

# A CONFLICT BETWEEN ILLUSION AND REALITY IN A *STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE* BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Dr. L. Amutha  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Srimad Andavan Arts and Science College  
Trichy, Tamil Nadu

**Abstract:** This research paper aims to analyse how the theme of illusion and fantasy lead the play *A Street car Named Desire*. Most of the characters have a constant battle between appearances and reality. Among them the rival relationship of Blanche and Stanley direct the plot and give the audience a comprehensive nervousness, stress and anxiety. Though reality trumps over fantasy, imagination is too a central and useful tool. Blanche's insanity emerges as she moves away into herself, leaving objective world behind in order to avoid accepting the reality.

**Index Terms** - Illusion and fantasy, nervousness, stress and anxiety and reality

## I. Introduction

*A Street Car Named Desire* is a famous play for its social themes prevalent during its time of release. Most people noticed the plight of women. It shows how the social structure of the south offered little protection for women. The author exposes unfairness that often went inconsideration.

It explains the causes of the conflict that occurs when society's perception of a person and individuals personal reality do not coincide. It sheds lights on society's victimization of females and reflects the idea of female self-expression. It also questions women's apparent lack of authority in male dominated society.

## II. Discussion

There are many characters who live in the world of delusion. Among them Blanche predominantly lives in her illusionary world. Blanche is a tumbled woman in the eyes of society. She is an insecure and dislocated individual. She is an elderly belle, lives in a state of perpetual panic about her fading beauty. She pretends to be an unaware of humiliation. Her false behaviour attempts to show herself appear attractive to new male suitors. She is interested on powdering her face in anticipation of the male company but the men do not show any interest in her presence. Blanche has the habit of drinking alcohol continuously but refuses to acknowledge her problem with it. The conversation between Mitch and Blanche reveal that Blanche is scared of exposing herself during the day time and unwilling to disclose her real age to Mitch. It is evident enough to understand that Blanche lives in the world of imagination and fails to accept the reality.

**Mitch:** What it means is I have never had a real good look at you, Blanche. Let's turn the light on here.

**Blanche** ( fearfully): Light? Which light? What for? ( ASD 43).

As the play develops, the spectators may understand that Blanche is inappropriate and unrefined. Her sexual desire and tendency to drink away her problems make Blanche ashamed of her life and identity. She is the most fascinating character in the play. Because she creates reality as fantasy and vice versa in an absolutely brilliant way. This is what makes her role interest the audience and contribute to the excellence of the work. Though Mitch and Blanche come from completely different worlds, they are drawn together by their mutual need of companionship, support and therefore they believe themselves right for one another. In the end, Blanche blindly allows herself to go with the doctor, ignoring her sister's cries. It is the final sad image of Blanche's vanity and total dependence upon men for happiness. Thus she lives in a fantasy, hides her true self, lives in the mistakes of her past and describes a brighter future.

Stella is from economically good background. She falls in love with Stanley at the first sight of his

officer suit and attractive medals. As the play progresses, the relationship of Stella and Stanley seems to be violent. She desires to be with Stanley even if he hits her. She overlooks Stanley's downfalls, thus escapes her reality. At the end of the play, she is not ready to accept the truth about her sister's past and Stanley's violation of Blanche.

**Stella to Blanche:** Yes, you are, Blanche. I know how it must have seemed to you.....In the first place, when men are drinking and playing poker anything can happen. It's always a powder-keg. He did not know what he was doing..... He was as good as a lamb when I came back and he's really very, very ashamed of himself (ASD 63).

Stanley is the epitome of vital force. He is reliable to his friends, passionate to his wife and heartlessly cruel to Blanche. He imagines himself socially important person and likes to destroy Blanche's social pretensions. His deep hatred of Blanche is encouraged in part by the aristocratic past Blanche represents. He thinks that Blanche is untrustworthy. He goes through her cocoon verbally with his sharpened insults and physically with his sexual desire. He discerns that Blanche's outward appearance and personality are merely illusion which she creates to protect herself. He attacks Blanche's weakest point of being in the delusion. He plans to destroy Blanche by exposing her to the world.

Mitch does not fit to be a chivalric hero of whom Blanche dreams. He is also impressed by Blanche's charm. He imagines for marrying a perfect woman which makes him to accept the words of Stanley about Blanche's past. After confirming the words of Stanley, he hesitates to marry and escapes from fantasy. He is clumsy, sweaty and unrefined interests like muscle building. He is sensitive but fails to understand Blanche's romances of poetry and literature. Blanche plays with his lack of intelligence. She teases him French, knowing that he will not understand, duping him into playing along with her self-flattering charades.

### III. Conclusion

Through the characters, author tells the story of humankind who searched for happiness and stability. They are illusive because they do not accept their reality. On the other hand Blanche firmly believes that only men bring happiness thus she never goes out on her own to find happiness. Her retreat into fantasy saves her from the harshness of reality. At the end, she is an castaway from society.

### References:

- [1] Berkman, Leonard. "The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois" in Bloom, Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 33-40
- [2] Bloom, Harold, ed. Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988
- [3] Kazan, Elia. "Notebook for *A Streetcar Named Desire*" in Miller, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Streetcar Named Desire*, 21-27
- [4] Williams, Tennessee 1951, *A Street Car Named Desire*, Penguin Group, New York