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Hedonistic Orientation and Class Distinction in Tennessee Williams' Play *A Streetcar
Named Desire*

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Abstract

The present research work explores the Hedonistic Orientation and Class Distinction in Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* especially focusing on dialectical relation between Blanche and Stanley. Stanley's authority derives from physical violence, intimidation, and above all economic domination. Stanley stays within the parameter set for him by his sex and class and is victorious while Blanche loses because she fails to conform. Blanche is driven out of competition by Stanley. Blanche is deviant in regard to her class and sex. Although she tries to maintain the trappings of the aristocrat in her hedonistic orientation like expensive and elegant tastes. She has allowed the rest to slip, like Belle Reve, teaching profession, away from her. Her last grasp at happiness is cruelly destroyed as the boundaries of class and profession, she arrives in New Orleans to attempt to regain her aristocratic ascendancy. She explicitly makes plans to regain her class till she is raped and send to asylum. Finally she is defeated as Stanley has more economic power over Blanche.

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I. Tennessee Williams: Life and Works

The present research work focuses on Tennessee Williams's widely discussed play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It studies *A Streetcar Named Desire* as a symbolic representation of the human spirit in the cold war period. The study further examines how Williams's play has a complex consciousness, marked by a shifting, complex hedonistic orientation in which personage creates a class distinction. The researcher focuses on Williams's dramatization of the then class consciousness in the conservative southern societies through the motifs of food, drink and sex.

Tennessee Williams born Thomas Lanier Williams on March 26, 1911 in Missouri forty-five years ago, was an American playwright who received many of the top theatrical awards for his works of drama. The second of three children, his family life was full of tension. His parents, a shoe salesman and the daughter of a minister, often engaged in violent arguments that frightened his sister Rose. He moved to New Orleans in 1939 and changed his name to "Tennessee", the state of his father's birth. As clerk, lift-boy, telephone operator, waiter and cinema worker, he learned to observe people and to write about them. He wrote poetry, short stories and plays. He studied in the Universities of Missouri and Iowa and in Washington University. Now, as Tennessee Williams, he is a playwright of high talent. His own judgment that he is a minor dramatist who has written one or two major plays seems a modest one: he has not been uniformly brilliant but few of his works have failed to reflect glimpses, at least, of sure craftsmanship.

Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi, in the home of his maternal grandfather, the local Episcopal priest. He was of Welsh descent. His father, Cornelius Williams, a hard drinking traveling salesman, favored Tennessee's younger brother Dakin, perhaps because of Tennessee's weakness and effeminacy as a child.

His mother, Edwina, was a borderline hysteric. Tennessee Williams would find inspiration in his problematic family for much of his writing.

In 1918, when Williams was eight, the family moved to the University City neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri, where he first attended Soldan High School, used in his work *The Glass Menagerie* and later University City High School. In 1927, at age 16, Williams won third prize (five dollars) for an essay published in *Smart Set* entitled, "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?" A year later, he published "The Vengeance of Nitocris" in *Weird Tales*.

He has won the annual New York Drama Critics' Circle Award three times, and twice the coveted Pulitzer Prize. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1948 and for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 1955. In addition, *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and *The Night of the Iguana* (1961) received New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards. His 1952 play *The Rose Tattoo* received the Tony Award for best play. In 1980 he was presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Jimmy Carter.

Tennessee Williams met and fell in love with Frank Merlo in 1947 while living in New Orleans. Merlo, a second generation Sicilian American who had served in the U.S. Navy in World War II, was a steadying influence in Williams' chaotic life. But in 1961, Merlo died of Lung Cancer and the playwright went into a deep depression that lasted for ten years. In fact, Williams struggled with depression throughout most of his life and lived with the constant fear that he would go insane as did his sister Rose. For much of this period, he battled addictions to prescription drugs and alcohol.

On February 24, 1983, Tennessee Williams choked to death on a bottle cap at his New York City residence at the Hotel Elysee. He is buried in St. Louis, Missouri.

In addition to twenty-five full length plays, Williams produced dozens of short plays and screenplays, two novels, a novella, sixty short stories, over one-hundred poems and an autobiography. Among his many awards, he won two Pulitzer Prizes and four New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards.

It is not, however, because of these successes that Tennessee Williams has become a much-discussed man, both inside and outside the theatre world. He has been the centre of enduring controversy; and each new play, almost indeed each new production of one of his plays, has whipped up that controversy. The main point at issue is the predominance of 'sex', and sexual aberration, in his work and the manner in which he treats it. His critics condemn him as bold and bawdy, often suggestive, sometimes indecent; to those who defend him he is a sincere artist impatient of superficiality and convention, a realist who depicts people as they are: with their private hopes and fears and failings and failures. That is but a broad statement of the opposing points of view.

The Researcher shall discuss them more fully in the course of this dissertation. Meantime we may note Tennessee Williams's reaction to the strife that surrounds him. He refuses to change his methods; he writes what he wants to write ; and if theatergoers do not like it they can stay away from his plays. In the introduction of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* , he writes:

Of course I know that I have sometimes presumed too much upon corresponding sympathies and interest in those to whom I talk boldly, and this has led to rejections that were painful and costly enough to inspire more prudence. But when I weigh one thing against another, an easy liking against a hard respect, the balance always tips the same way, and whatever the risk of being turned a cold shoulder, I still don't

want to talk to people only about the surface aspects of their lives, the sort of things that acquaintances laugh and chatter about on ordinary social occasions. (xii)

Of this it may be observed in passing that many of his supporters seem to accord him much more than 'a hard respect', that 'a cold shoulder' hugely understates the attitude of his opponents and that in their opinion a hard respect or even warm acclaim may be won at too great a price.

Williams creates driven characters who are unlike anyone most of us are ever likely to meet and yet they are almost all convincing and recognizable. Williams's special gift is exactly his ability to give universal dimension to his private fantasy figures. In his successful period, from 1945 to 1961, his plays appealed to millions, from adolescents to English professors. Different kinds of audiences were titillated, challenged, and absorbed by Williams's original vision. In his prime Tennessee Williams was an eminently commercial man of letters.

The characters which Tennessee Williams puts before us are people in trouble. Usually they are people in desperate trouble : they are lonely, forgotten, poverty stricken, misunderstood or despised, without hope of helping themselves and unhelped by others. He is remarkably faithful to this theme. Sometimes he crowds all the trouble on to the shoulders of one unhappy person, sometimes there are two or three, equally unhappy, whose lives and troubles intermingle, sometimes he leaves them at the curtain fall with a dim ray of hope, more often there is none.

Blanche du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is perhaps Williams's most forlorn character. She has been a gentlewoman knowing wealth and ease, now she is destitute, an alcoholic, an ageing nymphomaniac. She scrabbles frantically for a hold, something with which to lift herself from the depths. She glimpses a breathless break

in the clouds when Mitch is attracted to her, likes her, she realizes, ask her to marry him. But her tottering hopes crash forever when her brother-in-law, despising her and her airs of gentility and her ceaseless recalling of better days, tells Mitch of her past promiscuity. At the play's end she is taken, screaming, to a mental home.

It is the waifs and strays and outcasts and misfits that claim Tennessee Williams's attention. In bringing their distress before us he serves them well. His writing is clear sighted and remorseless. He is sincere in his belief that what he depicts is representative of the world about us, and, as he himself tells us, he is trying to drive home the screaming need of a worldwide human effort to know ourselves and each other a great deal better. To Williams, his hapless characters are not merely the misfits of the world they are typical human beings. They typify others similarly if not identically cudgeled by misfortune. The little world of a Williams play is a miniature of the great cruel world in which we, all of us, live. The squalid dwellings which are the homes of his characters symbolize the decay and corruption of our world.

It is remarkable that although Williams writes consistently of suffering humanity there is little anger in his writing. Clearly, much of the sorrow that surrounds his heroes and heroines is occasioned by the acts or omissions, willful or unconscious, of their acquaintances. But Williams does not waste time with the culprits. His whole attention is given to the sufferers, and he is himself always gentle and understanding with them. He is pitiless in exposing their weaknesses, but he is compassionate with them He is on their side He fights their battles.

Unhappily, just as Tennessee Williams exaggerates the universality and aloneness of suffering humanity, so too does he push his compassion too far. He is on sure ground when he states that he has never met a person he could not love, provided he understood that person. To understand and to sympathize and to love are right and

good things. It is when Williams goes further that we must part company with him individuals have taken right or wrong paths not by choice but by necessity, driven willy-nilly by themselves, their circumstances and their antecedents. That is a morally indefensible doctrine. It is the most dangerous element in Tennessee Williams's works.

In the plays we find the implied suggestion, based on compassion, that Williams's men and women are not responsible for their immoral behavior. They are unhappy weary people. They fall into two groups: some whose present plight is the result of earlier excesses mainly of a sexual nature to which they were driven by circumstances; they are now to be pitied, but who, understanding the stresses to which they surrendered, will blame them for what they did. To this group belong, for example, Blanche du Bois. The second is a larger and more varied group : we see the circumstances working on the characters, the vain search for relief and, finally, the fall.

The elements in Tennessee Williams's plays to which most people take exception are his use of strong language , dialogue about intimate sexual matters, and suggestive situations. It is not at all easy to indicate where the line should be drawn in this connection. Some things unquestionably should not be discussed or done in public on a stage, others, equally undoubtedly, are allowable. But there is a middle group which will always pose problems: is this immoral, or suggestive, or indecent, or obscene? Has the borderline been crossed?

Nymphomania, promiscuity, rape, greed, alcoholism, impotence, homosexuality, profligacy, frigidity, crib fetishism, pedophilia, blowtorch killing, castration, dope addiction, venereal diseases, cannibalism, madness, panty fetishism, masturbation, coprophagy, etc are the subjects that have occupied Tennessee

Williams's play. Drawing on his erotic fantasies, shocking and charming audiences with his hothouse visions of sex and violence, Tennessee Williams is a popular entertainer who is at the same time a serious artist.

We may set aside from the present discussion the pornographer. He is a sex peddler. He may seek to avoid unqualified condemnation and perhaps prosecution by adroit handling of his shabby wares, but his purpose is to sell his cake because of the spice it contains. It is unnecessary to comment on the morality of his writing.

To what extent is all this allowable? We face here a problem that has long been debated. The matter is governed by moral principles that are old and wise and based on discerning knowledge of human nature. They are as sound today as they were centuries ago; and they cannot with impunity be disregarded. It should be obvious that it is necessary to avoid two extremes. The first of these would sweep away any restriction on the dramatist's license. In this 'progressive' view, sexual matters may be treated in an uninhibited manner as is any other less inflammatory facet of human life. The dramatist as an artist is above morality. To take cognizance of it would cramp his artistic expression. Surely this is false. The dramatist is a man, as such he is subject to the laws of human nature, to temper his writing, to respect the laws that govern him and all mankind cannot impair his work as an artist. On the contrary his work must thus be enhanced, completed and rendered more valuable.

More serious discussion of sexual affairs may be less offensive. Here there is no poking fun at matters sacred. There is rather honest exploration of a difficult situation or problem. Presentation and delicacy of touch are of first importance; and again, 'realists' and 'art' advocates notwithstanding, there is room for and need of judicious reticence. A husband and wife may discuss their marital intimacies or difficulties in the privacy of their room. But there may well be serious moral dangers

to watchers and listeners when that discussion takes place in a 'private' room on a public stage. A tremendous amount depends on the content and tone of the conversation, as on the quality of the audience: what is fit food for adults can be poison for younger people.

In his other plays discussion of sex concerns itself all but exclusively with the physical element. Delicacy of treatment apart, this uniform insistence on only one aspect of human love must impart a false impression. The insistence is on a single-minded approach to sex and marriage. Tennessee Williams would, again, more faithfully have mirrored actual life had he given us even a few more normal men and women : more normal in that they recognize the spiritual quality of marriage relations and are happier for that recognition.

Williams remains a reluctant Dionysian, a guilt-ridden revealer; and for this Southern puritan, sex still sometimes promises catastrophe. The narrator is openly, at times even joyously, homosexual, so that sexual desire isn't disguised here as it was in the plays. Williams, however, is one of those writers for whom telling all may have a therapeutic effect on his spirit but a dampening result on his art. On one level *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a homosexual fantasy with Blanche as an effeminate male masked as a magnificently neurotic Southern belle.

Project like this may require a vast study and research. Due to the time constraints and the limited availability of resources and materials, the research may not be able to get into the depth of the subject as it might require. In my interpretation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* from Marxist perspective, my focus has been exclusively on the hedonistic orientation and class distinction in the play. I have used the available reference materials and criticism on *A Streetcar Named Desire* as my supporting documents.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. That first chapter presents a brief introductory outline of the work. In addition, it gives hawk eye view of the entire work. The second chapter tries to verify, explain the theoretical modality that is applied in this research work. It discusses hedonism and Marxism as an appropriate tool. On the basis of the theoretical framework established in the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length. It analyzes hedonistic orientation and class distinction in Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It sorts out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study – eating, drinking, and sexual orientation in the play shows the clear cut class distinction. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research work.

II Marxism: A Theoretical Modality

Marxism is a highly complex subject, and Marxist literary criticism is no less so. Towards the middle of the 19th century, Karl Marx in association with Frederic Engels invented radical economic, social and political theories. Views of Marx and Engels on art and literature have been drawn upon differently by various scholars and interpreted and developed in different ways. The theories, which are known as Marxism today, Marx formulated, the most revolutionary and scientific theories in the time of tremendous socio-economic changes from the scientific discoveries and establishment of large scale production industries. His theories clearly disprove the bourgeois, economic, social and political system establishing the philosophy of proletariat, against those who possess abandoning amount of wealth. The emancipatory movement initiated by Marxism aims at abolishing the concentration of wealth in the hands of tiny minority by seizing political and legal power from the hands of bourgeois class. Thus, Marxism is a political theory that advocates class struggle of the proletariat against the ruling class until the political power is seized and socialist emancipatory society is established

Marxism brought significant change in the bourgeois ideology. It challenged the old view point of philosophy itself. As Marx himself clearly stated that “philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” (qtd. In Selden, 24), and explain life and world from quite a different perspective. His theories that aim at intensifying the inevitable process of change brought considerable change in the concept of art and literature as well.

Marxism treats literature as expression of socio-economic life and judges it on the basis of how far it has fulfilled this function. Its struggle stresses liter literature should be useful to life. Although Marxism is primary a theory of social, economic,

political and revolutionary activities, it treats art and literature with special care. Disapproving the early concept of then Marxist theoretician, they have developed their own theories, which are known as Marxist theories of art and literature. Majorities of these theoretician, believe that literature has social as well as political implications and it must be committed to the cause of people. It should be used for advancement of society.

Although, Marx and Engels didn't propound any systematic theories concerning art and literature, they are found to raise some basic questions about them in relation to their discussion about base and superstructure. According to Marxism base affects the superstructure and with the change in base, superstructure also automatically gets changed, especially, to say the change in socio-economic relations brings change in ideology, politics, religion, art and literature as well. They believe that each economic structure e.g. feudalism, capitalism, or socialism of society leads to its own type of social organization and production of its own literature, art, culture and religion. So, a basic characteristic of literature and art is determined by socio-economic factors. Orthodox Marxist theoreticians, therefore, are of the opinion that the origin, developed and success or failure of a literary work should be examined on the basis of its relation to socio-economic life of the contemporary society. However, such relation is quite complex and contradictory. Development of art and literature even when socio-economic life was in quite a backward stage has proved their autonomy to a certain extent. The achievement of art and literature, have been found perpetually occupying their dominant position even after complete revolution in socio-economic situations. Most of the Marxist critics are aware of this fact and recognize their partial autonomy; therefore, they don't entirely neglected the literary values despite their emphasis on sociological aspects. They are of the opinion that

literature can lay active role in the development of human understanding and beside its aesthetic purpose; it can be used as vehicle for non-literary ideas. Though their development is rather an independent phenomenon, they are capable of influencing each other.

Marxist criticism examines how far a literary work embodies ability in altering human existence and leads it in the path of progress, prosperity and emancipation. Marxism aims at revolutionary the whole socio-economic life establishing new political system led by proletariat. Orthodox Marxist literary theory strongly insists that a work of literature should reflect the class relations and be committed to the cause of working class. A writer's success or failure should be judged on the basis of his work which exhibit his insight of the lower class by the upper class. So, literature instead of rendering outward superficial appearance of reality, successfully, an author needs to have deep intellectual power and penetrating vision of the historical forces of the period. Outward superficial depiction of the things like that of naturalism and modernism which bracket off all the inner causes can never lead to reality. Literature, for Marxist critics, should be an auxiliary in spreading ideology of working class.

Marxist literary criticism analyzes literature in terms of the historical conditions which produced it; and it needs, similar to be aware of its own historical conditions which produced it. As a matter of fact, it was quite safe and rather conventional to treat literary works as something referring to a reality outside them. For Marx, the external reality is prior to ideas in mind, and that the material world is reflected in the mind of man translated into forms of thoughts.

George Lukacs, one of the most important Marxist critics, doesn't see literature as a reflecting reality in the way mirror does. Reflection of reality is the key idea of his theory of art. Art for him is socio-historical phenomenon. But the reality in

literary works and the reality in the actual world need not have one to one correspondence. Artistic representation is no photographic as the artist is not a machine. A photographic machine presents everything indifferently as it can't react, whereas, an artist is a sensitive mind of the author. The previous experience and his own liking and disliking influence his interpretation of the world. For Lukacs, the world is chaos from where an artist picks up the required materials. During this process of selection he may give priority to one aspect of reality neglecting the others. Similarly, the objective external reality is mingled with the artists' feeling and emotions which are purely subjective. In the process of creating work of art, the objective reality which lies in the chaotic state is given form and arranged in sequence. David Forgacs in his book *Marxist literary Theories* observes thus:

To be reflected in the literature reality has to pass through the creative from giving work of the write. The result, in the case if correctly formed work, will be that the form of the literary work reflects the form of the real world. (171)

Thus, for Lukacs, literary creation is a process of putting selected matters together. This process of selection and combination impose bound to the chaos of objective reality. Forgacs says, in Lukacs' view form is "the aesthetic shape given to content, a shape manifested through technical features such as time and the interrelationship of characters and situation in work".

Lukacs denounces the romantic concept of art that separates it from social realities and its utility. For romanticists art has no more scope and aim than expressing the purest feelings of the creator. For Shelley, a poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds. For Wordsworth, the creation of poetry is nothing more than "spontaneous overflow of

powerful feelings, emotions recollected in tranquility” (qtd. In Daiches 887), hence romantic poetry is less about mankind, more about nature. In Lukacs’ view, the poems that are about mankind are quite subjective. Thus, the romanticism that entirely excluded the mimetic and pragmatic function of art was clearly a reactionary movement.

Lukacs doesn’t only reject romanticism; he criticizes naturalism that attempts to reproduce photographic picture of life. For him, Naturalism which appears to be more realistic in its depiction of life is unmediated. In his view naturalist writers, are alienated from comprehensive social problems. They possess superficial visions of life and dismiss the inner and constant antagonism between classes. They are unable to apprehend the basic historical truth. Similarly, Lukacs disapproves the modernist writers as Joyce, Beckett, Woolf, etc. of going too far in the direction of subjectivity. In his opinion, the modernist writers try to make their works life like, what they have depicted is not endowed with reality as it excludes the inner causes that have made the life worthless. The tremendous change brought by the modernist writers in technique, theme and especially in treatment of time is not acceptable to him. The personalization of the standard of significance that is the private interpretation of value and loss of confidence are more objective reality and is determined by it. As a true Marxist, he criticizes the modernist literary practice of spreading individual from social process.

For Lukacs, the content of type or typically is a central component. The type is not a mere statistical ‘average’ but the character or the situation in the literary work which brings together the general movement of history and a number of unique, individual trails. In, *The Historical Novel*, he follows Marx in admiring Balzac, but

goes further in suggesting that Balzac's achievement is made possible by his ability to depict types. As he writes:

The central category and criterion of realistic literature is the type, a particular synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and in situations, which makes it a type is that in it all humanity and socially essential determinations are present at their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibilities latent in them in extreme presentation of their extremes rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs.

Thus, Lukacs insists that only the use of types allows social reality to be properly described. A true artist, in Lukacs's view, is the one who is successful in depicting the social and historical reality objectively via his literary works. Art, therefore, is a special form of reflecting reality which is the sum total of socio-historical phenomenon. He argues that scientific thought as well as our everyday thinking possesses reality but art differs from them because the impression of reality in art is mixed with individual reaction. Thus, he strongly rejects the emotive theory of art. In *The Historical Novel*, he argues that the creation and appreciation of art is not unique and mysterious kind of knowledge, as it is neither created in vacuum nor received so.

Time and again he stresses the fact that art directly correspond to outside reality. At the same time he states that thought it is closely connected to the reality. The socio-historical situation of specific period; it is not reality in itself in itself. It is only the knowledge of reality. Art is totality and reflects totality. Nevertheless, he insists that "the novel must be faithful to history despite its invented hero and imagined plot"(Lukacs 252). Here he means to say that the thematic must be realistic

whatever the description is. According to him, “the novel’s aim is to represent a particular social reality at a particular time, with all the color and specific atmosphere of the time.”

Though Lukacs demands an artist to portray reality in his works, he draws attention to the fact that is not possible to portray reality as it exists. According to Lukacs;

Reality as a whole is always richer and more varied than even the richest work of art, no detail, episode, etc. however exactly copied however biographically authentic, however factual, can possibly compete with reality. (302)

He argues that an artist, however, should endeavor to portray an all round and comprehensive picture of his time. The universality of such picture depends upon the variety of the characters depicted in a work. A true artist should attempt to include even such characters who are felt to be “the bearers of hostile principles” (330). All the character, whether good or bad, should be “portrayed as living many sided human beings and not as poser like creatures” (330).

In Lukacs’s view, reality reflected in a literary work should be similar to the one reflected in human consciousness and it is the duty of a critic to examine whether it is translated correctly or not in a literary work; and to judge whether a literary work is realistic or not. Lukacs always emphasized that there must be some formal correspondence between the reality work and “dialectical totality”. Not only Lukacs, the Marxist philosophy itself insists that literature closely corresponds to reality. It is explicitly stated that literature belongs to the superstructure as politics, religion and philosophy which are based on socio-economic base. Thus, art from Marxist point of view is original in the society and it must have some social significance. However,

this reproduction of reality can't be always indifferent. It also carries the artists' attitude towards it. Lukacs who has tried to interpret art from Marxist realistic perspective is rather severe in his treatment. For him all interesting writings can't be work of art. To be a literature it must straightforward in its imitation of immediate truth along with literary characteristics. The only measurement of the successful artist is touch to reality. Whatever the language, style, uses of images, construction of plots is, if it doesn't copy the life faithfully, Lukacs doesn't allow it to be entitled a work of art. Regarding the duty of Marxist aesthetic, he observes that its duty is "not only to explain his impoverishment and inadequacy in a social genetic ways but also to measure them aesthetically against the highest demands of artistic reflection of reality and to find them lacking" (334). Thus. Lukacs views that it is the duty of the critics to evaluate whether the historical reality is properly reflected or not.

In opposition to Lukacs, the "Frankfurt School" of German Marxist, especially Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkheimer, lauded modernist writers such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Samuel Beckett, proposing that their formal experiments by the very fact that they fragment and disrupt the life they "reflect", establish a distance and effect a detachment which serve as an implicit critique or yield a negative knowledge of the dehumanizing institutions and processes of society under capitalism. Adorno's theory of literature is markedly different from others as it openly criticize the formal laws of literature and argues that the reality in the world is formless. Unlike Lukacs and Macherey, Adorno sees literature as alienation from reality. Adorno, regards literature, as negative knowledge of the real world, and give definite value to the works of the modernist authors. Interior monologue or the stream of consciousness as literary techniques was much criticized by Lukacs. Adorno, however, emphasized "the interior monologue, far from cutting the reality work off

from reality, can expose the way reality actually is” Forgacs (188). But, for Adorno this reality is not photographic as for Lukacs and at the same time the duty of the author is not to give to the objective reality pre-existing in the same society. However, according to David Forgacs, Adorno by negative knowledge “doesn’t mean no-knowledge, it means knowledge which can undermine and negate a false or reified condition”

Thus, Adorno emphasizes the negative and critical role played by the works of the modernist writers as Proust, Kafka, Beckett, Joyce, etc. As stated by Forgacs, Adorno “opens up modernist writing to Marxist theory by showing that a different kind of relationship between the text and reality is possible” (Forgacs 190).

Ramon Selden observes the theory of Adorno in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, states that for Adorno “Literature unlike the mind doesn’t have a direct contact with reality” (34). Adorno is of the opinion that art and reality are not alike. Inverting the reflection theory of Lukacs he claims “art is set apart from reality; its detachment gives it its special significance and power” (34).

Walter Benjamin, notable German Marxist Critic, was briefly associated with the Frankfurt school. In his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin argues that in order to resist the influence of bourgeois art such as cinemas, telephone, radio, television, etc, revolutionaries have to “become producers in their own artistic sphere” (qtd. in Selden, 37). According to Selden, Benjamin “rejects the idea that revolutionary art is achieved by attending to the

Hence, Benjamin views that art like any other form of production also depends upon technique. Even for Marxism, the stage of development of a mode of production involves certain social relations of production, and the stage is set for

revolution when productive forces and productive relations enter into contradiction with each other.

For Benjamin, the revolutionary artist should not uncritically accept the existing forces of artists' production but should develop and revolutionize those forces. In doing so, artists create new social relation between artist and audience.

In the last few decades there has been a resurgence of Marxist criticism, marked by an openness, on some level of literary analysis to other current critical perspectives; a flexibility which acknowledges that Marxist critical theory is itself not a set of timeless truths but at least some degree an evolving historical process: a nature- meaning that people constitute or define themselves 'as human' through ideology. As he writes, "the category of the subject is constructive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function of constituting concrete individuals as subject"(160).

The implication of this idea is enormous because it means that 'ideology goes to the heart of the personal identity of how we conceive yourself as subject in the world and all that this involves. Althusser avoids a reductive opposition of ideology and reality by suggesting that ideology makes our reality in constituting it as subjects. Ideology, Althusser argues, "Hails or interpolates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (162). For Althusser, the functions of Art is, as he remarks in *A Letter on Art*, "to make us see, and what it allows us to see, what it forces us to see, is the ideology from which it is born" (204). What is most terrifying and compelling about this is the fact that being a subject feels so real, so natural and yet, as Althusser remarks, "This very reality or 'naturalness' of being a subject is itself an ideological effects" (204).

For Poststructuralist critics, the notion of ideology is fundamentally suspect, since it appears to rely on a classical opposition of true and false, of reality and false consciousness which such critics would question. Hence, by this view, ideology appears too easily as a master term for totalizing reading of literary texts.

Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, in the important essay *On Literature as an Ideological Form* argue “Literary texts produce the ‘illusion of unity’ and that a ‘material analysis’ needs to look for signs of contradictions which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text” (87). Hence they mean that, literature begins with the imaginary solution of ‘implacable ideological contradictions’. “Literature is there because ‘such a solution is impossible’” (88). In capitalistic society, literature itself is an ‘ideological form’ both produced by and producing ideology. They further argue that the task of the critic would be to look beyond the unity that the literary text’ strives to present, and forcefully to explore the contradictions, embedded within it.

In the book *Literary Theory*, Hans Bertens observes Tony Bennett’s view:

A thorough going Althusserian criticism would not simply restore or reveal the contradictions that are already in texts: rather, it would read contradictions into the texts in such a way that it would affect a work of transformation on those forms of signification which are said to be ideological. (163)

Hence, in this respect, an ideological criticism is not that understands the reality of a text of better, rather it is a criticism that changes the text. Hans Bertens further remarks Bennett’s view “there can be no notion of ‘the text’ underlying any reading: texts have historically specific functions and effects change is time, and what changes them is reading”. (163)

Literary texts however do not simply or passively 'expresses' or reflect the ideology of their particular time and place. Rather, they are sites of conflict and difference; places where values and preconceptions, beliefs and prejudices, knowledge and social structures-all the complete formations of ideology by which history articulates itself-may be produced and, finally, transformed.

Pierre Macherey, a French Marxist theoretician, rejects literature to be reflection of outside reality. In his essay, *Literature as an Ideological Form* written jointly with E. Balibar, writes:

Literature is not fiction, a fictive knowledge of the real, because it cannot define itself simply as figuration, an appearance of reality. By complex process, literature is the production of certain reality, not intended an autonomous reality, but a material reality, and of a certain social effect. (66)

Hence, he views literature as not able to produce realistic picture of the given society, however, the text produces 'reality-effect'. He opposes the concept of fiction and realism and also presupposition of outside reality as the 'anchoring point'.

For Macherey, the author of any text does nothing more than working out with already existed materials such as language, genres, ideology etc. The production of literature, for him is inseparable from social practices. Macherey is of the opinion that creation of literature basically is a linguistic phenomenon. Macherey with E. Balibar remarks:

Literature submits to a threefold determinations; 'linguistic', 'fictive' and pedagogy. There is a linguistic determination because the work of literary production depends on the existence of a common language codifying linguistic exchange, both for its materials and for its aims in

so much as literature contributes directly to the maintenance of a
 ‘common language’. (630)

According to Macherey literature produces ideological effect and the material for literature are the ‘ideological Contradictions’ which are political, religious, etc. As he states that the fundamental materials for literary text is “contradictory ideological realization of determinate class positions in the class struggle” (68). Reading the effect of the literary text, Macherey states that it provokes “other ideological contradictions which can sometimes be recognized as literary ones but which are usually merely aesthetic, moral, political, religious discourses in which the dominant ideology is realized” (68).

David Forgacs in his essay *Marxist Literary Theories* discusses Macherey’s theory of literary production under the Productive Model. According to Forgacs the specially of his theory lies in the concept of ideology. For Macherey, ideology, as it enters the text and settles with other elements, it loses its proper meaning. For Macherey, as Forgacs observes “a text contains gaps and silences; and writing is necessary a partial or in coherent reading of reality” (181). In his opinion the texts are incomplete and the reader has to bring to the theoretical knowledge the text and its author didn’t possess (180). Thus, in his theory the role of the readers or critics is of great importance. For him reading of any literary text is not interpretation of what a text already contains but the critics task is to seek out the principle of its conflict of meaning, and to show how this conflict is produced by the work’s of text’s relation to ideology.

Ramon Selden examines Macherey’s and Althussures’s theories of literary production under the title *Structuralism Marxism*:

Literary critics is not concerned to show how all the parts of the work

fit together, or to harmonize and smooth over any apparent contradictions. Like a psychoanalyst, the critic attends to the text's unconscious-to what is unspoken and even inevitably suppressed. (40)

Thus for Macherey, the gaps and silences are of great importance than what is in the text but not obvious for an ordinary reader.

Raymond William, a dominant British Marxist, doesn't believe in structuralist and post structuralist theories, he positively responds to the late 20th century developments in art and literature. He doesn't approve the general concept that realist novels have seized to exist and literature has made departure from reality. He insists that 20th century novels whether it is of Woolf or any other authors still hold to reality.

In his penetrating work *The Long Revolution* William writes:

No human experiences is entirely subjective or objective. It is both because we can't see things as they are apart from any creation; it is inseparable processes so it is wrong to relate science to object or physical reality and art to subject or emotion [...] the conscience is part of the reality and reality is the part of consciousness, in the whole process of our living organization. (23)

According to him, there is much similarity between art and ordinary day to day communication. As every day, an artist perceives things and interprets this sensory information with the help of previous knowledge. However, the efforts to describe the new experience are very important on the part of an artist. Such efforts are made not only by the artist but also by everyone and it is the part of ordinary social process. William clearly describes and states, "What is called an art is one of a number of ways commonly used as dance from gesture, poetry from speech" (24). He

further says “[...] the arts are certain intense forms of general communication, in which artist and spectators or readers participate actively” (25). Art, in his views, is active, powerful expression of human experience and what is often called creative imagination is the capacity to find and organize new descriptions of experience, and is common to all, therefore, an artist’s work becomes art only by his extraordinary skill in transmission of this experience. According to him, “ the ‘creative’ act of any artist is in any case the process of making a meaning active by communicating an organized experience to other” (32). It is the artists’ power to communicate on which the value of art depends.

Explaining artistic creation from Marxist perspective he clearly justifies the inseparable relation between art and ordinary experience. He says that art cannot be excluded from serious practical concerns. Neither art can be dismissed as unpractical or secondary nor can it be distinguished from ordinary living.

William insists that art like other communication is socially activity and it can’t be set apart from reality. It is obviously a part of our social organization. As he writes:

It is totally wrong to assume that political institution and conventions are of a different and separate order from artistic institutions and conventions. Politics and art together with science, religious, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, belong in a whole world of active and interacting relationships which is our common associative life. (39)

Hence each activity should be studied in relation to the whole, the abstraction results in suffering.

The Long Revolution contains quite a valuable discussion regarding the contemporary novels under the title *Realism and the Contemporary Novels*. Williams divides the whole literary tradition into three phases, in the first phase there developed literature with concentration on heroic, romantic or legendary subjects related to invisible supernatural power. And it was centered on the upper class. However, with the raise of middle class contemporary, ordinary, everyday activities were set against the above subject and the attention was gradually shifted to the ugly poor aspects of everyday reality. Naturalism developed parallel to realism however; it is different from realism as it is simple, technical reference to subject for it is straight forward depiction of observed reality. Describing the feature of contemporary novels he observed that 19th century tradition of realistic novels is replaced by psychological novels and the apprehension of psychological states, the consciousness of the characters, has been its fundamental characteristics. He observes, “[...] realism as an intention in the description of these states (i.e. psychological states), has been widely abandoned” (227). Though, he seems much positive towards the new development, he is not fully satisfied with them as they are not able to embody reality in the way realist works should. He points out, “there is the formal gap in modern fiction” (278). For him a realist novels is the one, which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons. Thus, aspects of general life should be embodied in personal life and individual character should be drawn in relation of society.

For Williams, it is not that realist tradition has disappeared is the modern fiction but what has actually disappeared in the integration between individual’s circumstance in favor of rendering impression. There has been polarization of styles. The earlier novels were object realist and the modern are subject impressionist i.e. the

social and personal novel. According to him a social novel generally offers the accurate observation and description of the general life, the aggregation, on contrary the personal novel offers the accurate observation and description of process and units. However, none of them are perfect portrayal of reality. Contemporary novelists are not able to apprehend the reality that personal experience is formed on the attempts to separate an individual from the society neglecting the impacts of socio-economic as well as political situation on him, is erroneous.

William views that 20th century is characteristics for individual right and absolute freedom. Everybody is happy in separating him/her in order to preserve freedom and identity. As Williams observes, these things have actually happened in the society and they existed in reality before they made their way to literature. The change in real socio-economic life has resulted in the change in both literary technique and content. The new trend has powerfully threatened the old and it's impossible to remain responsive to its pressure. In such a situation, it is only foolishness to try to grip hold to the old and dismiss powerful emergence of the new. Williams says; "time has come to explore the new definition of realism in order to break out of the deadlock and find a creative direction" (287). Thus, in contrary to other Marxist critic and theoreticians, William responds positively to the new trend in fiction and observes, "The contemporary novel has both reflected and illuminated the crisis of our society [...]" (287). For him the fundamental problem in modern literature is extrication of individual from the whole social process and the only solution to it is to put efforts in setting back the fragments into whole.

A leading Marxist theorist Terry Eagleton has expanded and elaborated the concepts of Althusser and Macherey in his view a literary text is a special kind of

production in which ideological discourse described as any system of mental representations of lived experience is reworked into a specifically literary discourse.

Ramon Selden in his book *Literary Theory* observes Eagleton's view that:

Like Althusser criticisms must break with its ideological prehistory and became a 'science'. The central problem is to define the relationship between literature and ideology because in his views texts don't reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an 'effect' of the real. (42)

Hence, Eagleton means that the text may appear to be free in its relation to reality, but it is not free in its use of ideology. Ideology here refers not to conscious political doctrines but to all those systems of representations which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience. In *Marxism and Literary Criticism* Eagleton writes:

Ideology is not in the first place a set of doctrine; it signifies the way men live out their roles in class. Society values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole. (15)

Here, he means that any work of art should show a man making sense of his experience in ways that prohibit a true understanding of his society, ways that are consequently false.

Eagleton rejects Althusser's view that literature can distance itself from ideology; it is a complex reworking of already existing ideological discourses. As he writes:

In any society ideology has a certain structural coherence. Because it possesses such relative coherence [...] and since literary text 'belong'

to ideology, they too can be the object of such scientific analysis. A scientific criticism would seek to explain the literary work in terms of the ideological structure of which it is a part, yet, which it transforms in its art; it would serrate out the principle which both ties the work to ideology and distance from it. (18)

Eagleton means that literature and ideology both are the object of scientific interpretation. Because science gives us conceptual knowledge of a situation; art gives us the experience of that situation, which is equivalent to ideology.

He argues that such attempts to disengage art and culture from socio-economic determinants lead them to unprivileged humble position. Art becomes nothing more than production of any other commodity. Regarding the anti-representationalistic nature of modern and post modern art, Eagleton views:

If art no longer reflects, it is not because it seeks to change the world rather than mimic it, but because there is in truth nothing to be reflected, no reality which is not itself already image, spectacle, simulacrum, fiction, etc. (387)

Here he means that in contemporary society truth itself has been subjected to power and performance instead of reason. Nevertheless, the attempts to disintegrate art from reality erase the influence of history on present and create art on culture devoid of all political and historical contents is nothing more than metaphysical illusion which can never be successful. For him the vital fault of modernism in breaking off the real social world, establishing a critical negating distance between itself and the ruling social order is its bracketing off the political forces which seek to transform that order.

In, *literary theory: An Introduction*, Eagleton discusses that in the present world of nuclear power everything has been politicized, and literature is not exception to it. It has been in the literary theories from the earliest time. Regarding history of modern literary theory he observes that it is part of the political beliefs and ideological values. He further writes that it is not an indifferent phenomenon, so pure literary theory devoid of all historical, social and sexual relevance is entirely impossible as he writes that literary theories without any relevance to socio-economic situation is “only an academic myth”. According to him, “literary theory has a most particular relevance to this political system. It has helped witting or not to sustain and reinforce its assumptions” (196).

Regarding the utility of studies, he observes “perhaps literary criticism and literary theory just mean any kind of talk about an object not the method, which distinguished and delimits and discourse” (197). Nevertheless, the object or literature itself is not stable as he states, “the unity of object is as illusionary as the unity of the methods” (197). Therefore, attempts to put boundaries to the study of literature, weather it is in terms of method or its object is liable to be misleading.

In Eagleton’s view the relation between literature, literary criticism or its theory and politics is inseparable. As he writes:

[...] all criticism is in some sense-political [...] socialist criticism and feminist criticism are of course, connected with developing theories and methods appropriate to their aims: they consider questions of the relations between and sexuality or of text and ideology, as other theories in general do not.(212)

A common accusation of Marxist approach to literature is that they are insufficiently attentive of the form of literature. Here is also a residual suspicion

among Marxist that the aesthetic and the political are somehow antithetical-that to 'tell the truth' in literature is to refuse the excesses, the performativity, the exuberance of poetry.

In this book, *The Political Unconscious Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), Fredric Jameson, remarks that this suspicion is itself the product of a capitalist culture which has appeared to split the poetic and the political. As he writes:

[...] one of the determinants of capitalist culture, that is, the culture of the western realist and modernist novel, is a radical split between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political [...]. We have been trained in a deep cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private existences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamic. Political in our novels, therefore is accounting to Stendhal's canonical formulation, a 'pistol shot in the middle of a concert'. (69)

Here, Jameson renews earlier debates within Marxism concerning the relative merits of classic realism and modernism. In place of 'Lukacs' rejection of modernism as an anti-political aestheticism, Jameson takes modernism text for their repressed political contents.

Jameson views that narrative is a 'socially symbolic act' so now Marxist readings need not read literature merely as a reflection of its particular context. It is not a matter of learning something of the historical context and then reading the text off again that as a form of 'background'.

Jameson refutes the idea that historical subtext is 'extrinsic' to the work, something which he, not the text, brings to bear upon it. As he writes:

A definition we think of as paradoxical only because such theoretical

strategies have tended to be situated as oppositional to one another.

Formal patterns in the work are read as symbolic enactments of the social within the formal. (77)

Jameson's reading are thus attempts to combine heuristic with deductive procedure. His initial approach to the work is a moment description of its formal and structural properties. It is deductive in so far its hunt for formal contradictions are motivated by its aims of transcending the purely formalistic; it stimulates intention of relating these contradictions to history as the subtext of the work. And such contradictions will enable a political analysis in its widest sense. Jameson draws upon such Marxist theorists as Althusser and Macherey (Structuralist Marxist) and Sartre and Lukacs (Hegelian Marxist) and combines their approaches with those of psychoanalysis, structuralism and post structuralism.

Within these parameters, Marxist approaches to literature are surprisingly varied, and there is no programmatic way of applying Marxist ideas. Of course, Marxist critics will continue to discuss such issues as class struggle, commodification and alienation of labor and so on, but their shared concerns have not entailed that Marxist readings are always identical in approach, or even that their conclusion will be the same.

In the following chapters, this present research work seeks to explore the class struggle which is apparent in Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The researcher explores how the major character Stanley maintains his class distinction under modern capitalistic economy and Blanche who succumbs to the capitalist economy and is thus, alienated.

III. Class Distinction in Tennessee Williams' Play *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* dramatizes the hedonistic orientation and class distinction, especially focusing on two characters Stanley and Blanche.

The cultural clash between Blanche and Stanley, the clash between values of the past, and the new success, shows a society gradual move from old values to new. Stanley and Blanche represent opposing ways of life. Blanche represents the old; Stanley the ruthless new. Stanley is Polish while Blanche is a woman of American South. The cultural clash becomes more prominent when Blanche continually refers to her brother in law as 'the Polack' When Stanley hears, he says:

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.
(197)

The marginalized in the society is often victimized. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* we are made to hear Blanche mention often that she has particularly nowhere to go. From a wealthy background she is reduced to penury, and she pitifully misses her financial and social security. The economic concern is voiced by Stella when she mentions that among all people; only Stanley was likely to reach somewhere. Though not a play directly based on the depression, the intersection between the depression and its concomitant angst finds utterance in the play.

Blanche is a Southern woman looking back on her 'better days'. Blanche seems an eluded woman looking back on her life in the South bred on Black labor as typical of the old south. The word 'Blanche' itself means 'white' but in the play she is no 'lily,' and is ruthlessly punished for her race and class reservations. Blanche looks

for her old life and is miserably at odds with the class and ambiance that her sister is part of. She tries to break apart Stella and Stanley, but ultimately Stanley ruthlessly wins the game by raping her and sending her to an asylum. The play reflects the desperate clash of old and new, South and North, masculine and feminine, and power and victimization.

Blanche, as the last vestige of a dying aristocratic culture, is the heroine on a social level. As heroine she represents all that is scared within this culture – the love for language, the appreciation of art and music, the beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart. Stanley, on the other hand, represents the crude destroyer and profaner of this aesthetic sensibility. His violent abuse of Blanche is a destruction of a class as well. In the class struggle neither can brook a coexistence with the other. The negative implication of such coexistence is seen in Blanche's futile plea to her sister. "Don't – don't hang back with the Brutes! (323).

The sexuality healthy marriage Stanley shares with Stella stands as the sacred arena defiled by the profane intruder Blanche with her sexual perversity. If Stanley is taken at his word when he confides in Stella, the normalcy of their relationship is convincing when he says:

Stella, it's gonna be all right after she goes and after you have had the baby [...] God, honey, it's gonna be sweet when we can make noise in the night the way that we used to and get the colored lights going with nobody's sister behind the curtain to hear us. (125)

In direct contrast to Stanley, Blanche represents the epitome of a psychological malaise. Her sexual preventions with schoolboys are in direct contrast to the normalcy of Stanley's aggressive sexuality in marriage.

Stanley violently reacts as his role of supremacy of his class is threatened in his own house. Stanley, a richly feathered male bird among hens, is violent against Blanche, a profane intruder. When Stella tells him to help clear the table, he hurls a plate to the floor, and says:

That's how I'll clear the table! (He seizes her arm) don't ever talk that way to me! 'Pig-Palock – disgusting –vulgar –greasy!'—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? [...] (He hurls a cup and saucer to the floor) My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places? (98)

Thus, the class conflict is highly pervasive throughout the play. Blanche represents the profanation of Stanley's sacred, if crude, marriage.

Blanche was brought up in the traditional Southern mode. The meals enjoyed in the South included fresh garden vegetables in the spring, summer and fall, canned in the winter. There would be the traditional Southern meat dishes – chicken and dumplings, fried chicken, fried or baked ham, pork chops, and roast beef. There would, of course, have been the obligatory desserts: pies, cakes, boiled custard, puddings, cookies. All the above would have been washed down with sweetened iced tea, coffee, or milk. Since it was the custom in the early decades of the twentieth century for the parishioners to provide food for ministers and their families, Blanche was too accustomed to that kind of food.

The Southern devotion to good food and, in some sectors, good drink, surprisingly plays a major role in the play. The dramatist's uncanny ability to seize a symbol in the most unlikely place is demonstrated in *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the scene in which Blanche, looking around the Kowalski apartment for something she

and Mitch can drink, finds a liqueur: “Here’s something. Southern Comfort! What is that I wonder?[...] Ummm, it’s sweet, so sweet! It’s terribly, terribly sweet!” (65).

The words reflect ironically on the tragic events that soon will impact Blanche’s fragile life. More often than not, Blanche experience Southern discomfort, although she is always seeking a balm for her injured spirits. She is horrified by the contrast between the Kowalski’s squalid surroundings in the tenement called Elysian field, and her idealized, dreamlike memory of life at Belle Reve, the family estate lost through bankruptcy.

Stanley Kowalski is often a brutal man, for Blanche, who hates pretensions and affection. He is unimpressed with Blanche’s education and refinement, except as it infuriates him. Drinking, bowling, and poker are suppressed only by sex among his favorite activities. He hits Stella, shouts, throws dishes, tosses the radio out the window, and brutally rapes Blanche. Is he merely an animal defending his territory against an intruder? The dialectical situation between Stanley and Blanche is the conflict between the North and South, the masculine and feminine, the white and the Black and the progressive economy and the fallen aristocracy.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire* situations are at odds with each other and flares up into relentless conflict. Blanche DuBois is not only a recognizable human being but an abstraction of decadent aristocracy. It is her final tragedy that the life she encounters in a married sister’s home cannot spare her precisely when she requires the most commiseration. She is the victim of the economic depression with her plantation lost, the teaching profession closed to her, her reputation gone, her nerves stretched to snapping-point, Blanche has come to Stella in the French Quarter to find her married to a lusty ex-sergeant of Polish extraction. With her superior airs and queasiness she interferes with Stanley’s married happiness.

Blanche is the last descendant to cling to the family plantation of Belle Reve, sold acre by acre by improvident male relatives, as she says. Her simple-hearted sister declasssed herself easily by an earthly marriage to Stanley Kowalski and saved herself, Blanche tried to stand firm on quicksand and was declasssed right into a house of ill-flame. Unable to face the family death and the decay if the state to a mere twenty acres and a graveyard, she turns prostitute in her efforts to find kindness. She says:

After the death of all intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with [...] I think it was panic that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection here and there, in the most unlikely places even, at least, in a seventeen-year-old boy. (75)

Blanche is in every sense the sum of an exhausted tradition that is the essence of sophistication and culture run down into the appearance that struggle to conceal rapacity. Her life is a living division of two warring principle, desire and decorum, and she is the victim of civilization's attempt to reconcile the two in a morality. Blanche lives in a world of shades, of Chinese lanterns, of romantic melodies that conjure up dream world, of perversions turned into illusory romances, of alcoholic escape, of time past the romantic continuity of generations to which she looks for identity and of Christian morality that refines away or judicially and morally vitiates animal impulse.

Blanche is an intruder, often a foreigner, enforcing her domination by superior Southern cultural strength. Williams's Blanche is from the aristocracy, but in this historical period aristocracy is no longer the ruling class. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, progressive bourgeois men Stanley defend his wife and his society against a reactionary irrational force which threatens his dominance of his planet.

Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire* figures two incorporated entities: the clash between Stanley, a progressive bourgeois, and Blanche, a faded Southern aristocracy. Blanche and Stanley, compete to the death for a complete monopoly on circulation and consumption. Both focuses on power and is not on the individual desiring subjectivity but on the meaning and power of the consolidated group.

Blanche is a genuinely perverse Southern Belle who tortured and seduced many people. Her perversion follows from the prostitution to seduction, a sin against Christianity. She is represented as dangerous because she is a force from the past seeking to restore the old order though through illusions and dreams. Blanche portrays impulsive primitive forces rising in revolt against the socialized mind, against the progressive society. The savage seeks to overthrow the civilized, emotion to undermine thought. At the most abstract level, it is the old battle of chaos against order.

Blanche's design upon family is read by him as the desire to control his family. Blanche is an image of aristocratic tyranny, of corrupt power and privilege, and of foreign threat in order to characterize her own cause as just, patriotic, and even revolutionary.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire* they contest each other's interpretive authority, Blanche and Stanley resort to similar emotional and linguistic strategies in order to gain ascendancy. Why does Stanley's act of reading win out over the more literate Blanche's? Having been shown in the beginning as incapable of telling the difference between real and fake among Blanche's remaining possessions, Stanley is finally given complete authority over his sister-in-law's true colors.

Stanley's first appearance is mediated by two "reading": his wife's gentle reprimand for his manners, and the explicitly sexual interpretation that his throwing

raw meat at Stella elicits from the two neighbor women. Blanche, by contrast, remains Stanley her strengths and weakness, and thus the sources of both her authority and her eventual loss of it.

Throughout the play Blanche's displacement isolates her. Her confidence is undermined by a setting in which she is unsure of the social conventions, the successful manipulation of which is indispensable for gaining and maintaining authority. Not only does Stanley dismiss her genteel protest, "Please don't get up," with "Nobody's going to get up, so don't be worried," but Stella, who has warned her about the inapplicability of her customs to the present setting, finds her sister's "superior attitude" "out of place"(13). In effect, Blanche's relation to "place" resonates from the first scene, in which "this place," owned by Eunice and Steve, is contrasted with Blanche's "home-place, the plantation" (248-49), the picture of which is variously interpreted by Eunice and Stanley, and Mitch's rejection of her expresses itself in a refusal to bring her "home". Stanley's birthday present to her, the bus ticket to Laurel, serves only to underline his declaration "She's not stay in here after Tuesdy"(298). Like Stella, he knows Blanche can return to no home. She is the highly victimized character.

The struggle for mastery between the two rivals begins as soon as they share the stage. Blanche attempts to subdue Stanley through her Southern belle flirtation, a convention which he does not entirely understand but through which he is easily able to cut. She uses even more provocative behavior when he begins his speech about the Napoleonic code, and again Stanley counters her moves with the crude but effective "Don't play so dumb" (281). Since Stanley's experience with flirts, women who overvalue their good looks and those who give men "ideas" about them seems vast, Blanche's tactics fail. She begins to gain ascendancy over him only when she uses a

language to describe her past and the history of Belle Reve that takes her out of Stanley's ken that makes her the woman about whom Mitch confesses, "I have never known anyone like you" (343).

The two levels of discourse, Blanche's evocative, diffuse, evasive language and Stanley's direct, seemingly factual speech, point to a distinction based on gender and class that for a time works in Blanche's favor, but ultimately defeat her. In Scene One, Stanley admits that he "never was a very good English student," (15) but he immediately tries to erase that failing by making Blanche feel its irrelevance to his dominant position versus his higher class, English-teaching sister-in-law: "How long you here for, Blanche? (267). In Scene Two, Stanley's interpretation of the contents of Blanche's trunk attempts to reduce them to the swindle that he suspects Blanche to have perpetrated on Stella-and more importantly, on him. Each item he examines becomes another piece of evidence in the case against Blanche:

There are thousands of papers, stretching back over hundreds of years. A solid-gold dress, genuine fox fur-pieces, a half mile long, the treasure chest of a pirate, pearls! Ropes of them! And diamond there's thousands of dollars invested in this stuffs here, here's your plantation, or what was left of it, here. (274-75)

Neither Stella's expertise nor her repeated protests have any effects on Stanley because they merely counter his propositions, instead of changing the level of discourse.

As in the matter of Blanche's trunk, physical violence becomes the response by which to subdue the class adversary. The increasing dissent makes Stanley try even harder to keep control over Mitch and the declassed women. When his commands to Mitch and Blanche fail and Blanche turns the radio on again, he throws the radio out

the window. Despite the earlier slap that served both as warning and as a reminder to Stella of Stanley's rights to her, her defiance of Stanley, by calling him "animal thing, you" (302) and by demanding that the poker players leave provokes him into striking her in earnest. Contrary to Blanche's lament that "there's so much—so much confusion in the world" (309), his explosion restores his authority. Everybody is respectful of his capacity for violence, and Stella returns to Stanley, accepting his mastery over her. Blanche's reading of the night's events, "lunacy, and absolute lunacy" (303), is easily set aside by the others. Eunice even makes it clear that this night has ended less dramatically than similar nights in the past: "I hope they do haul you in and turn the fire hose on you, same as the last time" (306). To Blanche's "I'm terrified," Mitch replies, "Ho-ho! There's nothing to be scared of. They are crazy about each other [...] Don't take it serious" (308). For the characters who are at home in the Quarter, the explosion is merely a crisis peak in a cycle in which crises lead to reconciliation and temporary harmony, and eventually to other crises that are easily contained.

In the continuing struggle for authority, Blanche must impose her reading of reality on her sister or lose all. Whereas before the poker night Blanche's historical revisionism seems almost unconscious and motivated largely by affection, in Scene Four it becomes emphatically intentional. Which Blanche first comes to New Orleans, she asks for "my sister, Stella DuBois," then corrects herself, "I mean Mrs. Stanley Kowalski" (246). She frequently refers to Stella as the "baby" sister and as a "child". The morning after Stella and Stella back into the past they share, a past that excludes Stanley, by throwing herself on the bed next to her sister" (310). Her tenderness proves no match for Stanley's embraces, and Stella distances herself from her. Blanche tries to awake Stella to her past, to the tradition of gentility in which they were both raised and which she cannot possibly find in her present life:

I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with, You can't have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a gentleman's in his nature! (320-322).

Since Stella remains insensible to these appeals, Blanche moves from an interpretation of their particular circumstance to an overview of the history of humanity and its hope to reduce him to a beast. Yet whereas Stella openly rejects Blanche's reading through gesture more than speech, Stanley, who overhears Blanche's attempted coup, chances upon the opportunity to plot secretly in order to make Blanche's historical revisionism boomerang against her.

Escalating the rivalry for the authority of the historical voice, Blanche launches into her reading, in which Stanley is reduced to a specimen from a primitive phase of evolution that must be abandoned in order for humanity to move forward. She begins by calling him "bestial" (322) and supports her interpretation with the authority of anthropology:

There's even something-sub human –something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something –ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I have seen in-anthropology studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him rightly by, and there he is-Stanley Kowalski- survivor of the Stone Age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! (323)

Although she has seen the inefficacy of her caresses in light of Stanley's lovemaking and heard from Stella about her loyalty to the man who makes "things ..happen[...] in the dark, " Blanche proclaims the superiority of "tendered feeling" over "brutal desire." She places her sister among the "apes" subject to their will: "And

you –you here- waiting for him, May be hell strike you or may grunt and kiss you!
 That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! “ (323) On the opposite side stands all that is best in humankind, “art,” “ poetry and music,” “ new light” in the “dark march” of progress. Her final plea to Stella has reduced Stanley to those who need to be left behind for the sake of culture: “Don’t –don’t hang back with the brutes!” (323).

Only when Stanley taps into the dominant discourse of class and patriarchy and is thus able to reduce Blanche’s story to an all –too common denominator can he vanquish her. From the end of Scene Four to the climax of Scene Ten, Stanley proceeds to gather the evidence he needs for an interpretation of Blanche which is as reductive of her as her evolutionary claims have been of him. That Stanley begins to discredit Blanche even before he gets “proofs from the most reliable sources” (359) becomes evident in Mitch’s hesitation to give Blanche a hint about how Stanley discusses her. In Scene Seven, in which Stanley comes home with the “dope” on Blanche, he has already won Mitch to his side. It remains for him to win Stella the “place” indisputably back from Blanche, for despite Stella’s seeming rejection of her sister when the latter attacks her husband, Blanche has made inroads into Stella’s loyalty in the same way that she has partly redecorated the Kowalski’s apartment to suit her own “dainty” tastes. Clearly, Blanche’s presence has made Stella feel a small sense of displacement as well. She declares, for instance, that she likes to wait on Blanche because “it makes it seem more like home” (333). Stella’s reproof to her husband contains precisely the sense of a shared past with Blanche that Blanche was earlier seeking to revive in her sister, and from which Stanley is excluded:
 “Blanche is sensitive and you have got to realize that Blanche and I grew up under very different circumstance than you did. “Stanley’s reply, “So I had been told. And

told and told and told!” (358) emphasizes his sharpened sense that he is being supplanted.

Whereas Blanche wants to write Stanley out of history by relegating him to the savage, distant past of pre-history, Stanley out of history by relegating him to Blanche; he moves to inscribe, to author, not only her past, but her future. He has already selectively authored her past by choosing only her “recent history.” He then blocks her escape to Mitch’s home at the same time that he presents her with a bus ticket not to send her back to Laurel, where he himself has acknowledged that she can-not to send her back to Laurel, where he himself has acknowledged that she cannot return, but to exile her from his home. When Stella asks, “What on earth will she-do, “ extending Blanche’s exile to a planetary scale, Stanley responds, “Her future is mapped out for her” (367). The passive construction of that sentence masks Stanley’s active part as cartographer. In Scenes Eight and Ten, he proceeds to strip Blanche of her disguises, of the illusions given her by the costumes that he had so overrated when he raided her trunk. But even that seems insufficient, since Blanche still manages to regain something of the strange dignity that makes Stanley refer to her as “loyalty.” Because she refuses to become the woman in the travelling salesman joke, the stereotype of the nymphomaniac upper class girl, he rapes her. His famous line rationalizing both the struggle for mastery in which he and Blanche have engaged, leading to the crucial combat, and his ultimate reduction of her to the whore of his history who provokes and enjoys yet another encounter.

If Blanche exalts herself in her encounters with death and sex, Stanley’s debunking of her myth as priestess of Aphrodite-he is equipped to deal with the issues of sex though not with that of mortality – places Blanche in yet another dimension,

that of the made joke about insatiable fallen women. His discourse reduces Blanche to the stature of less exalted legend among males in her hometown of the chaste name:

Everybody in the town of Laurel known all about her. She is as famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States... The town was too small for this to go on forever! And as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco... That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act-because she's practically been told by the major to get out of town! Yes, did you know there was an army camp near Laurel and your sister's was one of the places called "Out-of Bounds"? (359-61)

Through their vast exaggerations, Stanley's "everybody" and his "she's practically been told by the mayor" throw doubt on the unanimity in Laurel about Blanche's reputation. Yet Stanley is close to achieving unanimity within his sphere of influence, namely Stella and Mitch, and he knows that he needs to debase Blanche thoroughly if he is to transform her from strong antagonist to victim.

Stanley's success in transforming Blanche into victim has less to do with the conventions of social discourse that discredit her speech while valuing Stanley's than the steady erosion of her authority. Labeled as an outsider by her costume from her very entrance on stage, Blanche is forcibly pushed to the margins as her escape routes - to Mitch's house, back to Laurel, to Shep Huntleigh's yacht-are blocked, and as her position in her sister's household becomes increasingly defined as that of an intruder. Both Mitch and Stella end up by accepting Stanley's version of Blanche. The clearest signs that Blanche herself succumbs to Stanley's version of her, to the incomplete recent history of the traveling salesman, appear in Scene Ten, which fittingly culminates in her being raped. The woman obsessed with cleanliness, who takes two

baths a day, who becomes hysterical when she spills a drink on her white skirt, who will not think of wearing an outfit if it is “crushed,” appears in Scene Ten dressed in “a somewhat soiled and crumpled satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed slippers” (391). Given Blanche’s obsessive fastidiousness, one wonders where she may have found a soiled dress and scuffed slippers, but the stage direction deal less with the probabilities of Blanche’s wardrobe than with a representation of her psyche, which has begun to allow for Stanley’s assessment of her soiled lily-whiteness and for Mitch’s echoing, “you are not clean enough” (396).

Bereft of any alliance with power, even an imaginary one, Blanche as a no-longer-young single woman barred from her profession, with no home, no male relatives, and no prospect of marriage, has her destiny mapped out for her, but not exactly in the way intimated by Stanley’s prophecy. She joins the throng of the displaced, whom society disposes of by incarceration, expulsion, or death. Henceforth her discourse becomes ravings, and her presence and embarrassment.

Thus, Tennessee Williams’ play “A Streetcar Named Desire” revolves around the issues of sex, food and good drink. The victimization of the female subject has been blended with the economic as well as the discourse on female sexuality. Blanche is the invader over the Stanley’s economy, authority over family and society. She has been shown to be victimized as she has lost the economic control over her family treasure. She has been striving to gain the control over economy back. She cling to prostitution, teaching profession and she acts in an aristocratic manner even though she has already been declassed of her wealth and health. Stanley is an image of progressive bourgeois, of corrupt power and privilege over Blanche in order to declass her. Blanche recognize that he can have his access to Belle reve, money, and landed property only if he can deter her access to the authority.

IV. conclusion

After the discussion and analysis of Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the play reflects the longing of good test and series of encounters between the Kowalski world and the Blanche DuBois world. Each of these encounters will intensify with each subsequent meeting. The confrontation is not so severe, but it increases in severity until one of the two must be destroyed. Stanley's findings about her past sexual experiences are more than just a victory; they show a flaw which is even greater than naivety.

Stanley's authority derives from the same sources which most of us are forced to acknowledge in one way or another all our lives: physical violence, intimidation, and above all economic domination. In the quest for authority, Stanley profits from staying within the parameters set for him by his sex and class and Blanche loses because she fails to conform. Stanley is perceived as normal. His pleasure are sex, bowling, drinking, and poker. His loyalty is to his family, for which he is a good provider. Except for his rape of Blanche, nothing Stanley does threaten the social fabric. Blanche, on the other hand, is deviant in regard to her class and sex. Although she maintains the trappings of the aristocrat in her expensive and elegant tastes, she has allowed the rest to slip, like Belle Reve, away from her. In seeking emotional fulfillment, she has disregarded the barriers of "normal" female sexuality and of class. Her actions subvert the social order: she remains loyal to the memory of her homosexual husband, she fulfills the desires of young soldiers outside the very walls of her ancestral mansion, she is oblivious to class in her promiscuity, and she seduces one of her seventeen year old students. Having thus overstepped the boundaries of class and profession, she arrives in New Orleans to attempt to split up the Kowalskis, even after she learns of Stella's pregnancy. She explicitly makes plans to take Stella

away from Stanley, to have Shep Huntleigh set the two of them up in a “shop” in which they can earn their living together, and apart from Stanley.

Thus, Stanley is a tyrant seeking to preserve the survival of his house through recourse to violence and victimization. There can be seen class struggle where the capitalist is rich and progressive and always wants to be rich by victimization and exploitation of the poor. Always he wants to be powerful, rich, respected in the community and family.

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