

Drama Technique of Tennessee Williams

—*A Streetcar Named Desire*—

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Abstract

Tennessee Williams used various drama techniques in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Williams, however, had four other titles in mind when he wrote the play, and his favorite one was *The Poker Night*. *The Poker Night*, after he decided the title of the play as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, remained in the play as the title of Scene Three. In this thesis, therefore, I would like to analyze *A Streetcar Named Desire* from a viewpoint of poker game tactics and clarify the efforts and survival technique of Blanche Dubois to sustain living in New Orleans. In addition, with respect to the unique techniques used by Williams, I would like to analyze the reason why Williams was particular about *The Poker Night*.

Introduction

The life of Blanche Dubois reminds me of Mary Tyrone, one of the characters in *Long Day's Journey into Night* by O'Neill. Though they live in different places, times and circumstances, they have a similar destiny. First of all, I would like to compare Blanche's life with Mary's to clarify how Tennessee Williams used the drama techniques to express and reveal the deep psyche of Blanche.

Blanche grows up on a large farm in a southern state of America in an upper-class family. Her beloved husband's sudden death by committing suicide curtains up her tragic life. She loses her job and property and most of her family members pass away. She visits her sister, Stella, in New Orleans (her only family left). In New Orleans, Blanche starts a new life hoping she can find a man to spend the rest of her life and live as happily as ever. Stanley (Stella's husband), however, corners her at the edge of a cliff, falling down into the hell of adversities.

Blanche creates a world of illusion to escape from the harsh reality. In the play, Williams often used various drama techniques to describe her delusions. As the play progresses towards the ending scene, the frequency of the fantasy increases with intensity. The illusion is not just

about a relief from her difficulties. Williams used delusions to express Blanche's conflict within her mind. Blanche never thinks that she can overcome her problems with her fantasy world. Her efforts to survive in the real world create the illusion. It is the result of her struggle for existence. Without understanding her struggle, it is difficult for us to dig the true meaning of her last line, "Whoever you are –I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." (Williams, *Desire*, 418) This line represents the life of Blanche Dubois that reveals her solitude and sufferings.

Mary Tyrone is a character in *Long Day's Journey into Night* who makes a strong impression on the audience. This play is an autobiographical play of O'Neill that revealed a true confession of his family. As the title, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, suggests, each member of the Tyrone family reveals the hidden darkness inside his/her heart gradually as the scene approaches a night. This play, however, is not just a simple tragedy. The performance enables the audience to experience the sufferings and pain of the tragic ending, but there is something more. O'Neill and his family has a lot of troubles. At the end of the play, Mary (O'Neill's mother) drowns herself in the fantasy world of her past in relief from her family's troubles. Like Blanche she is controlled by loneliness and sufferings. Mary's second son dies and when Mary gives birth to her third son, the doctors administers morphine without consideration of the consequence in an unprofessional manner causing the drug addiction. Mary does not accept the reality of her serious condition. She drowns herself in the world of her shining past in remembrance of her happiness, forgetting her unfaithful husband and Edmund's tuberculosis.

Each of O'Neill's family members had a trouble, especially his mother, Mary. Her problem was serious. Nobody was able to comfort her. One reason is her father who died with tuberculosis. She lives in dread of losing her son with tuberculosis. Sinking herself in the past world of her glory is not just an escape from the reality. Without knowing the process of her action it is difficult for us to understand the essences her last line of the play. At the end of the play, Mary touches on the happy days during her school days. She no longer hears her family in the real world.

The confrontations and solitudes of Blanche and Mary are condensed in the world of illusions and memories. The author's genius shines in the brilliant use of drama techniques.

Blanche takes a streetcar named Desire and visits New Orleans. Her first lines in the play is "They hold me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at –Elysian Fields!" (Williams, *Desire*, 246) Professor Yasuo Kimura refers to the images of a train in his article saying that her first lines in the play represent a journey of life, the journey from life (earthly desire) to death (graveyard) and this journey is the

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natural phenomenon that all living beings pass. He refers to it as the law of the universe. He points out that “Heaven” where the dead people live shuts out Blanche. According to him, the images of “life” and “death” coexist in “heaven” and Blanche symbolizes death. The fact that a streetcar named Desire carries Blanche to the death land called “Heaven (paradise)” may reflect that a train is the symbol of “mortality.”

The common elements found in Blanche and Mary are that they both live a life of solitude, they struggle to live in pursuit of happiness and that “death” symbolizes the world of “illusions” and “memories.”

In addition to image of illusion and a train, Williams used various drama techniques in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The symbol is also presented in the title. Williams, however, had four other titles in mind when he wrote the play:

He says in *Memoirs* that the play began as *Blanche’s Chair in the Moon*, of which he had written only a single scene during the winter of 1944-5. ...Williams stopped work on the play because he “became mysteriously depressed and debilitated” while writing it (M86). ...He sent Audrey Wood a scenario on March 23, 1945, writing that he intended it for Katherine Cornell and suggesting as possible titles “The Moth,” “The Poker Night,” “The Primary Colors,” or “Blanche’s Chair in the Moon.”¹

He decided not to use *Blanche’s Chair in the Moon* immediately after but out of the other three, his favorite one was “The Poker Night.”

Then, as a final act of restoration, I settled for a while at Chapala to work on a play called “The Poker Night,” which later became “A Streetcar Named Desire.”²

The title *A Streetcar Named Desire* first appeared in a letter to Audrey Wood on January 15, 1946, but Williams favored *The Poker Night* right up until the last revisions.³

“The Poker Night,” after he decided the title of the play as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, remained in the play as the title of Scene Three. He did not use the other titles for scenes in this play. Most of the important drama techniques (music, colors, a paper lantern etc.) are condensed in the scene “The Poker Night.” The title was of special importance to Williams as evidenced by these facts.

Regarding the “poker,” Professor Kimura points out that “Poker Game” is the symbol of human destiny and the struggle to live in the world of survival of the fittest where “only the

¹ Murphy, Brenda. Tennessee *Williams and Elia Kazan: A Collaboration in the Theatre*. 1992. New York: Cambridge University Press, reprinted 1996, p.20.

² Williams, Tennessee. *The New York Times*. Drama Section, 1947.11.3.

³ Murphy, Brenda. *op. cit.*, p.20.

strongest survive,” the world where people attempt to win the competition over the weakness of the others. His point can be witnessed in the relation between Blanche and Stanley. Stanley takes advantage of her vulnerability to force her out of New Orleans and Blanche tries to counter-attack in maintaining her living. The battle between the two characters represents “the law of the jungle” and “the struggle for existence.”

Kimura further analyzes the conflict between Blanche and Stanley in the following note: Stanley questions Blanche’s past and when he hears Blanche calling him ‘animal’ and ‘ape-like,’ he decides to investigate her past (her true character). He finds out and reveals her past (her past love life with other men due to her desperate urge to escape from despair). In Scene Ten, he reads the mind of Blanche and takes an action in advance to violate her and wins the victory in the game of survival with Blanche. Scene Four is the turning point of the competition between these two characters that changes the situations of the game. Kimura categorize Stanley as the winner and Blanche as the loser. When we take the life of Blanche and the behaviors or attitudes of other characters toward Blanche in the final scene into consideration, we cannot say Stanley is the victor and Blanche is the loser.

In the letter to Audrey Wood, Williams wrote that he prepared three possible endings for the play. All the endings focus on Blanche:

One, Blanche simply leaves –with no destination.

Two, goes mad.

Three, throws herself in front of a train in the freight-yards, the roar of which has been an ominous under-tone throughout the play.⁴

These endings differ from those of the released version. Considering the processes leading to the conclusion using various techniques of expressionism, the author tried to reveal the confrontation of Blanche to the audience.

In this thesis, therefore, I would like to analyze *A Streetcar Named Desire* from a viewpoint of poker game tactics and clarify the efforts and survival technique of Blanche to sustain living in New Orleans. In addition, with respect to the unique techniques used by Williams, I would like to analyze the reason why Williams was particular about “The Poker Night.”

Chapter I: Drama Techniques in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

i . The Poker Night

In Scene Three, “The Poker Night,” the major events that change the life of Blanche take

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20.

place. First, I would like to point out what a victory is for Blanche and what is her tactics to achieve the goal. In order to realize her dream, there are a few obstacles to clear. Technically, Blanche not only has to overcome her guilty conscience against Alan but also has to get a stable life both mentally and economically. In “The Poker Night” a man called Mitch, the candidate for her future husband, appears. She is attracted by him and approaches him in an effort to get him but Stanley stands in front of her as a hard wall. Williams intelligently used his drama techniques to elaborate and illustrate the characters’ precise feelings and their intentions behind their attitudes and his plots are reflected in the use of background colors and music.

Williams used the raw colors of childhood’s spectrum for the clothes of men and the background as he has specifically instructed in the following stage direction:

There is a picture of Van Gogh’s of a billiard –parlor at night. The kitchen now suggests that sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colors of childhood’s spectrum. Over the yellow linoleum of the kitchen table hangs an electric bulb with a vivid green glass shade. The poker players –Stanley, Steve, Mitch and Pablo –wear colored shirts, solid blues, a purple, a red-and-white check, a light green, and they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colors. There are vivid slices of watermelon on the table, whiskey bottles and glasses.⁵

“A picture of Van Gogh’s of a billiard –parlor at night” is “Le Cafe de nuit” which Gogh painted in September, 1888. He said about the colors in the following letter to his younger brother that he used red and green to express human emotions. In the same letter, about the use of a bar as the main site of the play, he mentioned that he wanted a place where people get mad and even commit crimes to contrast soft rose and red to express the image of blood by using the red wine and Louis XV and Veronese style soft green as well as strong yellow-green and blue-green. About positioning of the colors on one location, he revealed his intention to express the atmosphere of pale and sulfurous crucible of hell to represent the dark power in a bar.

The letter above explicitly describes the author’s image of a cafe. The genius of Williams enabled the use of raw colors such as red, green, yellow and blue. He wrote that the poker players “are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the primary colors” in the stage direction. The room where the male characters play poker in colored shirts (solid blues, purple, red-and-white check and light green) has the image of disaster, madness and crime. These colors do not represent Blanche but she enlarges her dream in the scene “The Poker Night” and her challenge starts. “Madness” in “The Poker Night” reflects the future of Blanche,

⁵ Williams, Tennessee. *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume the first*. New York: A New Directions Book. 1971, p.286.

and at the same time it harbingers the coming “insanity” at the end of the story.

ii . The Encounter with Mitch

Blanche is attracted by Mitch who is kind and warm-hearted to Blanche. Unlike other players he is gentle and nice. They find out that they share a common past. Blanche’s husband commits suicide and Mitch’s girlfriend dies from illness. She shows her sympathy straight-forwardly to Mitch after knowing his girlfriend’s death as she knows the sorrow of losing the loved ones referring to her late husband, Alan. Her deep suffering synchronizes with Mitch’s pain of losing his girlfriend. Blanche’s heavy-hearted experience enables her to understand his feeling deep inside his psyche. She asks Mitch to put a paper lantern on a light bulb with the intent to tag him over to her side. Her behavior tests Mitch whether he stands by her to support her life or not which is her intention to get him.

When Blanche talks about her past in Laurel with Stella, she also touches on her sadness of living without the help of others. She mentions that she cannot be an indomitable woman who lives a life of solitude and also says that “When people are soft –soft people have got to shimmer and glow.” (Williams, *Desire*, 332) Moreover, she explains that for getting someone’s help she has to be noticed by attracting others. Blanche knows that she is a soft woman and worries about her future in New Orleans. She points out, “they’ve got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a –paper lantern over the light....It isn’t enough to be soft. You’ve got to be soft *and attractive*.” (Williams, *Desire*, 332). The light represents “soft people.” The paper lantern symbolizes the charm men want to have.

In short, the paper lantern reminds Blanche of the hardships of her past life such as the loss of her husband and the fall of her family. However, the act of putting the paper lantern on the naked light frees her from her sufferings of the past. She asks Mitch to take the action hiding her intention to secure the stable living in New Orleans.

In the conversation with Mitch, Blanche never tells the truth of losing her teaching job due to her drinking habit in the past. She calls her students Romeo and Juliet and continues to talk on the subject of literature to impress Mitch about her educational level. She wants Mitch to have a good impression on her. The stage and lines enable the audience to witness the plot behind her action with ease. With the background music, the author reveals her emotions to Mitch.

[...*Blanche rises and crosses leisurely to a small white radio and turns it on.*]...

[*Rumba music comes over the radio. Mitch rises at the table.*]

STANLEY: Who turned that on in there?

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BLANCHE: I did. Do you mind?

STANLEY: Turn it off!...

STEVE: Sounds like Xavier Cugat!

[*Stanley jumps up and, crossing to the radio, turns it off. He stops short at the sight of Blanche in the chair. She returns his look without flinching. Then he sits again at the poker table.*]...

[*Mitch rises as Stanley returns to his seat.*]⁶

Music from the radio is probably “Miami Beach Rumba” by Xavier Cugat orchestra. In 1946 (the year before the publication of *A Streetcar Named Desire*), the rumba composed by Irving Fields was one of the big-hit popular music by Xavier Cugat orchestra. The lyrics of the song describe Miami. Blanche mentions that she ran into Mr. Shep Huntleigh in Miami and that he was her boyfriend. She continues, “I took the trip as an investment, thinking I’d meet someone with a million dollars.” (Williams, *Desire*, 316) Her appeal and expectations to rely for her future on him and that she wants him to help her life is quite evident. From the facts she mentioned it is quite apparent that in Miami Blanche once lived a life with hope under the protection of the others. When Mitch hears the rumba, he immediately stands up and approaches Blanche. This means that she has succeeded in seducing Mitch with her charm and with rumba music. Rumba represents her feelings to Mitch, her desperate urge to get him as her boyfriend to support her life. The stage effect clearly reveals her intention and plot behind her attitude in an easy-to-understand manner. The audience is able to understand the main character’s ambition and technique of winning. Waltz, as well as rumba, is used to express her feelings to Mitch as follows:

[*She turns the knobs on the radio and it begins to play “Wien, Wien nur du allein.” Blanche waltzes to the music with romantic gestures. Mitch is delighted and moves in awkward imitation like a dancing bear.*

[*Stanley stalks fiercely through the portieres into the bedroom. He crosses to the small white radio and snatches it off the table. With a shouted oath, he tosses the instrument out the window.*]⁷

The theme of “Wien, Wien nur du allein” is love for a hometown. Through this song she thinks of her hometown and a life at Belle Reve as she dances with Mitch.

In both songs Blanche recollects her love life of the past and she charms Mitch with the music which is her technique to magnetize this man, her plot to achieve her victory with her experienced skill. When waltz from the radio ends, Stanley is raged at Blanche’s behavior and his anger is directed to the radio as he throws it out of the window and breaks it. His hostile attitude against

⁶ *Ibid*, p.294.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.302.

Blanche opens the fire of confrontation between them.

iii. Desire of Stanley and Stella

In “The Poker Night,” Stanley and Stella’s sexual desire are represented by the music. Stanley’s violence to Stella after his aggression against Blanche forces Stella to escape from him. In this scene, Stella is hurt but her attitude suddenly changes as she hears him calling her name. She eventually forgives him, which signifies that they are controlled by their sexual urge and this is their way of making love.

STANLEY [*with heaven-splitting violence*]: STELL·LAHHHHH!

[*The low-tone clarinet moans. The door upstairs opens again. Stella slips down the rickety stairs in her robe....They stare at each other. Then they come together with low, animal moans....He snatches the screen door open and lifts her off her feet and bears her into the dark flat....*

[*The music fades away....*]⁸

Their desire is expressed with the dissonant brass, low-tone clarinet and “blue piano.” The music begins with the appearance of Stanley and Stella. The music is effectively used to reveal their surging emotions. Their feelings are aroused with the increase of the volume of music. With the disappearance of these two characters, the music fades out. Williams often used this technique of using music after “The Poker Night” scene. In Scene Four, for example, the music represents Stanley’s control over Stella in the sense that she is emotionally ruled by her husband. The use of audio sound impacts the audience to know the mind of the characters.

STANLEY: Hey! Hey, Stella!

STELLA [*who has listened gravely to Blanche*]: Stanley!

BLANCHE: Stella, I—

[*But Stella has gone to the front door. Stanley enters casually with his packages.*]

STANLEY: Hiyuh, Stella. Blanche back?

STELLA: Yes, she’s back.

STANLEY: Hiyuh, Blanche. [*He grins at her.*]...

[*Stella has embraced him with both arms, fiercely, and full in the view of Blanche. He laughs and clasps her head to him. Over her head he grins through the curtains at Blanche.*

[*As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the “blue piano” and trumpet and drums is heard.*]⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.307.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.324.

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In “The Poker Night,” Stella is the target of Stanley’s violence and runs to Blanche to seek help but eventually when she hears Stanley, she rushes out of the room without listening to Blanche’s advice. In Scene Four, as well as “The Poker Night,” Blanche advises Stella to live separately from Stanley but she ignores her sister and returns to him when he comes home. In both scenes, Williams used “blue piano.” Stella in fact escapes from Laurel and she finally finds her place and starts her new life with Stanley and the people in New Orleans.

In the 1940s, jazz music called “bebop” was popular. Bebop artists played the music using the brass such as a trumpet and a saxhorn. Some of the artists called “piano trio” mainly used piano, bass guitar and trumpet. Williams used these sounds. He wrote the play while listening to the jazz, the sounds of brass, drum and piano.

As evident in the above, major drama techniques are condensed in the scene, “The Poker Night.”

Chapter II: Plot of Blanche

i . Tactics against Stella

In the introduction, I have pointed out on the relationship between “death” and “train” which can be evidenced in Scene One. In the first lines of Blanche: “[*with faintly hysterical humor*] They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at –Elysian Fields!” (Williams, *Desire*, 246), the audience recognizes that she doesn’t think New Orleans is an “Elysian Fields” and she mentions on the L&N tracks: “Out there I suppose is the ghoulish-woodland of Weir!” (Williams, *Desire*, 252) There are words associated with the image of “death” such as “ghoul” and “haunted woodland.” “Death” is also represented in her soliloquy at the end of the conversation with Stella.

[...*The music of the “blue piano” grows louder....*]...

BLANCHE: I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard!...You didn’t dream, but I saw! *Saw! Saw!* And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I let the place go! ...Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep!...Stella. Belle Reve was his headquarters! ...That was all, Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school. Yes, accuse me! Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! *I let the place go? Where were you!* In bed with your –Polack!¹⁰

Blanche tells Stella that she suffered the pain of “death” in Laurel and nothing eased her sorrow. She hopes to overcome the fear of death in New Orleans, however, as the matter of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.261.

consequence, the new land of hope happens to be “the ghoulish-woodland of weir” where the shadows of death wait, implying she has visited the land of cadaver where she smells the walking of death towards her. Her soliloquy maybe the clue to the third ending? “throws herself in front of a train in the freight-yards.” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20)

Blanche, then, blames her sister that a part of the reason why she had to visit New Orleans is because Stella did not help her when she was in deep despair about the death of their family. To this, Stella does not have any words and cries. Blanche’s tactic succeeds to secure a living in New Orleans.

The “blue piano” in stage direction is not about “desire” like Scene Three. In “The Poker Night” this music was used to express “desire” of Stanley and Stella. In Scene One “blue piano,” however, has difficult meanings from that of “The Poker Night.” Elia Kazan analyzes the symbolism of “blue piano” in the following passage:

Why does the ‘blues’ music fit the play? The Blues is an expression of the loneliness and rejection, the exclusion and isolation of the Negro and their (opposite) longing for love and connection. Blanche too is ‘looking for a home,’ abandoned, friendless. ‘I don’t know where I’m going, but I’m going.’ Thus the Blue Piano catches the soul of Blanche, the miserable unusual human side of the girl which is beneath her frenetic duplicity, her trickery, lies, etc. It tells, it emotionally reminds you what all the fireworks are caused by.¹¹

The volume of “blue piano” increases just before Blanche talks about her loneliness and the death of her family in Laurel. The use of crescendo represents not only the desire of Stanley and Stella but the solitude of Blanche.

In “The Poker Night,” Blanche is shocked by Stanley and Stella’s hedonistic way of living. In her effort to change her sister’s life style, back to that of Belle Reve, Blanche reveals her real intentions taking the dangerous risk. Her challenge to take back Stella from Stanley starts. First, Blanche tries to persuade Stella that her way of life is absurd and of vulgar taste. She preaches Stella, intelligently, leading her to remember the life of Belle Reve gradually, implying the break up with Stanley. The interesting point here is Blanche’s unswerving determination and power to open her new life without delving into a life controlled by earthly desires.

BLANCHE: Pull yourself together and face the facts....

BLANCHE: What you are talking about is brutal desire –just –desire! –the name of that rattle-trap streetcar that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another...

STELLA: Haven’t you ever ridden on that streetcar?

¹¹ Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. 浅田寛厚 編. 東京: 金星堂, 1979, p.140.

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BLANCHE: It brought me here. —Where I'm not wanted and where I'm ashamed to be...

BLANCHE: He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! ...Yes, something —ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in —anthropological studies! ...*Don't —don't hang back with the brutes!*¹²

From these lines, the audiences are aware of the conflict deep inside Blanche that she tries to refuse her sexual urge, evoked by the hedonistic life of “desire” of her sister and Stanley in New Orleans, while preaching to Stella. Her resistance is triggered by the “defense mechanism” (Freud, A) and an expression of “self—actualization” (Maslow, A. H.).

Since Blanche has experienced and is very well aware of the fear of “desire,” Stanley appeared to her to be the “survivor of the Stone Age” (Williams, *Desire*, 323) who will ruin her sister's life into the misery.

In the lines mentioned above, she reveals her hatred towards the streetcar named “Desire.” To Blanche, “Elysian Fields” where the streetcar brought her is not a paradise. New Orleans is the city of earthly desires, opposite and a completely different world from what Blanche hopes to live. She persuades Stella to live a decent life apart from “desire” which implies the separation from Stanley as she determines to win her inner conflict with her sexual urges and earthly desires.

Stella seems to agree with Blanche but Stanley becomes the wall of obstacle. After listening to Blanche's preaches, he calls Stella out loud intentionally. Stella leaves Blanche immediately she hears the voice of Stanley.

Stella's attitudes are best explained by “the need to belong” theory (to New Orleans) by Leary and Baumeister. Her behavior shocks Blanche but Stella is accustomed to the situation and it is a very natural reaction for her sister. At the end of the scene, Stanley smiles deliberately at Blanche with the background music of “blue piano,” “trumpet” and “drums” are played slowly. “Blue piano” symbolizes desire of Stanley and Stella. The manly power of Stanley showing his dominance over her sister defeats Blanche and her plot fails.

ii . **Tactics against Mitch**

After failing in getting Stella back, Blanche's first challenge to date with Mitch begins, knowing that Stanley has started to dig out her life in Laurel. The final goal is, of course, to get married to Mitch and secure a peaceful and stable living in New Orleans. In Scene Six Blanche aims to attract his attention and win his heart. Her final goal is to get married and secure her

¹² Williams, Tennessee. *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, Volume the first*. New York: A New Directions Book. 1971, p.323.

stable and peaceful life in New Orleans. In order to achieve her goal, she first attempts to get him at her side and use the man as a final card to win the game with Stanley. With Mitch on her hand, her advantage over Stanley is evident.

Her efforts in getting her future husband begins first by trying to get the information from Mitch, how much he knows about her past in Laurel because she is skeptical of whether Stanley already knows her past life or not, which may become the main obstacle to her future marriage. In order to secure her position over Stanley, she wants Mitch to think that Stanley's slanderous information about her past deeds is a misleading rumor fabricated by her bother-in-law resulting from his envy towards Blanche in case Stanley is successful in his investigation and has shared the information with Mitch. Her desperate efforts from the fear that her sister's husband may ruin her new life in the city of Elysian Fields forced her to acquire the information she needs. She wants to win the trust from her future lover and avoid any oppositional information against her. The leak by Stanley may be the major hindrance to achieving her goal. She approaches Mitch and successfully leads the conversation to make him talk on the topic of marriage.

Blanche is anxious and eager but clever enough to maintain her patience and hides her intent. She controls the conversation and tries to lead the dialogue maintaining her tone and attitude in an ordinary manner. She successfully changes the topic to Alan's death with her intent to win the sympathy from Mitch in order to win his attraction. In "The Poker Night," she finds out the death of Mitch's girlfriend due to an illness. In Scene Six she also discovers that he worries about his mother's health how long she can live. Without knowing her intent, Mitch sympathizes with her and succeeds in getting his trust. As she and her future husband share the solitude and sorrow, she achieves her goal of getting him on her side.

BLANCHE: He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery –love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me...[*Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.*]

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later –a shot! [*The polka stops abruptly.*]

[*Blanche rises stiffly. Then, the polka resumes in a major key.*]...

It was because –on the dance floor –unable to stop myself –I'd suddenly said – "I saw! I know! You disgust me..." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this –kitchen –candle...[*The polka music increases. Mitch stands beside her.*]

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MITCH [*drawing her slowly into his arms*]: You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be —you and me, Blanche? [...*The Polka tune fades out...*]¹³

In her lines when she reveals her past experience which represents the self-disclosure of her love life, polka music is played in her heart reflecting her complex feelings towards Alan. The music reverberates in her mind in remembrance of her affection at the same time as her guilty conscience to Alan. Her love towards her late husband revives during the playing of polka at the same time as she is gripped by panic, seized with pain and agony. In her consciousness, the confrontation of opposing emotions of love and guilt, happiness and sadness squeezing her heart corners her to the edge of a cliff looking down into the hell. She delves herself into the world of her illusional sufferings but the light of hope shines in the darkness of her negativity. The existence of Mitch, however, torches her freezing world of loneliness and empty life with warmth and hope. In other words, polka is the music that represents her emotional transition, describing the changes in Blanche's life of alienation to the life of love. As the music fades out, the light of hope intensifies in her heart with compassion and warmth. The effective use of music reveals the changes of the character's feelings in a precise and detailed manner. The stage effects enable the audience to witness and experience how Blanche evolves from her sufferings and finds the hope. The music functions as a vehicle to transport the emotions to the audience who synchronizes with the main character.

In the following conversation, Blanche behavior to the “train” reflects the negative attitude towards the carrier:

BLANCHE: ...How will you get home?

MITCH: I'll walk over to Bourbon and catch an awl-car.

BLANCHE [*laughing grimly*]: Is that streetcar named Desire still grinding along the tracks at this hour?¹⁴

In the same scene, a train appears again in the middle of Blanche's soliloquy about death of her late husband.

[*A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She claps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking.*]

Afterward we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.354.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.340.

[*Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.*]¹⁵

In the play, the sound of a locomotive is used frequently and effectively in the same way as the music of polka which is played in her remembrance of Alan's death. The author maintains to symbolize death with a streetcar. In these lines of the heroin as well as the sounds and the train suicide committed by Blanche in her mind, all represent death and it is the third ending planned by Williams: "throws herself in front of a train in the freight-yards." (Murphy, *Williams*, 20)

The tactics against Mitch comes to an end in Scene Nine. Blanche who drinks to forget the past waits for Mitch. She was desperate to run away from her misery of the past and alcohol has been the only means to Lethean oblivion, the anodyne to assuage her pain and sufferings. Only hope left for her is Mitch. At the beginning of the stage direction, Williams had specified the music of polka to be heard in the mind of Blanche. The author used the technique intelligently with the use of action and lines on the stage to express the heroin's inner mind. The tune in her heart which represents her escape from the harsh reality of her past adversities is played as the background at the same time "*she seems to whisper the words of the song.*" (Williams, *Desire*, 379) Before this scene, she is not able to stand the sound. In other words, in the earlier scenes, she cannot stand the music and tries to avoid polka, however, in Scene Nine, where she is cornered to the edge of her life, the extreme situation she cannot bear, she seems to whisper the song.

Polka stops at the arrival of Mitch, which is the light of hope, a signal beam that rainbows her darkness and clear the cloud of the past misery. To Blanche, Mitch is a man that opens the dawn of her new life. The adverse shadow of the past remembrance, however, darkens her heart and drowns Blanche into the world of her illusion. The music is the trigger that opens the past. The time with Mitch is the only moment she returns to a reality. A playback of the music pulls her back in the world of illusion. She travels between the world of reality and illusion. The music is used to express the difference between these two realms, a hope of happiness (present or real world) and a painful life of sufferings (past or a world of illusion). When polka is played in her consciousness, the past memory is played in her mind.

BLANCHE: Something's the matter tonight, but never mind. I won't cross-examine the witness. I'll just—
[*She touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again.*] —pretend I don't notice anything different about you! That —music again...

MITCH: What music?

BLANCHE: The "Varsouviana"! The polka tune they were playing when Allan— Wait!

[*A distant revolver shot is heard. Blanche seems relieved.*]

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.354.

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There now, the shot! It always stops after that.

[*The polka music dies out again.*]

Yes, now it's stopped.¹⁶

She never tells the secret of polka music in her mind to any other characters. The virtual world of her illusion is locked up in a chamber of the unbearable truth she encountered in the past. In other words, with polka the last love memory with her husband revives but her guilty conscience also emerges with sorrow and self-destructive accusation. She cannot or does not want to touch on the music and tries to avoid the topic in her conversation. She confronts with the playing of music and the sound of a single shot that took her husband's life in her hidden memory deep inside her mind, covered by beautiful images of the past fantasy. While accepting her agony, she tries to kill the past and maintains herself or pretends to be a sincere and pure, educated lady, she calmly approaches Mitch, which is the reason why she is called a "grotesque beauty" (her grotesque beauty is also described in Scene Eleven). The ugly truth under the illusion of the past beauty suggests her madness deep inside her heart. The conflicts inside her tear her apart. Its consequence is quite evident. Her lies and vanity corners Blanche towards the end of the play. Mitch, after all, decides to test Blanche, wanting to hear the words of truth from her and take action against the heroin. He wants to eradicate the rumors by Stanley. He tears the paper lantern off the light bulb in order to see how she reacts and know the truth of Stella's sister. In the scene, "The Poker Night," Blanche asks Mitch to put the lantern over the light bulb with her intent to magnet him on her side. She succeeds in winning his heart as he puts on the paper cover. Tearing the lantern off in Scene Nine, however, signifies that he completely deserts her. This suggests that she has lost the strongest card she had. She emphasizes by the following lines:

BLANCHE: I don't want realism. I want magic! [*Mitch laughs*] Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people.

I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what *ought* to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it! —*Don't turn the light on!*¹⁷

The story she tells Mitch, as the lyrics of the song "Paper Moon" in Scene Seven suggests, is not the truth but her hopes. She tries to avoid a naked bulb because the light activates the past memory of her adverse life of pain in Laurel. "What *ought* to be truth" (Williams, *Desire*, 385) means that she fulfills the empty space brought by death of Alan and tries to detach from her earthly desires by marrying Mitch to lead a youthful, beautiful life but the reality is full of the obstacles to her success —such as Stanley who tries to interrupt her from achieving the goal —and

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.381.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.385.

the fact is that she is no longer young and cannot maintain her living in New Orleans without Mitch. She is very well aware of the severe situation she is in and this is the truth of her current position. Consequently, she endeavors to win the heart of Mitch and Stella to overcome these obstacles (which is the function of “defense mechanism” by Freud. A), however, she fails on achieving her dream. When all her efforts end in vain, the castle of her dream is destroyed from the foundation leading to her breakdown. The only way left for her in order to survive is to “escape” (by Freud. A) into the world of her illusion. Her “escape” is reflected in the following lines, “I don’t want realism. I want magic!” (Williams, *Desire*, 385) In other words, “escape” is the method of defense used by Blanche Dubois. Professor Muto points out that the eradication of her past life of misery and adversities and the urge to live a happy life is the manifestation of “repression” triggered by her “defense mechanism.”

Mitch’s disappointment against Blanche blinds him and he cannot see the truth in her or understand her agony she suffered in her past life of misery. Her attitudes just frustrate Mitch. He thinks she is just trying to look young by avoiding the light and despises her lies and vanity. When she understands that the odds are against her, she is determined to tell the truth about her life in Laurel.

During the soliloquy in the following scene where Blanche reveals her past, Williams used three types of music to express her regrets, sadness, sufferings and solitude.

[A Vendor comes around the corner. She is a blind Mexican woman in a dark shawl, carrying bunches of those gaudy tin flowers that lower-class Mexican display at funerals and other festive occasions. She is calling barely audibly. Her figure is only faintly visible outside the building.]

MEXICAN WOMAN: Flores. Flores. Flores para los muertos. Flores. Flores....

BLANCHE [*frightened*]: No, no! Not now! Not now!...

[The polka tune fades in.]...

MEXICAN WOMAN: Flores.

BLANCHE: Death –I used to sit here and she used to sit over there and death was as close as you are....We didn’t dare even admit we had ever heard of it!

MEXICAN WOMAN: Flores para los muertos, flores –flores...¹⁸

At the beginning of this scene, the audience hears the voice of a blind Mexican woman carrying bunches of the gaudy tin flowers that lower Mexican display at funerals and other festive occasions and the music of polka is played. The color of her dark shawl symbolizes despair and anxiety. It is also associated with darkness, fear, dismay, and loneliness. The melody of polka and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.378.

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the voice of the blind Mexican woman reflect a fear in Blanche, a fear for “death.” While she discloses the painful memory of the death of her families, the voice of the Mexican woman repeatedly echoes on the stage effectively. The remembrance of the deceased flashes in her mind and the shock of losing the loved ones returns as a misery and despair. The sound of polka reminds her of the death of her late husband, all of these recollections bring her into the world of her illusion. The combination of polka music and the lady’s voice make the audience aware that a fear of death forces Blanche to dive into the world of illusion and drown herself.

Mitch abuses Blanche knowing her past which drops her into the incessant solitude world of darkness.

BLANCHE: The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder!...

[The Mexican woman turns slowly and drifts back off with her soft mournful cries. Blanche goes to the dresser and leans forward on it. After a moment, Mitch rises and follows her purposefully. The polka music fades away....]

MITCH: I don’t think I want to marry you any more....

MITCH *[dropping his hands from her waist]*: You’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother....*[With a startled gasp, Mitch turns and goes out the outer door, clatters awkwardly down the steps and around the corner of the building. Blanche staggers back from the window and falls to her knees. The distant piano is slow and blue.]*¹⁹

In the stage direction, Williams had given a specific instruction: “*The distant piano is slow and blue.*” (Williams, *Desire*, 390) The music and the voice gradually fade out. Blanche’s plot and tactics against Mitch end up in a failure. The loss of Mitch meant losing the means of living in New Orleans. The sound of a piano represents solitude of losing Mitch, the same as the “blue piano” in Scene One.

Blanche’s line, “The opposite is desire.” (Williams, *Desire*, 389), represents her past life of having affairs with numerous men to ease her pain of losing the loved ones and her guilty conscience against Alan. Her behavior is driven by her fear. It was an essential to satisfy her thirst and fulfill her empty space. The satisfaction of her “sexual urge” was required to defend or protect her from the breakdown. She had lost not only her love but also a love support or emotional backup as she was embraced with the love of a husband. Her “need of love” intensified as her thirst gets stronger. To her it was a required action to survive. She needed love. Unfortunately, she was not able to completely satisfy her thirst as no true love was found in Laurel. No one was able to fulfill her emptiness and comfort her solitude and eradicate her

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.389.

anxiety. Her journey in pursuit of true love began. Yet, in New Orleans, her pride and tactics ironically ends up against her because she makes the same mistake as she did in Laurel.

Mitch calls Blanche “not clean enough” and tells her straight-forwardly that he has no intention of getting married to her. In addition, he, intentionally, reveals his brutality that the motifs of his action is based on his earthly desires similar to that of Stanley and corners Blanche to the edge detonating the madness inside the main character.

In Scene Six, the music of polka pinpoints to the death of Alan and Blanche’s guilty conscience. However, in Scene Nine, Williams used the same melody in combination with the voice of Mexican woman to represent death of Blanche’s husband and her family as well as her fear against losing the loved ones. At the end of the scene, a piano is played to reveal her loneliness. With these three sounds, the author hints to the audiences at the ending breakdown of the main character, Blanche Dubois.

iii. Tactics against Stanley

Stanley is a realistic, stereotyped manly man who acts as “a king” of the house. He is the only character who tries to prevent Blanche from achieving her goal. He is the major obstacle to Blanche’s new life in New Orleans. Her attempts and tactics fail because of his destructive character. He is disgusted with her self-centered behavior. He is the greatest enemy of Blanche. He takes away Mitch who is the final card Blanche needs to win the victory from her as he reveals her intention behind her attitudes. His victory is to maintain his position as “a king” to keep his kingdom. The triumph over Blanche signifies the destruction of her illusion.

Stanley’s “Realism” is depicted in the Scene Two where Stanley and Stella quarrels while Blanche takes a bath. When he hears about Blanche losing the property of Belle Reve, he recognizes Blanche as an enemy threatening his life and decides to reveal her past in an intention to unfold her plot. At the mentioning of the topic of a property, he does not lose the chance to attack her. He instantly talks eloquently on “the Napoleonic code” and coerces Stella using his power as “a king” and reveals his distrust on Blanche.

In Scene Two, Blanche does not meet with Mitch, yet. She intends to manage the living by herself in the real world whereas Stanley corners her excessively. Blanche, however, succeeds in her tactics against Mitch during the date in Scene Six. Her feat is quite evident and her final goal seems to be near. The songs in Scenes Two and Seven represents her emotional transition before/after the date with him. In both scenes, the realism of Stanley and romanticism of Blanche are contrasted using the expressionism technique with various stage effects as in the following

lines:

STELLA: Stan, we've —lost Belle Reve!...

STANLEY: How?

STELLA [*vaguely*]: Oh, it had to be —sacrificed or something....

BLANCHE [*singing in the bathroom*]: “From the land of the sky blue water,
They brought a captive maid!”...

STANLEY: Yeah. I get the idea. Now let's skip back a little to where you said the country place was disposed of....

STELLA: It's best not to talk much about it until she's calmed down.

STANLEY: So that's the deal, huh? Sister Blanche cannot be annoyed with business details right now!²⁰

The song sung by Blanche is effectively and intelligently used in the scene during the time when the dialogue between Stanley and Blanche ceases to contrast Stanley who is eager to find out the reason of losing Belle Reve and Blanche who enjoys the singing in remembrance of her past prosperity. Stanley's obsessed commitment in investigating her past and her ignorance are distinctive and suggestive.

The song in Scene Two explains that Blanche has left Laurel where she experienced the death of her families but now she is “a captive maid” in New Orleans. The author used the song to describe the past of Blanche as well as the present situation without any action. In other words, the lyrics of the song reveals her sorrow and her empty heart, her solitude in an opera technique. It is the monologue that sings the opera of her life.

In Scene Seven, Blanche uses the tactics against Mitch where she sings a song of happiness as she enjoys the delightful dialogue with Mitch, talking about the marriage. On the other hand, Stanley and Stella are secretly talking about her past. Her lies are revealed by Stanley and exposed under the sun.

[*Blanche is singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley's speech*]....

BLANCHE [*singing blithely*]: “Say, it's only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea —But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!”...

STANLEY:... In fact I am willing to bet you that she never had no idea of returning to Laurel!... They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended —and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy — she'd gotten mixed up with!

BLANCHE: “It's a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be —”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.270.

[*In the bathroom the water goes on loud; little breathless cries and peals of laughter are heard as if a child were frolicking in the tub.*]²¹

According to the stage direction, her song “is used contrapuntally with Stanley’s speech” (Williams, *Desire*, 359) and the more delightful and cheerful she becomes, the more secrets are disclosed and the gravity of the unfolded lies becomes powerful. The use of music arouses the feelings of audience and enables them to realize her stratagem becomes worse.

Both in Scene Two and Seven, Blanche sings the song that unveils her inner feelings in the bathroom while the hidden talks progresses between Stanley and Stella. The author used the same method repeatedly to effectively show the audience the emotional changes of the main character in between the dialogues of her sister and her husband on the harsh reality of Blanche. The contrast between the temporary happiness Blanche appreciates and the progression of the plot by Stanley who whispers the unrevealed secrets of her sister to Stella impacts the audience effectively with the use of music. These effects leave a strong impact of what is going inside Blanche’s consciousness and audience is also aware of the changing situation of Blanche. The positively or the bright side of Blanche and the negativity for the dark reality of her past life unfolded by her sister’s husband represents the changes in the psychology of Blanche. The audience notices the difference between the enjoyment and seriousness through the switching of the setting in one scene. Interestingly, as the play progresses, Blanche’s psychological transition becomes more evident and her past is unveiled until she is naked.

In Scene Eight, Blanche, Stanley and Stella appear on the stage where jazz and polka are played alternately during their conversation. With the effects of music, audience is readily made aware of the superiority. In this scene, when Blanche starts to talk, the blue piano played from Scene Seven stops. At this point, Blanche is dominating the conversation and the jazz that represents the power of Stanley ceases. However, when his anger exceeds his tolerance, Stanley explodes and takes action against the attitude of Blanche and Stella. He counter attacks the opponents. When his dominant position as a king is being threatened and he uses his power of violence, he breaks the radio in “The Poker Night.” In the following scene, when his position becomes predominant after the enforcement of his power, the jazz is played at the background once again. Stanley attempts to corner Blanche but she stands up to talk back using her talent of speech. The piano, then, stops.

STANLEY: Goddamn, it’s hot in here with the steam from the bathroom.

BLANCHE: I’ve said I was sorry three times. [*The piano fades out.*] I take hot baths for my nerves.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.359.

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Hydrotherapy, they call it. You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of course you don't know what anxiety feels like!²²

Before this scene, their positions are balanced but the incidence that changes the situation occurs. Stanley gives Blanche the ticket to go back to Laurel. The shocking event offsets the insanity in Blanche's psyche.

STANLEY: Ticket! Back to Laurel! On the Greyhound! Tuesday!

[The Varsouviana music steals in softly and continues playing. Stella rises abruptly and turns her back. Blanches tries to smile. Then she tries to laugh. Then she gives both up and springs from the table and runs into the next room.]

Well!²³

According to the first edition of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, after the lines above the Varsouviana is played loudly and rapidly. Even Stella who understands the character of Blanche is helpless. She has abandoned the life in Belle Reve and has chosen to live in New Orleans as living with Stanley has been more valuable to Stella. Stanley's way of living based on "desire" has influenced her and she too has agreed. In Blanche's mind the music of polka is played louder and louder and with the ticket to Laurel, her desire to escape intensifies as her loneliness is aroused. There is nowhere in the world of reality for her to go. To go back to Laurel meant a life of distress and despair, the confrontation with "death" and "loneliness." There is no future for her and the only place for her to escape is the world of illusion created in her mind, the world that comforts her and heals her excruciating pain and sorry.

In Scene Ten, the tactical war between Blanche and Stanley comes to an end. Losing Mitch and the ticket to Laurel forced by Stanley meant the absolute defeat of Blanche which has taken all of her hopes in the real world. Her tactics and plots no longer are useful. According to the begging of the stage direction in Scene Ten, illusion of Blanche is represented with her dresses, behaviors and speeches. Williams expressed her sufferings using these stage effects to create the vivid image of her inner mind.

As the drinking and packing went on, a mood of hysterical exhilaration came into her and she has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels.

Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers....

²² *Ibid.*, p.374.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.376.

*[Stanley appears around the corner of the building. He still has on the vivid green silk bowling shirt. As he rounds the corner the honky-tonk music is heard. It continues softly throughout the scene.]*²⁴

The color of her dress is “white” the same as that of Scene One. The color represents “purity” and “refreshing.” In Scene One, her white dress symbolizes her elegance but in Scene Ten the dress as well as her accessories emphasizes the inner world of her illusion. Her out-of-place garments in both scenes do not match with the atmosphere of New Orleans. “The vivid green silk bowling shirt” emphasizes the rude, barbaric and violent character of Stanley in the same way as “The Poker Night” and “the honky-tonk music” represents his lust and arrogant attitude. In other words, Stanley’s personality is opposite to Blanche’s fantasy (the telegram from Mr. Shep Huntleigh and a visit from Mitch). Her tactics to win the victory (such as perfume, dresses, the light bulb with a paper lantern, etc.) are all rejected by Stanley who corners Blanche. In Scene Nine she starts to lose her self-esteem.

Blanche and her fantasies are all denied by Stanley. His superiority over the heroin as well as the increasing intensity of his emotions and desire is expressed using various methods.

[Lurid reflections appear on the walls around Blanche. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form. She catches her breath, crosses to the phone and jiggles the hook. Stanley goes into the bathroom and closes the door.]...[She sets the phone down and crosses warily into the kitchen. The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle....

*[Blanche presses her knuckles to her lips and returns slowly to the phone. She speaks in a hoarse whisper.]...[The bathroom door is thrown open and Stanley comes out in the brilliant silk pyjamas. He grins at her as he knots the tasseled sash about his waist. She gasps and backs away from the phone. He stares at her for a count of ten. Then a clicking becomes audible from the telephone, steady and rasping.]...[He crosses to it deliberately and sets it back on the hook.]*²⁵

The stage direction above emphasizes the “desire” in Stanley and loneliness in Blanche. Emphasis on these opposites is further created by the contrast of these two characters such as the inhumane screaming of the animal-like voice, “menacing” shadow and “lurid” reflections on the wall represents Blanche’s fear against Stanley’s dominant power and arrogance, his lust for power. He is a dreadful nightmare to her. Her trepidation is described in her telegram. The audience hears the hang-up sound from the phone, sees Stanley put the phone on the hook and recognizes that Blanche has nowhere to escape. She is now at the dead end. He drops her into the black hole of despair where nobody waits. She is in a complete darkness alone.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.391.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.398.

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[The barely audible “blue piano” begins to drum up louder. The sound of it turns into the roar of an approaching locomotive. Blanche crouches, pressing her fists to her ears until it has gone by.]...

[The “blue piano” goes softly. She turns confusedly and makes a faint gesture. The inhuman jungle voices rise up. He takes a step toward her, biting his tongue which protrudes between his lips.]...

STANLEY: Oh! So you want some roughhouse! All right, let’s have some roughhouse!

[He springs toward her, overturning the table. She cries out and strikes at him with the bottle top but he catches her wrist.]

Tiger –tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We’ve had this date with each other from the beginning!

[She moans. The bottle-top falls. She sinks to her knees: He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly.]²⁶

Williams’s drama technique of using the music is impressive and fascinating. The technique and skill of the drama genius synchronize the character and audience. The same or similar emotional feelings of the actors and actresses are experienced by the audience. In this scene, the “blue piano,” “the roar of an approaching locomotive,” “inhuman voices like cries in a jungle,” and “the hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces,” all of these sounds are the representations of the characters inner mind. The audio effects together with the action describe their emotional transitions. The music of a piano and the Four Deuces express Stanley’s lust for his dominance and power and loneliness of Blanche at the same time. On the other hand, the shifting of the music from that of the blue piano to the roaring sound of a locomotive illustrates the image of “death,” signifying that Blanche is walking towards death. Her lonesome circumstance is now shadowed by the darkness of death. The combination of these four sounds realistically expresses her terror against Stanley’s dreadful lust for dominance. The audio effects panic the audience. The implication of the scene is quite evident and descriptive. The whole scene points to the complete defeat of the main character. In other words, Blanche has lost the living means to survive in New Orleans. She has lost the war against Stanley in both tactics and plots. Her failure meant the losing of all hopes she expected. With sounds and music, the audience recognizes the defeat of the heroin.

Stanley mentions in the following lines to Blanche: “We’ve had this date with each other from the beginning!” (Williams, *Desire*, 402), implying that there is nothing Blanche can do to change her situation, to forfeit the battle and back off to where she came from. She takes his words as “repetition compulsion.” The term is defined as a psychological phenomenon in which a person repeats a traumatic event or its circumstances over and over again. In Freudian viewpoint, it is

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.400.

“the desire to return to an earlier state of things.” The main cause of the problem resides in the personal relationships during the early stages of his/her life. According to Freud, a person instinctively attempts to analyze the origins of the issues. A person who is enslaved by repetition compulsion tends to seek a happy result; nevertheless, he/she repeats a painful event as before unconsciously because his current situation differs from the past experience of conflict, frustration, and guilty conscience to the problem encountered. To analyze the play from Freudian viewpoint, I have picked up Scene Ten. In the scene, the event happened in Laurel is repeated once again in New Orleans. A question arises at this point. As there are various suggestive messages that hints at the emergence of sexual urges of Blanche towards Stanley. In other words, Blanche may have wished to have sexual affairs with Stanley. Her attitudes and behaviors may have shown her inner instinct as a consequence of defeat. However, from the circumstances, it is not possible or difficult to think Blanche willingly approaches him. It is Stanley who has forced “desire” by showing his absolute power with his violence and manly approach. In other words, she is compelled to act based on her sexual urge or physical desires. Her behavior is completely the opposite from that of Laurel. From these evidences, the concept of repetition compulsion was used in designing the character of Blanche which can be observed from the lines of Stanley through this does not imply that she simply and willingly tried to acquire Stanley to satisfy her earthly desires.

Scene Eleven, which is the ending of the play, is one of the most significant and important parts. The author used various numerous techniques in this one scene. Furthermore, the scene overlaps with “The Poker Night.” In other words, it is the rearrangement of “The Poker Night.” The author intelligently used the same scene (rearranged) with an intent to elicit the changes in the characters.

The major drama techniques used in “The Poker Night” are colors, a paper lantern and the music. The primary colors used in the scene represent each poker game player whereas Rumba and Waltz are used to show the emotional intensity in Mitch and the blue piano represents the desires of Stanley and Stella.

Drama techniques in Scene Eleven are also primary colors, a paper lantern and the music (Varsouviana, sounds of the jungle, drums, trumpet and the blue piano) connotes the solitude of Blanche and her terror of “death” and “desire.” In addition, the poker players resume their routine activities and return to their daily lives, back to where it all began in the scene, “The Poker Night.” Blanche’s last lines in “The Poker Night” is “Thank you for being so kind! I need kindness now.” (Williams, *Desire*, 309), and her last lines in Scene Eleven is “Whoever you are –I

have always depended on the kindness of strangers.” (Williams, *Desire*, 418) Both of them are emblematic and represent her wretched life which needs the kindness of strangers.

In Scene Eleven, although the similarities of the techniques used, scene settings, location and the characters, the events that took place during the play impacts each individual. These elements are scattered in the scene and distinctively expressed to show the difference. The author used various techniques to elicit the unquestionably different situations. The major difference is the mind of each character. In “The Poker Night,” Williams used the poker game to express a rude primitive and violent behavior as well as the hidden “desires” or “greed” of the people of New Orleans. Blanche lives in the same world controlled by her inner “desire.” At the time, Stella is governed by her husband and never pays attention to Blanche. In Scene Eleven, however, Blanche escapes from Stanley who priorities his “desires” and dives into the world of her illusion where he cannot possibly enter. Her insanity is very well expressed through her attitude and behavior when she is in her fantasy which is shutoff from the outside world of reality. The use of drama techniques and stage effects emphasizes her madness.

EUNICE [returning, brightly]: Someone is calling for Blanche.

BLANCHE: It is for me, then! [*She looks fearfully from one to the other and then to the portieres. The “Varsouviana” faintly plays*] It is the gentleman I was expecting from Dallas?²⁷

STANLEY: Did you forget something?...

[*She rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The “Varsouviana” is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. Blanche seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.*]...

STANLEY: You left nothing here but split talcum and old empty perfume bottles –unless it’s the paper lantern you want to take with you. You want the lantern?

[*He crosses to dressing table and seizes the paper lantern, tearing it off the light bulb, and extends it toward her. She cries out as if the lantern was herself.*²⁸

The music of Varsouviana and the illusory dream of Blanche where she believes the arrival of Shep Huntleigh signify that she is captured in the world of her illusion. Her madness is triggered by Stanley who destroys the paper lantern and stabs her throat with the reality. Her situation in this scene suggests the endings: “two, goes mad” and “the roar of which has been an ominous under-tone throughout the play.” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20) On the other hand, Stella and Mitch

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.411.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.414.

regret what they have done to Blanche and cries.

STELLA: I don't know if I did the right thing....

STELLA: I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley....

STELLA: What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?²⁹

(Mitch has started towards the bedroom. Stanley crosses to block him.)

MITCH (*wildly*). You! You done this, all o' your God damn interfering with things you –

STANLEY. Quit the blubber! (*He pushes him aside.*)

MITCH: I'll kill you! (*He lunges and strikes at Stanley.*)

STANLEY: Hold this bone-headed cry-baby!...

(Mitch collapses at the table, sobbing.)³⁰

Stella and Mitch with guilty conscience regrets their behavior and send Blanche off to the asylum. At the end of the scene, the volume of the blue piano and trumpet increases. The play comes to end with the lines of Steve, "This game is seven-card stud." (Williams, *Desire*, 419) The final sound of the blue piano absorbs the luxurious sobbing of Stella and the sensual murmur of Stanley. The music represents not their desires but the solitude of Blanche. With the lines of Steve, their daily lives of New Orleans and loneliness of Blanche are contrasted.

In the letter to Kazan, Williams wrote "I know you're used to clearly stated themes, but this play should not be loaded one way or the other. Don't try to simplify things." (Kazan, *A LIFE*, 346) In this letter, the author emphasized that there are no right or wrong and no one is a winner or loser.

By using the same situation as Scene Three, "The Poker Night," Blanche's emotional transitions and the life of the people in New Orleans where the earthly desire prevails are contrasted vividly and distinctly. The techniques used by the author enable the audience to recognize the character's way of living. At the end of the final scene, Williams paints the life of Blanche in a picturesque manner. The author's effort to illustrate her life in detail reflects his intention to massage the audience that winning or losing the game is not the main objective. In Scene Ten, Blanche is forcefully pulled into the world of desire by Stanley which results in her insanity. If the play ends in Scene Ten, Blanche's tactical defeat is evident and Stanley becomes a winner since Blanche's efforts in getting Mitch fails which signifies the losing of life partner as well as the financial support in New Orleans. Yet, when we consider the attitudes and behaviors or actions of other characters in the ending scene, it is difficult to identify the winner or loser. In

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.405.

³⁰ Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Stuttgart: Reclam. 2012, p.158.

the final scene, Blanche's figure is different from other people in New Orleans, and by "entering into illusion" she exists in a place which is away from desire. In Scene Eleven, Mitch has guilty conscience toward Blanche and in turn he confronts Stanley but he is also helpless. In addition, Stella regrets what she did for Blanche but she cannot help as she obeys Stanley. When we consider the attitudes of other characters, we no longer have any expectations for Blanche to win the victory in this scene. In Williams' notes, the author mentions that at this stage we no longer are able to distinguish a winner or a loser. The audience knows that Stanley is a winner in tactics. The Scene Eleven is the ending which rises above the victory or defeat of the poker game.

Additionally, Williams simulates, as mentioned earlier, the scene "The Poker Night" in Scene Eleven to express the changes of the main character. With this scene, the people of New Orleans are able to return to the daily living based on their earthly desires.

In "The Poker Night," Williams used primary colors and music as well as the poker game which is the main axis of the story line of the play. Considering the fact that all of the drama techniques are concentrated into this one scene, we can assume that Williams placed the vital importance on "The Poker Night."

Conclusion

Considering the fact that the author titled the play originally as "The Poker Night," "The Poker Night" scene is the most important part of the play. Tennessee Williams has created the scene with meticulous detail using various numerous techniques as well as the stage effects. The "tactics of Blanche" is scattered throughout the scene. In addition to the actions of the characters, Williams used as many drama techniques as possible in "The Poker Night." Primary colors, music and paper lantern are used to express the relationships and emotions of the characters. These props and stage effects precisely illustrates the inner minds and personalities of the characters as well. Until the very end of the scene, the play background and settings are used to reflect the psychological movement. The colors represent masculinity of the men who are at the peak of manliness. The tough and rough, rude and careless manhood are described as the traits of the characters in the scene. Rumba and waltz were used to approach and seduce Mitch. It is the Blanche's technique to appeal her femininity. The blue piano playing the New Orleans music represents the "desire" of Stanley and Stella.

Blanche attempts to win her sister's heart in order to survive in New Orleans. She uses her eloquent speech technique to control the conversation and to persuade her sister to desert her husband, Stanley and live with her. Stella, however, is already dominated by Stanley and she

cannot help Blanche until the end of the play.

In “The Poker Night,” she starts to win the affections of his close friend Mitch with the intent to sustain her living in the city. In Scene Six, Blanche discloses her sufferings, death of Alan and her guilty conscience against him which is also her tactics to win Mitch’s heart. She succeeds and Mitch sympathizes with her resulting in his determination to marry Blanche. Polka is used to represent her complex guilty feelings towards Alan. When Mitch approaches her, polka stops. The audience then realizes that the light of hope is shone upon Blanche and expects the happy ending or her victory. In addition to the sound effects, Williams used the roaring sound of locomotive as a symbol of death, the same representation as the music of polka that reminds her death of her late husband. All of these sound effects consequently suggest the third ending, “Three, throws herself in front of a train in the freight-yards.” (*Murphy, Williams, 20*)

In Scene Two and Scene Seven, the music except polka is used to express the heart of Blanche. In Scene Two her reality is reflected in the lyrics of her song: “From the land of the sky blue water, They brought a captive maid!” (Williams, *Desire, 270*) On the other hand, in Scene Seven, Blanche sings, “Say, it’s only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea –But it wouldn’t be make-believe If you believe in me!” (Williams, *Desire, 360*) which implies her intention not to accept the reality and believe her fantasy or illusion.

Although she seems to win the victory over Stanley in terms of tactics, she is cornered gradually. When he gains the control and the situation is turned against the heroin, the blue piano, trumpets, and drums are played to describe his superiority. These techniques, the audience is aware of the winning of Stanley. The sound and music is effectively used. In the play, the blue piano is used to represent the desire of Stanley and Stella as well as Stanley’s predominance. In Scene One and Scene Eleven, however, it is used to express of the loneliness of Blanche. In the above (Chapter II) I have discussed on the effects of this music by quoting Elia Kazan. Williams used music, colors and sound techniques to express the communication skill or negotiation tactics of the characters as well as their minds.

Williams simulated or arranged “The Poker Night” in Scene Eleven where numerous drama techniques and stage effects are used effectively to express the emotional transition of the characters and to draw the attention of the audience by contrasting the two scenes, thereby, ending the play with shocking conclusion. The use of the same scene signifies the author’s intent and his enthusiasm on using “The Poker Night,” which is the core of the play in terms of the plot and story development of the play.

Why, then, did Williams who was fascinated in using the title “The Poker Night” changed to

A Streetcar Named Desire?

As mentioned in the above Introduction, when he called this play “The Poker Night” there were three endings. The final version, however, combined these three endings into one conclusion to spotlight the main character, Blanche. I have studied the play thoroughly and concluded that all of these three endings are expressed in the heroin, her attitude, action and lines in the last scene.

The first ending, “One, Blanche simply leaves –with no destination” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20) is equivalent to Scene Eleven: “*Blanche walks on without turning, followed by the Doctor and the Matron. They go around the corner of the building.*” (Williams, *Desire*, 418)

The second ending, “Two, goes mad” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20) is represented in the playing of Varsouviana in Scene Eleven and the following stage direction explain the similarity of the conclusion: “*Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The “Varsouviana” is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle.*” (Williams, *Desire*, 414) These sounds are played only in her mind.

Finally, the third ending, “Three, throws herself in front of a train in the freight-yards” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20) is represented in the sounds of a locomotive (with the image of “death”) which appears in the play quite frequently. Furthermore, the third ending, “the roar of which has been an ominous under-tone throughout the play” (Murphy, *Williams*, 20), is also demonstrated with the music and Blanche’s action in Scene Eleven. “The roar” corresponds to the sound of drums, her panicking voice and the cries and noises of the jungle. The dialogue between Stanley and Matron echoes in her mind which becomes a threatening dagger to arouse the fear in Blanche’s psyche.

With these drama techniques used in Scene Eleven, the author integrated all of these three endings into one shocking conclusion the heroin ended up.

If Williams titled this play, “The Poker Night,” the audience probably expected the winning or losing and viewed the characters from the aspect of competing relationships. These three endings, however, are assembled into one conclusion, all of which are concentrated in Scene Eleven. This final scene focuses on the life of Blanche and the conclusion is beyond the victory or defeat of a game. I would like to conclude that the intent of the author behind the play was to express the journey of Blanche Dubois’s life on the stage and this is the main reason of the title *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

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