did not fit in with the people of the community by comparing the manner in which women in the story handle their social life with men. In the third scene, Stella, who is pregnant at the time, is beaten by her husband Stanley for not obeying her husband as the sound of beating is heard in the background, "There is the sound of blow. Stella cries out; Blanche screams and runs out" (37). This shows men's dominance towards women during the transitional period. This becomes one of the troubles between men and women at the time. She immediately runs upstairs to her friend's apartment, upstairs. But, soon Stanley runs outside and screams "Stell-lahhhhh" (39). She proceeds to come down, and they then spend the night together. The next morning Stella and Blanche discuss the horrible incident. Blanche asks "How could you come back in this place last night? Why! I've been half crazy, Stella! When I found out, you'd been insane enough to come back in here after what happened – I started to rush in after you" (41). Blanche shows her solicitude for her sister. She advocates equality between men and women, because she thinks this as the problem which hinders a nation's development. Stella answers "You're making much too much fuss about this" and later says that this is something that "people do sometimes" (42). But, Stella is submissive. One sees that this is actually a common occurrence by the fact that the same exact thing happens to the neighbors a few scenes later. Later in the

story Mitch, Blanche's boyfriend, yells at her and tries raping her, but she does not let him. Afterwards, she tells Stanley that she would never forgive him because "deliberate cruelty is unforgivable" (84). Blanche also does not fit into her surroundings. Tennessee Williams describes the place as having a "raffish charm" (10). But, this eludes Blanches. She describes it as a place that "Only Poe! Only Mr. Edgar Allen Poe!-could do it justice!" (14). This shows that Blanche does not find Stella's place worth living as there is discrimination and dominance.

The person whom Blanche is most directly contrasted with is Stanley. Blanche loves living in an idealistic world, while Stanley strictly relies on facts. They do not come to terms with each other. When Blanche asks Stanley for some favour, he does not show any interest in her. When she asks him to help her with the buttons, he says, "I can't do nothing with them" (25) Again, when she expects some complement from Stanley, he replies, "I don't go in for that stuff" (25). In the story Blanche makes up a good portion of her past for the majority of the play. When she was young she lived an eloquent life in a mansion, but she eventually lost it due to unpaid bills. She tells everyone this part of her history but neglects to tell them what she had done during the interim period, before she came to Elysian Fields. Ms. DuBois never told them about the promiscuous life she lived before she came. Stanley, on the other hand, persisted in trying to find out her true past throughout the story. Considering that this is Stanley's house, his domain, it is easy to see that this spells doom for Blanche.

The difference between Blanche and Stanley would not be so bad if it were not for one of Blanche's flaws. This harmful trait is Blanche's inability to adapt to her surroundings. This is seen by noting a play on words used by

Williams. In the first scene Blanche is described as "daintily dressed" and mentions that she is "incongruous to her setting" (11). Blanche cannot adapt to her surroundings, but instead tries to change them. Later in the story she says "You saw it before I came. Well, look at it now! This room is almost-dainty!" (77). By using the word dainty in both places Williams shows us how Blanche tries to change her surrounding to match her, instead of adapting to them. This will not work with Stanley.

Blanche deceives everyone for a good portion of the play. However, Stanley is continually trying to find her true history. Blanche says "I don't want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, Magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what ought to be the truth." (78). Stanley does not enjoy "magic", he says that "Some men are took in by this Hollywood glamour stuff and some men are not" (26). Stanley never believes Stella's act (i.e. her "Hollywood glamour") he only likes the truth. This difference of philosophy creates much tension between the two. The climax of the tension between them is in the seventh scene. While Stanley is revealing to Stella Blanche's promiscuous life, Blanche is singing the following song:

> Say it's only a paper moon. Sailing over the cardboard sea-
> But it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me!
> It's a Barnum and Bailey world. Just as phony as it could be-But it wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me! (53)

The louder Stanley gets on insisting on the undeniable facts about Blanche, the louder Blanche sings. This is a symbolic collision of their two philosophies. Stella, the link between the two, must listen to the facts given to her by Stanley, and the virtues of idealism given to her by Blanche.

Light plays a crucial part in the struggle between Blanche and Stanley. From the beginning Blanche insists "I cannot stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark" (16). She then puts an artificial lantern on the light bulb. Light represents truth, and Blanche wants to cloak the truth by covering it up. Later in the play Stanley "brings to light" the true facts of Blanche's life. When Mitch, Blanche's boyfriend, is "enlightened" by Stanley about her history he proceeds to rip off the paper lantern from the light bulb, and demands to take a good look at her face.

The scene when Stanley rapes Blanche is the beginning of the end for Blanche. Sex is her most obvious weakness. That is the reason why she ran to New Orleans in the first place. Since she had come to New Orleans she had tried to avoid it. But, once again, Stanley is in direct contrast to this. Williams describes him: "Since earliest manhood the center of his life has been pleasure with women, . . . He sizes them up at a glance, with sexual classifications, crude images flashing into his mind and determining the way he smiles at them" (23).

It is only fitting that he destroys her with sex because sex "has always been her Achilles heel. It has always been his sword and shield" (24). After he has sex with her, she is taken to another asylum, a psychiatric hospital. The cycle is started again. "Desire" has once again sent her off to "Cemeteries" (11).

Throughout the book it is possible to describe the confrontation between Blanche and Stanley at a poker game. The importance of the poker game in the play is proven by the fact that Tennessee Williams was thinking of calling the play "The Poker Night". In the first four scenes of the play, Blanche plays a good bluff. She tricks everyone into believing that she is a woman of country-girl manners and high moral integrity. Stanley asks her to "lay her cards on the

table", but she continues her bluff (Adler 54). However, Stanley then goes on a quest for the truth. He then discovers and reveals Blanche's true past. Once he knows her true "cards" he then has the upper hand. Stanley caps his win by raping her. It is interesting to note that in the last scene of the play, when Blanche is being taken away, Stanley is winning every hand in a poker game he is playing with friends. This symbolizes his victory over Blanche. The card game can be viewed as fate, in which skillful players can manipulate his cards to his advantage.

The music in the background plays a key part in the play, in describing Blanche's emotions. In fact at one point it says of Blanche that "The music is in her mind" (15). The Blue Piano represents Blanche's need to find a home. She is always extremely lonely and needs companionship. This music is apparent during scene one when she is recounting the deaths of her family at Belle Reeve, and when she kisses the newsboy in scene five. The music is the loudest during the scene when Blanche is being taken away to the asylum. The Varsouviana Polka represents death, and to Blanche immanent disaster. This music is heard as she explains the suicide of her husband in scene six. It is also in the background when Stanley gives her a Greyhound ticket to go home (i.e. back to cemeteries) in scene eight. It also fades in and out of the scene where Mitch confronts Blanche about her true past.

In studying the main character of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche DuBois, it is necessary to use both a literal translation of the text as well as interspersed symbolism to have a complete understanding of her. Tennessee Williams the author of the play wrote it this way on purpose. In fact he once said that "Art is made out of symbols the way the body is made out of vital tissue"

(29). This is a wonderful quotation to show just how necessary it is to incorporate symbolism in an interpretation of a story.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the characters presented represent Williams' own view of society. In the play, Williams has created a medium to observe and reflect upon the darkest aspects of society and the result of these societal downfalls during the postwar period as the country is going through transformations.

Williams has portrayed numerous societal downfalls, such as the idea that he (or she) who tries to hide his true self and lie to the world ends up, above all, hurting himself. This statement, which lies just below the surface in the play, reflects the difficulties Williams had in finding his own place in life. Williams created that this play as a sort of "slap" toward a society which rejected Williams and his way of telling the world, "If you keep behaving like this, the whole place will go stark-raving mad!" (57). This is distinctly seen in both the suicide of Blanche's young husband and her own decent into madness.

Another collapse highlighted by Williams is the idea of the "macho-male," which extends to homophobia. Stanley is obviously Williams' characterization of this type of personality, and it is his brutality and chauvinism that lead Blanche to sink completely into the depths of insanity. By raping Blanche, Stanley is not only exerting his physical power over this disruptive woman in his life, but is attempting to show the world (and himself) that he is not a homosexual.

In the character of Stella, the reader's primary reaction is to support and identify with her, but in reality she represents the type of person who has given up on the ideals she once knew and has, in a sense, joined forces with the enemy.

She deserted Blanche at Belle Reve, her family ancestral home in Mississippi and has now settled for mediocrity. By the end of the play, our sympathies lie with Blanche because she was searching the world for security and ended up alone and mad. Now, Blanche has lost Belle Reve, as most of her relatives have died. Williams describes the loss through the conversation between Blanche and Stella:

> BLANCJE : I know, I know. But you are one that abandoned Belle Rove, not I! I stayed and fought for it, bled for it almost died for it.
>
> STELLA: Tell me what's happened? What do you mean fought and bled? What kind of –
>
> BLANCHE: I knew you would, Stella.
>
> STELLA: About what? – Please!
>
> BLANCHE [Slowly]: The loss – the loss . . .
>
> STELLA: Belle Reve? Lost, is it? No!
>
> BLANCHE: Yes, Stella. (18)

Williams is reminding the reader that, in this world, everyone is striving for a security and it was this natural desire that brought upon Blanche's descent into madness.

One of the main themes expressed by Tennessee Williams in this play is to condemn those who display cruelty and harshness in their treatment of others, especially those who are weak and vulnerable. Three characters who demonstrate these insensitive qualities are Blanche, Mitch, and Stanley. Whether the "cruelty is deliberate" or not, it results in the destruction of others, both physically and mentally (84).

Blanche Dubois, the central victim of mistreatment in the play, was herself, dealing out her share of insensitivities during her younger days. When Blanche was 16, she had a very handsome lover named Allan Gray. She was very much in love with him and decided to marry him. But by total surprise one night, Blanche found her lover in bed with another man. She tried to pretend that nothing had happened. However, she was unable to hold what she saw inside, and told Allan "I saw, I know, you disgust me . . ." (56). To Allan, Blanche seemed to be a person who accepted him for who he was in a society where homosexuals are discriminated against. What Blanche said completely devastated Allan and he found no reason to continue living. Although Blanche had no intentions of hurting Allan, enough damage was done to prompt Allan to shoot himself, his mind and body destroyed.

The harsh treatment dealt by Mitch to Blanche near the end of the play is strikingly similar to Blanche's treatment of Allan Gray. Mitch is a friend of Stanley's whom Blanche falls for during her visit to New Orleans. The relationship between Blanche and Mitch had been developing steadily. Both characters felt the need to settle down in life and both saw the image of marriage at the outcome of their relationship. It did seem as though the image would become reality, until Stanley interfered. Stan filled Mitch's mind with unfavorable stories of Blanche's checkered past and the relationship quickly turned sour. Mitch had not believed Stan at first, but when he received confirmation of the truth to Stanley's accusations, he became heart-broken and enraged. Mitch goes to confront Blanche personally and accuses her of being a prostitute and lying to him. Mitch also says that Blanche is hiding something, as he has never seen her in broad daylight. He then tears the paper lantern off the

light bulb, representing a tearing away of Blanche's shield from realism. Blanche admits to the accusations but reasons that she has changed her ways and never did lie in her heart. Mitch appears to forgive her as he goes to kiss Blanche. But in the midst of the embrace, Mitch blurts out, "You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother" (81). This outrages Blanche, who kicks Mitch out of the house. Just as she was to Allan Gray, Mitch appeared to be her salvation, but when Mitch exposes her vulnerability, she essentially becomes broken down mentally.

While Mitch delivers the blow that mentally destroys Blanche, it is Stanley, her cruel brother-in-law who orchestrates Blanche's downfall with no remorse. First, he digs up all the negatives from Blanche's past and hints to Blanche that he knows stories about her, making Blanche feel scared and insecure. Then Stanley proceeds to spread the news to Stella and Mitch, Blanche's two closest people in the play; One of whom (Mitch), turns on her. Then, on Blanche's birthday, Stanley "surprises" Blanche with a present…bus tickets back to Laurel. The tickets imply to Blanche that she has worn out her welcome, and makes her feel extremely uncomfortable. After the incident with Mitch where Blanche becomes mentally and emotionally battered, Stanley comes to inflict more damage to her. Stanley, knowing that Blanche would be making up stories about her supposed lovers (Shep Huntleigh) to salvage her pride, pretends to play along with the charade. He asks peculiar questions that force Blanche to a point where she could no longer keep up her act. Then, to deliver the ultimate insult to Blanche, Stanley brutally rapes her, causing Blanche to go insane, totally destroying her.

As shown, vulnerable people who are victims of vicious and cruel treatment feel incredible pain inside and outside when abused. Their minds are like time bombs, ready to go off when the pain becomes unbearable. Unfortunately, there are too many insensitive people around who fail to see their cruel nature in treating people. Until things change, society can not be deemed a safe place for the vulnerable and fragile.

IV. Conclusion

Tennessee William's *A Street Car Named Desire* portrays the miserable lives of working class people during the postwar period in America. As the country is transforming into harmonious, prosperous and equitable society, the people go through different sorts of troubles because the war has not only destabilized the country physically, but also it has caused social, moral and cultural destruction. So, the people are in the process of nation building and they are rebuilding their lives. This is beautifully shown through the southern representative character, Blanche and Stanley and his wife, Stella, who find themselves into constant conflict due to their respective beliefs in tradition, culture and modernity. In this way, all this reflects America's trouble during the transitional period.

Blanche DuBois, who comes to live with her sister, Stella and brother-in-law, Stanley, has left the South after her miserable life there. She has lost her Belle Reve, her ancestral home, and teaching job due to her promiscuous nature. This shows her incapability to cope with the changes that take place after great events like war and other political movements. She comes to New Orleans thinking of making a new life for her but to no avail because of the clash with Stanley, who treats women as subordinates. He treats his wife Stella badly, which Blanche does not tolerate. She protests and as a result is raped by Stanley, which throws her into insanity and madness. Stella is submissive and tries to act as a link between Stanley and Stella. But it is the male who rules and does everything to his advantage.

In this way, the peoples' hardships and troubles are portrayed through the play during the transitional period in postwar America. On the whole, peoples' troubles become nation's trouble, because through the scraps, textual strategies, metaphoric displacement, subtexts and figurative strategies emerges a nation according to Homi Bhabha.

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