

A streetcar named desire: the passion of blanche research paper

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Despite of her degenerate personality, dissolute desires, frivolous fantasies and her misdoings, Stanley Kowalski does not have the right to show disrespect towards Blanche DuBois simply because of their differences in terms of cultural background, and to set up her ultimate downfall.

A streetcar named desire might have never taken us to the capturing experience of watching several people's lives and their final tragedy if there has not been the so-called Southern Gothic Movement. Or, should I say better, there would have not been any Southern Gothic Movement if the famous streetcar had not started its route?

The movement began its pace in the southern part of the US in 1930ies and can be traced to 1950ies when it begins to cease. The very movement brings back the fleur of the England of the XVIII century, to " Southern-Gothic imp of Poe-etic perverse" (Simon 83) with all its ideas of Gothic culture and the features that are due only to the gothic genre, very sharp and gloomy, the idea of a human life inevitably ending in death dominating. (Smith 63)

The pessimistic spirit aside, the new genre gave the writers the opportunity to explore the secrets of life in the calm and reserved way that the slow XVIII century had brought.

That was what A Streetcar Named Desire and the rest of the wonderful literature novelties appeared. Carrying the spirit of hopes fallen and the people broken down by the hand of doom, they showed that there could be things that even the weaker people had to face and that there was practically nothing to be afraid of now, in the stagnate times.

Tennessee Williams was one of those to explore the new vision of the world with the great care and with the hope that people will finally be in time for their streetcar to take them to the place unknown. His works are shot through with the feeling that the world is shattering to pieces, but those survived could see the better place.

So Tennessee writes, and he writes a lot. And with the sincerity of a man who has learned to tell the truth from a lie, he shares his knowledge and his idea as long as he can. Of course, you might say that, being dead for a long time, he cannot share any idea with us. Bu he can. These are his stories that do. Take a streetcar to 1930.

Being a woman is a tough luck, and being a pretty woman is a constant torment. Tennessee explains it just fine in his play. He makes it clear that she is always facing a danger of a shame and a danger of getting subdued by her husband.

These are quite the same things, in fact. In the first case, it is the society that teases the woman, in the second one the tormentor is her husband. That is the fate of the third class, the people who are both blessed and cursed. A woman must get married and o raise children, which goes without discussions, and everything that does not fit the settled standard is considered a shame, weirdness or an obscenity.

It has taken an entire lifetime to change at least something about the widespread opinion, but even now a woman who does not follow the established scheme is someone to point fingers at. Just imagine what I could

be in 1930ies! And God forbid a woman to get pregnant before getting married – the crowd will stone her down. “ William is careful to distinguish the underlying reasons for their behavior (101)”, Blackwell claims. It becomes clear as Tennessee depicts Stella and her attitude towards her husband and the household chores.

Stella herself is a live predicament of those women “ who have subordinated themselves to a domineering and often inferior person to attain reality and meaning through communication with another person” (102). The fate of women being lower next to the superiority of a man is what all Stanley’s idea of a woman is. This can be clearly traced as he speaks both to Blanche and to Stella:

Blanche. Keep your hands off me, Stella. What is the

matter with you? Why do you look at me with that pitying look?

Stanley (bawling): QUIET IN THERE! – We’ve got a noisy woman on the place.

The cultural problem that the reader faces here is the problem of the notorious American dream – broken, forgotten and forsaken.

Yet, with this behavior Blanche expresses a certain class-consciousness.

Equality, which is implied in the American dream, does not exist for her. She acts predominant towards the whole neighborhood that Stella and Stanley live in. (Schweke 8)

Tennessee showed the world he was living in with the utter sincerity and without any mercy neither towards the people he was displaying, nor for himself, for he was a part of that cruel world as well, he was living in that time, he was the time himself, judging these people and crying with them. They were his concern and his pain to bear.

Blanche DuBios is everything that Tennessee felt was wrong and right about the women of the 30ies. The former Southern belle as she was, used to be married to a homosexual who had committed a suicide as she found out the whole truth about his sexual orientation, she is a person for the people of the small town to feel sorry for and to tell fruitful gossip about.

However, the strength that she showed as she paid no attention to those malevolent ideas disappeared as she had to face the hard truth. It was far easier for her to lie behind the bars of her idealistic illusions than to admit that the world has some initial cruelty and misery in it. She seems a half of what it takes to be a woman, with all her spiritual strength she cannot see the truth. Does it blind her? Can she realise that a man cannot live a make-believe? I'm afraid she cannot.

The only thing she does is merely living and speculating and acting. Acting us her life, after all, and she turns her life into a performance hall for her to take the leading part in. It is hard to say if she really acts or lives artificially, but whatever she does, she does in a half. It's like a rag doll that cannot sit and stand.

Stella Kowalski is something completely different, but she is cast of the same mould. There is no other way it could have been, for they both belong to the same epoch and the same voices speak to them. Belonging to different layers of society creates an illusion of two completely different people, but like all illusions, it dissolves as you take a look at the problem from another angle.

Her younger sister, her flesh and blood, literally, is a striking contrast to the soft and artistic lady. With a background being different and a bit more prosaic, she seems to stand on her feet better than the artistic sister, but, since she has always been used to the ideas implemented to her by the society she was living in, the society of farmland and rural life, she was too hasty to marry for good.

Her husband dominating her and regarding her in the rudest way, she got desperate and segregated in her own world of chores and housekeeping. The life she was living has broken her, too, and she turned into a wreck of a person, just like her sister has.

Despite the difference in the character and the destiny, the women depicted in the play are both desperate and broken. They have left their hopes long forgotten, and their lives are doomed to be senseless and full of misery.

However, they are facing it courageously. They are trying to get hold of the situation, and this struggle destructs them step by step.

The next idea that comes in question about A Streetcar Named Desire is the long-run conflict between the Old and the New South.

What made the Old South were the agriculture and the plantations that helped the country to develop. As the Civil War ended, the South, the agriculture laid at rest and the technological progress creeping into its body, has started to become foreign to people who have known it since the day they were born.

It was a clash of cultures that made the Old South, used to be prolific and prosperous, look so miserable and poor at the beginning of the new era. Tennessee managed to show it with the best of his talent, reprinting the spirit of the dying dreams in his play. It was the conflict of the dream that had died unborn.

Promising a new, better life and a new wonderful world, the new ideas led the South to the state of poverty and misery at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is important to admit, however, that during the Great Depression times all the US were suffering on and the same problem, but the northern states managed to recover much faster, due to their technical development and that they were prepared for the new way of living much better than their southern counterparts.

In fact, the self-contained and self-sufficient South is an epitome of patriarchal society (Fang 103)

That is also the clue to the characters of the play. Blanche, a woman of a noble Southern descent, is certainly the one who is supposed to be always prosperous, she is not used to a busy lifestyle of the North and she cannot think of something that does not fit her ideas of being a lady. She is so – so unaware of what a life in the New South might mean.

Blanche shows her courage by stepping into the new environment and begins her adventures in the new world full of evils and danger. However, her ignorance of the complexity of the reality in the New South, she fails to foresee the force that shatters her dream and finally destroys her. (Yuehua 88)

This is also the conflict of perceptions that takes the lead characters of the play so far from what can be called a life. The characters of the play have absolutely different world pictures, and that complicates things in the worst way. The opposition of what Blanche expects a life to be, the ideas of Stella and her own misconceptions about living a life, and of what a real life is, stir a tragedy within the play.

The characters are doomed to make the mistakes that will ruin their lives, and they are actually aware of the fact that they are doing them, but they cannot think of another way to act, and that is where the key to all their miseries is.

The constant constraint that the play sets is due to the conflicts that arise between Blanche and Stanley. The problem is the culture clash, and thus the problem is unceasing. The quarrels between the two characters are basically

the quarrels between the two different societies, two different universes that can never meet.

Every single topic that Blanche touches upon is a subject of Stanley's mocking remarks. Starting from their short talk on the alcohol: "Blanche: No, I - rarely touch it." Stanley Kowalski: "Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often," to something more meaningful and serious. But whenever they talk, they would always get it to debates that grow into a big conflict. It is either that Blanche does not hesitates to answer Stanley when he starts grumbling about something, or the clash of their cultures, but whenever some of them starts talking, the other contradicts.

Stanley: I have a lawyer acquaintance who will study these out.

Blanche: Present them to him with a box of aspirin tablets.

Blanche's refined manners, her lady-like lifestyle and her attractiveness mixed with boldness make it unbearable for Stanley to listen to her wits without answering in turn. It is clear and obvious that the worlds that they live in cannot coexist side by side - they will explode because of their unlikeness.

Stanley. If didn't know that you was my wife's sister I'd get ideas about you!

Blanche. Such as what?

Stanley. Don't play so dumb. You know what!

Those people are getting on each other's nerves, and they cannot be accustomed to living together. That is where the conflict of the contraries clashes.

Stanley. Where are the papers?

Blanche. Papers?

Stanley. Papers! That stuff people write on.

As you read the play, you can hear something rattling. These are the dreams getting shattered, the dreams of Blanche and Stella, and of thousands of people like them, from all layers of society and of any descent. Those dreams born on the day the people were given the hope are the reminiscence of the past days of a stable and calm life, when people knew there was someone they could rely on.

With the state of affairs that came in 30ies, people no longer had a sufficient backup. Neither had Blanche, or Stella. The author plays with the names of the characters, Blanche for "white" and Stella for "star", knowing that there would be no wishing stars for them, and that the white color as the symbol for purity and dreams coming true has been soiled so bad that nothing pure has been left:

Blanche DuBois, being French by extraction, tells Mitch that her last name "means wood and Blanche means white, so the two together mean white woods". She even goes on and compares it to an orchard in the spring.

(Sontag 5)

The “ neurotic and wistful Blanche DuBois” (Kuhn 241) is broken as she can be, living desolated in the new world.

One more idea of making the incompatible things meet touches upon the relationships between the leads.

A brute that Stanley Kowalski is, he brings the dreams of Blanche down without even thinking what harm and pain that may cause her. He acts the way he is used to, the way his culture makes him to, and though with Stella it is rather easy, since she is used to his domination, it is harder with Stella. She does not want to believe him, but the stone cold facts make her subdue, and she gets broken. Stanley acts as a barbarian, crushing people’s lives and tearing their dreams apart just for his own fun and satisfaction.

Stanley has brought the harsh light of reality onto all of Blanche’s carefully crafted illusions. He realizes Mitch cannot marry Blanche now. He plans to force Blanche out of his home in a humiliating way, by degrading her. (Vaughn 81)

That is something that even he can hardly do anything about. It is in his blood. And it is the environment which he lives in that has made him act like that. He is used to give commands and orders, for women to follow:

Blanche. Poker is fascinating. Could I kibitz?

Stanley. You could not. Why don’t you women go up and sit with

Eunice?

However, the fact that it was the society that made him be what he was does not make his fault lesser. He is a beast, as far from being a human as possible, with base instincts controlling him.

Stanley: What do you think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said – “ Every Man is a King!” And I am around here, so don’t forget it! [He hurls a cup and a saucer to the floor] My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places?

As the twisted truth that he took for granted was turned into ashes, used to expressing his grief with his anger, Stanley treats the wife and her sister in the most cruel and mischievous way.

“ Garbage is being collected” and “ someone is cleaning the front of a store with a hose”, what shows the great symbolism of the play. Directly after the rape, dirt and garbage is removed. In connection to the scene before, one can come to think that this already gives a hint to Blanche’s leaving, because this also suggests the interpretation that Blanche is seen as dirt or garbage by people she lives with. (Hurst 5)

The conflict between the two, Stanley and Blanche, is literally tearing the play apart. Totally incompatible with Blanche, Stanley destroys her world deliberately, to keep safe his one.

Next to her awful husband, there is Stella Kowalski. She is devoted to her husband like a dog, literally, not because he is superior, but because it is in her nature to play the part of a slave. Her mild and kind ways are not much

of a virtue, but the result of her primitiveness and her physical passions dominating over the spiritual ones. She is a mate, not a woman in the very sense of the word. Craving for the physical relationship and indulging into the life which is deprived of any sense but is merely existence.

Stella Kowalski, in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), is superior in background and personal endowments to her mate, but she subordinates herself to his way of life because they have a satisfying sexual relationship. (Blackwell 10)

Finally, there is one more character to discuss. It is Eunice, a woman who lives next door to the family of Kowalski. This is the woman who Blanche runs for protection from Stanley to. Eunice has witnessed a lot of frightful scenes from the Kowalski family life, but she does not want to intrude, thinking it is not her business.

The very indifference and not only the unwillingness, but the impossibility of doing anything good to protect people from injustice, cruelty and violence have been depicted in this woman. In fact, the author emphasizes that there is no place for women in the New South but the place of a servant to a man.

Women are annoyance, but are needed in life to fulfill the needs of food preparation and sex. (Walker 13)

The conflict between Stanley and Blanche does not seem to end somewhere. It takes both characters to the place where their cultures clash in an everlasting conflict. In spite of the fact that people are supposed to search for

compromises, Stanley and Blanche will never reach the one, for they are way too different. With all the respect to the cultures that they represent, they will never be able to understand each other. And there is hardly anyone's fault about it.

The dreamy world of Blanche that is being broken by the rude grasp of Stanley's hands is far too fragile to stand the harsh reality. Meanwhile, Stanley will never be able to see the world the way that Blanche does – this is where his poor imagination comes to an end. The tragedy of the two worlds that will never meet is what Tennessee speaks about, and he speaks more than convincing.

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