

**The Mythical Apollonian-Dionysian Forces in Tennessee
Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)**

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This paper explores the conflict between and within the main characters of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). It shows how that the strife between the characters, the ultimate result of the individual's fixed adherence to established ideals and the denial of his instinctive impulses, are equivalent to the mythical Apollonian-Dionysian forces. While the one of these opposed forces represents the learned, acquired traits, the other represents the unlearned, primitive impulses. Within the individual's divided psyche, the two forces display that the harmonious coexistence of both man's conscious and unconscious impulses brings about his emotional stability. In short, the paper suggests that man's natural impulses can never be suppressed or denied for like nature itself they are powerful and essential for man's basic existence and spiritual redemption. It can be argued that Dionysus for Williams represents modern man, who, despite being threatened by ineffectual traditional values and by modern technological inventions, refuses to submit and defiantly fights to create a new significant life.

Generally, Williams' plays demonstrate his interest in Nietzsche's conception of the antithetical Dionysian and Apollonian principles. Of the two mythological gods, Dionysus is the god of drunkenness and inspiration, of freedom and ecstasy, of joy and suffering, of life and death. In an essay entitled "*The Birth of Tragedy*" and published in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (1954), Nietzsche explores the Apollonian and Dionysian characteristics, and concludes that the co-existing of the two deities resulted in the greatness of Greek drama:

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Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art-deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a sharp opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the non-plastic, Dionysian, art of music. These two distinct tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term "Art"; till at last, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will, they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling eventually generate the art-product, equally Dionysian and Apollonian, of Attic tragedy (Nietzsche 951).

Furthermore, Nietzsche saw the only hope for man's survival in the modern world in "the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit,"(Nietzsche 1058) whose "magic" alone could transform "this gloomily depicted wilderness of our exhausted culture"(Nietzsche 1062). Williams himself, a strict believer and follower of Dionysus, stresses the importance of the Dionysian spirit for man's survival. As may be seen in *A Streetcar Named Desire* this vital and fighting Dionysian spirit is in constant confrontation with the Apollonian dream world and artificial appearance, which it often defeats, providing thus hope for renewal and faith in existence. To Williams, according to Nelson, Dionysus is "the god of love, life, and regeneration"(Nelson 160). He is the mysterious, unconfined, unpredictable, innocent and free spirit.

Thus, according to Greek myth, Dionysus is the god of music, of primitive animalistic joys, of irrationality, destruction and regeneration. He possesses a double nature of good and bad, of love and hate, of joy and sadness. He is

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thus the totality of our being. His dismemberment by the Titans and his subsequent rebirth amid flames "symbolize the embodiment of life that is stronger than death," and our "belief in immortality"(Hamilton 62). He is the god of heat and moisture because he "was born of fire and nursed by rain"(Hamilton 55). Being the god of wine and vegetation, Dionysus "represents the sap of life, the coursing of the blood through the veins, the throbbing excitement of nature; thus he is the god of ecstasy and mysticism"(Morford 190).

Apollo, who is in direct opposition to Dionysus, stands for objectivity, moderation, form and decorum. He is the advocate of beauty, knowledge, and the arts. He is the god of light and truth, of self-knowledge and restraint, the advocate of culture and civilization, of law and order. As indicated through *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams sees Apollo as idealistic and ironically self-destructive. In the modern scientifically-advanced age, where religion and morality are losing ground, where tradition seems forgotten, where individuals are constantly replaced by machines, Apollonian idealism and rigidity cannot exist or survive; rather, what can survive and give hope to man is the Dionysian spirit with its self-regenerating potential of continuation. In Williams' world man's instinctive longing for survival is very basic to his nature and very real, whereas Apollonian aloofness and pride seem vain and impractical.

For Williams, as he himself states in "The Timeless World of a Play," the most important moral problem of modern man is to achieve spiritual salvation and escape extinction:

The great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power deliberately to choose certain moral values by which to live as steadfastly as if he, too, like a character in a play, were immured against the corrupting rush of time. Snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting is the great magic trick of human existence. As far as we know, as far as there

exists any kind of empiric evidence, there is no way to beat the game of being against nonbeing, in which nonbeing is the predestined victor on realistic levels (Williams 262).

Moreover, Esther Jackson observes that, for Williams "the function of modern drama is to expose man's hidden nature, to search out his motives, to discover his limits, and to help him find a mode of salvation" (Jackson 87). Tennessee Williams has discovered this kind of salvation, like Nietzsche, in the mythological god Dionysus and in the Dionysian spirit. Esther Jackson perceives also that in Williams' plays "there rages a critical struggle between ways of life," as seen in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where Williams "polarizes this conflict in the school teacher Blanche, with her talk of poetry and art, and the laborer Kowalski, with his life of animal joys" (Jackson 59). Furthermore, she notes that through his main characters "Williams explores the question of choice for civilization itself, a choice between past and present, between soul and body" (Jackson 60). Lumley feels that in Williams plays there is a spiritual rejection leaving only "animal motivations, the instinctive groping to follow the system and to take what life offers before the realization of futility" (Lumley 185). Henry Popkin finds that in all Williams' plays "there is some struggle to be free to know the truth, and to know love" (Popkin 52). And although, he says, the failures outnumber the successes, the message is very clear, that "the effort to escape repressions and restrictions is worth making" (Popkin 53), even though it may result in defeat such as that of Blanche, who after her rape is sent off to an insane asylum.

Biggsby, on the other hand, recognizes Williams' admiration for such a character as Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar* whom Williams finds as a figure that is "brilliantly alive in a stagnant society," because he "manage[s] to survive in and even dominate contemporary society"(in

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Bigsby 108). However, such a figure essentially Dionysian in Williams' view, is "too much a product of the modern world to offer any real hope" (in Bigsby 108). And finally, Hugh Dickinson feels that for Williams "life alone is the ultimate reality, death its negation" (Dickinson 292), and Arthur Ganz, in the same way, believes that "in Williams' moral system the rejection of life is the greatest crime, and those guilty of it are visited by the kind of punishment that falls upon Blanche DuBois in *Streetcar*"(Ganz 206). It could be that as critical opinion reveals, Williams himself demonstrates that conflict between the two sets of values. Neither is absolute. Both are necessary, in Nietzschean terms, for reintegration and renewal -- both social and psychological. And if psychological, it must be observed that the conflicts in Williams' plays may be not only between representative figures like Blanche and Stanley, but also between the Apollonian and Dionysian principles within the individual psyche.

Thus, Dionysus to Williams, becomes the symbol of modern man. Haunted by an ordered Victorian culture and threatened by a feeling of impermanence effected by the decay of Southern social order and technological advances, modern man rebels and defiantly fights to create a new and meaningful life, refusing extinction. Finally, Williams offers us in his play a belief that man can build new foundations and raise fresh hopes for the future on this very basic assumption that life is worth living and fighting for. In the struggle between the Apollonian and the Dionysian there is implicit the necessity of defeat and renewal.

In *A Streetcar Named Desire* Tennessee Williams, therefore, makes use of mythology to portray life, as expressed by his main characters: Stanley Kowalski and Blanche DuBois. Their opposite and conflicting characteristics and attitudes towards life respectively reflect those of the two mythological deities, Dionysus and Apollo. Through them, Williams emphasizes the necessity of an Apollonian facing, as well as the Dionysian instinctive

urges, basic for man's spiritual survival in the modern world.

The dramatic action of *Streetcar* takes place in Stanley Kowalski's two-room flat, on Elysian Fields, a street in the old French Quarter in New Orleans. Surveying the setting, the spectator's eye can see women 'taking the air on the steps' of the outside stairs of the building while they are exchanging vulgar gossip, as well as street vendors selling their goods and calling, for instance, Re-e-e-d h-o-o-t, an indication of sex and a suggestion of hellfire in Elysian Fields.

As the mythological setting of the dramatic action, Elysian Fields is symbolically the place of future happiness and delight. It is the place where Stanley and Stella Kowalski enjoy a simple, modest, and happy life with each other and with their neighbors, and where lyric and sensual music is heard from the "blue piano," conveying the Dionysian "spirit of life that goes on here"(13). Its residents share simple joys such as going to the movies, bowling, playing poker and fighting. It is here that Stanley Kowalski, the Dionysian image of animalistic vitality, fights for his happiness and survival against the Apollonian intruder, Blanche, Stella's sister, who tries to impose upon them her concepts of culture and civilization.

Artistically, the Dionysian spirit in Stanley's world is emphasized early in the play when he first appears dressed in 'blue denim work clothes,' a young man in his vigorous manhood, bellowing at his wife, "Hey, there! Stella, Babby! Catch! ... What? ... Meat!" and heaving at her a "red-stained package from a butcher's"(116), Stella manages to catch the meat package laughing breathlessly, for it seems that she has been trained by her husband to function properly in his sensuous world; she is, thus, adjusted to the Dionysian lifestyle of Elysian Fields, "where life is pursued on a primitive level beyond or before good and evil" (Riddel 423). Unlike Blanche, Stella succeeded previously in

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escaping the death-in-life existence of her family's estate in the dying Old South, to re-emerge in the Dionysian world of her husband.

Blanche, on the other hand, is the Apollonian representative, a remnant of Southern gentility, whose hometown "Laurel" alludes to Apollo, the laurel being Apollo's sacred tree whose leaves were used to crown his victors, distinguished in poetry and arts. Her family residence, Belle Reve, is also an allusion to Apollonian beautiful appearances and dreams. Furthermore, Blanche being a teacher establishes her as the Apollonian representative of culture and arts. Dressed in white, her delicate and elegant appearance in the opening scene seems "incongruous"(15) to the Elysian Fields environment, a hint of her Apollonian image. Blanche's behaviour and impulses throughout the play indicate her Apollonian superiority and her focus on artificial appearances.

Once Blanche appears on stage dressed in such a way that distinguishes her from the inhabitants of Elysian Fields, we, as an audience, realize firstly her estrangement from the scene, and secondly the duality of the image: we see Blanche, the representative of the Apollonian spirit, alienated from Stanley's Dionysian world. The audience, thus, becomes aware of the schism between the two images. A remarkable point about the concept of Blanche's portrayal as an Apollonian figure, incompatible in Stanley's naturalistic, Dionysian world lies in the way Williams uses costumes. For example, the white suit, in which she is daintily dressed at the beginning of the play, and which becomes a soiled and crumpled white gown in the rape scene, is a stage business that encodes Blanche's inability to maintain a harmonious coexistence of both her conscious and unconscious impulses.

To Blanche, who is averse to the Dionysian spirit, the whole scene is a confining, ugly, cramped and 'horrible place', to which "only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe! -- Could do ...

justice"(121). In addition, her facial expression of shocked disbelief reflects her Apollonian reaction to the Dionysian atmosphere of Stanley's environment. Her first few words on stage summarize metaphorically her life-journey from her idealized Belle Reve to the sensual lifestyle at Elysian Fields street. She says: "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at -- Elysian Fields"(117)! It is because of a Mr. Graves, she tells Stella later on, who dismisses her from a former job, that she comes to her sister for salvation.

Blanche's artificiality is staged by her constant preoccupation to bathe and powder her face, a concern with outward appearances. Seeing herself in the civilized and cultural image of enlightenment, she often reminds her sister of their Apollonian upbringing and advises her to get rid of the uncivilized Stanley, highlighting her Apollonian rationality and ideals: "I take it for granted that you still have sufficient memory of Belle Reve to find this place and these poker players impossible to live with"(70). She adds: "You can't have forgotten that much of our upbringing, Stella, that you just suppose that any part of a gentleman's in his nature! Not one particle, no! There's something downright -- bestial -- about him"(71). Blanche seems to inhabit an imaginary world devoid of reality and practicability, an Apollonian illusive world that has long ceased to exist.

However, Williams dramatically, exposes with subtle ambiguity his characters' double nature beneath the masks they assume. Williams suggests that both Apollonian and Dionysian forces exist within each character, either in harmonious balance (Stanley and Stella), or in conflict and unbalance (Blanche), causing internal struggle within the individual. For example, Blanche's name, which means "white woods," ambiguously implies two antithetical forces: the paleness of the Apollonian mask opposed to the vitality of Dionysian woods. The Dionysian subconscious emotions

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of Blanche are in constant strife with her Apollonian principles, indicated by her constant changing of masks, suggesting the complexity of her personality. This conflict is metaphorically staged by the contradictory and symbolic streetcars 'Desire' and 'Cemeteries' that have brought her to the Elysian Fields. They not only represent the extremities of life, but they also allude to the antithetical Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, implying Blanche's fluctuation between the two, and her inability to face reality or to and acknowledge her Dionysian urges.

Upholding her Apollonian image, she avoids revealing her subconscious Dionysian emotions and feelings; with restraint she avoids breaking out of her Apollonian boundaries and spoiling her artificial appearances. She uses her Apollonian consciousness to cover her inner world, hiding her inner Dionysian impulse from people around her. For example, while she desires to be kissed and be loved by Micch, Stanley's friend, she uses restraint to control her desires because "a girl has to keep firm hold of her emotions" (87). Feeling a threat to her Apollonian world by the Dionysian Stanley, Blanche insists that artistic and cultural ideals are man's only salvation from primitives like Stanley:

Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella -- my sister -- there has been some progress since then! Such things as art -- as poetry and music -- such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! That we have got to make grow! And cling to, and hold as our flag! In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching. Don't -- don't hang back with the brutes (72)!

However, she is homeless and penniless. Her trunk, the only thing she possesses, is filled with antique furs and

jewels, worthless mortgage papers, and yellowing love-letters from her dead husband. She represents Apollonian romance and fantasy, insisting on dwelling in an illusive world of beauty and unreality. She admits to Mitch that she doesn't want "realism;" rather, "I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth. I tell what ought to be truth"(117).

Unlike Blanche, however, the Apollonian Stella has learned to understand and accept her Dionysian urges. Likewise, the Dionysian Stanley, achieves balance and completeness in the Dionysian environment of Elysian Fields, the same place that shall become a trap for Blanche, where her Apollonian ideals shall turn back upon herself to suffocate her. Theatrically, Blanche's secret search in the opening scene for the liquor illustrates not only her need to seek refuge in the pretenses of an Apollonian artificial world, but also hints at her Dionysian urges which she cannot openly admit. Furthermore, her internal struggle between these two antithetical impulses is highlighted by her self-caution not to drink too much because "I've got to keep hold of myself"(18). When offered a drink by Stella, she refuses, adopting her Apollonian mask. Later on with Mitch, she assumes the same mask, telling him that she is not "accustomed to having more than one drink"(54), ironically, after she had consumed quite a lot. Yet, Blanche's fear of her Dionysian emotions and of Dionysian intoxication is subtly implied in her plea to Stella to put the liquor away "so I won't be tempted"(22), quickly changing the subject by calling Stella's attention to her appearance. She is constantly afraid that her Dionysian urges will surface. Haunted by her unconscious Dionysian drives she desperately tries to keep control of herself. She searches for Apollonian protection and order.

Williams with sharp irony condemns Blanche's inability to be realistic and acknowledge her Dionysian urges. He skillfully stages Blanche's awareness of her double

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nature by her ambivalent conversation and actions. For example, for Mitch she puts on her Apollonian mask, telling him that she has "old-fashioned ideals"(91), in order to make him want her, while in the darkness she rolls her eyes, "knowing he cannot see her face"(91). Later on, after playing Dionysus to Mitch by being "gay," she replaces her Dionysian mask with the Apollonian, asserting self-knowledge and being careful not to overstep the Apollonian boundaries, holding a "firm hold over her emotions"(87). She, moreover, expresses her Dionysian desires and longings in French, a language that Mitch does not understand, ironically allowing Blanche to play Dionysus behind her Apollonian mask: "Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir? Vous ne comprenez pas? Ah, quelle doomage"(88)!

Nevertheless, her Dionysian impulses, hidden under the mask of her Apollonian consciousness, are going to be exposed ultimately by Stanley who, despite his Dionysian image, often takes advantage of his Apollonian nature to keep his home and happiness intact, as well as to ridicule Blanche's artificiality and to expose her Dionysian desires and longings.

When Blanche wears her Dionysian mask and flirts with him, Stanley, judiciously inquires what has happened to his wife's property, arguing that Stella has been "swindled," and "under the Napoleonic law I'm swindled too. And I don't like to be swindled"(35). When Blanche continues to flirt, playing Dionysus to him, he again displays his Apollonian mask, warning her that "If I didn't know that you was my wife's sister I'd get ideas about you"(41)! Stanley's awareness of these antitheses is skillfully staged through his metaphorical and ironic conversation with Blanche. With subtle ambiguity Stanley points out to Blanche that "Laurel" is not his "territory" and that he furthermore lacks "refinement," hinting at their antithetical principles and foreshadowing the clash that shall arise between them. With Dionysian cunning and insight, he perceives Blanche's suppressed Dionysian impulses when, noticing the

consumption of liquor, and despite Blanche's insistence that she seldom touches it, he ironically states that although some people never do, "it touches them often"(30).

Theatrically, Stanley's undressing in front of Blanche stresses his Dionysian freedom from inhibitions, contrasted with Blanche's Apollonian consciousness of external appearances. Stanley's entrance before Blanche can bathe or powder her face is a theatre business that suggests his penetrating insight into her conflicting nature, an insight that further illustrated in his inquiry about her husband that causes Blanche to become sick. Ironically, Blanche senses a threat to her Apollonian world, after experiencing Stanley's look through the curtains. Her ambivalent recognition that "maybe" Stanley is "what we need to mix with our blood now we've lost Belle Reve"(44), metaphorically underlines her awareness of the artificiality and the impracticality of her Apollonian world, as well as her recognition of Stanley's Dionysian existence as the only powerful and pragmatic existence. Yet, when faced with the powerful and intoxicating Dionysian emotions she becomes terrified, trying to escape from their mystical affects.

However, her fear of her awakened emotions becomes clear after the fight between Stanley and Stella at the night of the poker game. The Poker Night scene is a vivid portrayal of the primitive, sensuous world of Stanley and his pals. A notable point about the dramatization of the realities of Stanley's world lies in the way Williams uses light and colour in this scene. In his stage directions at the beginning of Scene Three Williams writes:

There is a picture of Van Gogh's of a billiard-parlour at night. The kitchen now suggests that sort of lurid nocturnal brilliance, the raw colours 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,

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MITCH, AND PABLO -- wear coloured 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 colours. There are vivid slices of watermelon on the table, whisky bottles, and glasses (143).

In this way, the sheer sensual intensity of Stanley's environment is presented pictorially in terms of 'primary colours' and bright light. It seems that Williams intends Van Gogh's picture with its raw colours to overshadow the scene and to correlate with the bright light bulb and the vigorous manhood of the players in order to underline the fact that unrefined tastes and sensual desires are the main characteristics of Stanley's lifestyle. When Blanche tries to find a space for her own artificial world in this scene (she has Mitch put a paper lantern over the naked bulb in the bedroom, turns the radio on and dances with him to the music), Stanley, enraged, storms into the bedroom and tosses the radio out of the window. When Stella, seeing Stanley through the eyes of her sister, protests and calls him "Drunk -- Drunk -- animal thing, you"(152), Stanley attacks her. It is notable that Williams uses the husband-wife reconciliation and reunion at the end of this scene, when Stanley carries Stella 'into the dark flat', to stress the sense of loneliness of Blanche who has lost both her extended and nuclear families, and who depends, therefore, on the kindness of strangers.

Whereas to Stella this fight provided mystical ecstasy and renewal, shown in her Apollonian calmness and serenity, Blanche's "appearance" reveals her internal conflict and her stirring Dionysian emotions. Her fears are further symbolized in the "confusion of street cries" that sound "like a choral chant"(62), which she cannot join. Frightened and terrified by her awakened Dionysian desires, and sensing a threat to her Apollonian facade, she wants to run away. In

her frenzied state, she tries desperately to keep hold of herself, to make a new life away from the Elysian Fields' environment and away from the madman Stanley, afraid to live with him.

Ironically, her fear of Stanley is not of his physical violence but of his animalistic drives, subtly staged by her metaphorical comment: "How could I stay with him, after last night, with just those curtains between us"(69)? Her frightened and ambivalent tone stages not only her awareness of her Dionysian emotions but also her sense of threat and inevitable Apollonian annihilation by Stanley's Dionysian spirit. Thus, her perception that the curtains do not offer enough protection from the animalistic Stanley, not only implies Stanley's Dionysian spirit that can penetrate throughout, but ironically suggests Blanche's obsession with the urges that drive her to insanity.

In contrast to Blanche's unrealistic and unpragmatic Apollonian world, Stanley Kowalski, the Polish laborer, having no culture and civilization but a fighting spirit for survival and existence, represents Dionysian reality and truth. He is the image of modern Dionysian man who accepts the present as it is without deception. He is the total being, a promising hope for the future. His Dionysian primitivism and animalism are explicit in Williams' description of his character:

Animal joy in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes. Since earliest manhood the center of his life has been pleasure with women, with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among hens. Branching out from this complete and satisfying center are all the auxiliary channels of his life, such as his heartiness with men, his appreciation of rough humor, his love of good drink and food and games, his car, his radio, everything that is his, that bears his emblem of the gaudy seed-

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bearer(29).

As the symbol of modern Dionysian man, Stanley acknowledges the reality of the present and the necessity of surviving in the modern world. It is part of Williams' thematic intention to show that Stanley's naturalistic, Dionysian way of life will prevail and replace the anachronistically traditional, Apollonian code of life. Benjamin Nelson classifies Stanley as "the new American"(Nelson 137), who is disillusioned, crude and tough, and who is able to 'mix his blood' with one of the former tradition's survivors. He is the new American who can function adeptly in the mad, modern world of the New South. However, Krutch defines Stanley as "the natural man ... [whose] virility, even orgiastic virility, is the proper answer to decadence. Stella, the representative of a decayed aristocracy, is rejuvenated by a union with a representative of 'the people' "(Krutch 128).

Stanley fights for his family's rights. As a Dionysian image under the influence of alcohol he becomes both destructive and creative. He hits Stella for interrupting his poker game and wildly fights off the men who try to overpower him. His primitive emotions are intense and mystical, alienating Stella from Blanche's Apollonian dismay. When Stella insists that "there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark -- that sort of make everything else seem --unimportant"(70), Blanche finds it a brutal desire, primitive and debasing. Nevertheless, Blanche's defying insistence on Stanley's primitivism and animalism give rise to Stanley's barbarism, urging him to remove her Apollonian mask and annihilate her Apollonian consciousness.

Blanche, proud of her ancestry and the cultural background of the American South, defies and outrages Stanley for his barbarism, animalism and primitivism. Calling him a foreigner, she sees Stanley as uncivilized and "common." Her pride and her sense of ancestral superiority cause her to resist change and refuse to accept the necessity

of Stanley's existence. She refuses to recognize and accept Stanley's primitive vitality and lack of culture, as well as her sister's happiness, and she attempts to put an end to this obscene disorder. She stubbornly refuses Stella's affirmations of her happiness and contentment with Stanley, as well as her satisfaction with the simple and unpretentious life.

Blanche's refusal of Stanley's way of life is staged by remarks and her verbal attacks on his uncivilized manners. For example, She calls him primitive, bestial, sub-human, and a survivor of the stone age, who can only offer animal joy. When Stella exalts sex, she calls it brutal desire. Her persistent rejection of Stanley and her refusal to accept his common existence without antagonism inevitably lead to her collision with him, and provide him with a thirst for revenge. His barbarism and subsequent motivation for revenge are stimulated by his overhearing Blanche's humiliating and contemptuous remarks about his bestiality, primitivism, and lack of culture, in an attempt to persuade Stella to desert him. Stanley challenged by Blanche's boldness, sets out to destroy Blanche.

To begin with, in Scene Two, he resents and assaults the contents of Blanche's trunk, which encodes on stage the idealized way of life to which Blanche desperately clings. Therefore, the stage business of this trunk is an aspect of the play's dramatic strategy to highlight Stanley's unfriendly attitude towards Blanche's lifestyle, and which anticipates his ultimate, severe transgression against her in the rape scene. Again, on her birthday he uncovers Blanche's disreputable past and love affairs which she had tried to hide behind her Apollonian facade, and which, now aroused, begin to haunt her, driving her to insanity. Having searched Blanche's sordid past and become aware that Blanche can best be described in terms of a brutal desire, Stanley breaks his silence on Blanche's birthday; he rages breaking and banging things.

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Stanley's well-worked-out scheme to destroy Blanche works gradually, a process in line with the episodic structure of the play. It is noteworthy that *Streetcar* is structured as a sequence of scenes which, like a sequential film-pattern, depends on the cumulative effect of its episodes. Blanche's wretched birthday is one episode in the sequence of her conflict with Stanley. Blanche's birthday is anything but a party, for the candles are not fully lit and an empty chair indicates the absence of Mitch, her supposed suitor. More than that, the only birthday present she gets is a one-way bus ticket back to the harsh, real world of Laurel, the town of her humiliation.

In the dramatic scene that takes place just before Stella's baby is born, Stanley's rape of Blanche marks the annihilation of her Beautiful Dream, and the consumption of her Apollonian dreams and illusions. The ritualistic, culminatory rape scene is made more convincing through Williams' lyrical theatre language, a language which presents Blanche's inner feelings in solid shapes. First, the audience is made aware of her further ritualistic withdrawal into her own world of dreams and illusions, for Williams points out in his stage directions that "*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*"(208). Then, Stanley shows up in his '*vivid green silk shirt*', and the '*honky-tonk*' music starts. When Stanley confronts her with her '*lies*', '*conceit*', and '*tricks*', the objective correlative of such a reality appears in "*lurid reflections ... on the walls around Blanche. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form*"(213). Unable to face up to such tough reality, Blanche seeks an escape to another world through the telephone and the invented story of the mythical Texas oil-millionaire. Yet, there is no outlet for "*the night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle*"(213), emphasizing acoustically the ineluctable world of facts.

To link the dramatic action within the Kowalski' flat

and the world without, Williams helps the audience see through the transparent back wall down the New Orleans street "*A prostitute [who] has rolled a drunkard. He pursues her along the walk, overtakes her, and there is a struggle. A policeman's whistle breaks the NEGRO WOMAN appears around the corner with a sequined bag which the prostitute had dropped*"(213). Hence, it can be said that Williams wants to highlight the harsher realities of Stanley's Dionysian world. The frightened Blanche vainly tries once more to telephone as Stanley comes out of the bathroom in his silk pyjamas, which he saves for special occasions. Then, the blue piano goes softly, the roar of the train is heard as well as the jungle voices and the hot music from the night-club, all of which objectify the terror she is experiencing. Stanley takes a "*step towards her, biting his tongue which protrudes between his lips*(213), and Blanche's last attempt is to threaten him with a broken bottle. Yet, he catches her wrist and "*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*" (215). Blanche's symbolic and destructive marriage to Stanley, her Dionysian counterpart, highlights the fact that the Dionysian spirit is indestructible and eternal.

The imagery of light and darkness ironically and skillfully theatricalizes Blanche's internal conflict. Throughout the play, Blanche avoids being seen in direct light, covering the light-bulbs with paper lanterns, signifying her artificiality and inability to face reality of her Dionysian emotions. Her outcry to Stella to "turn that over-light off! Turn that off. I won't be looked at in this merciless glare"(19), stages her fear of her emotions and the vital Dionysian spirit that she is afraid to face. She fears that her true subconscious feelings can be exposed. Her need to decorate, to make "unreal" through art is revealed in her admission to Stella of her insufficiency and artificiality: "I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are

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Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)**

soft -- soft people have got to shimmer and glow -- and put a paper lantern over the light"(79). It is Stanley who finally tears off the paper lantern from the light bulb and hands it to her, while she cries out "as if the lantern was herself"(140). The paper lantern is for Blanche an Apollonian illusive image which transforms the Dionysian reality into an ideal and bearable world. The naked light bulb, once more free to shed its light, symbolizes the resurrection of reality, as the symbolic rape establishes a Dionysian victory.

Finally, Blanche's romanticized Apollonian world expressed in the romantic polka tune, is forever consumed at the time of her rape by the sensual and powerful music of the "blue piano," trumpet and drums. As Nietzsche says, "it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual which gives expression to the will in its omnipotence, as it were, behind the principium individuationis, the eternal life beyond all phenomena, and despite all annihilation" (Nietzsche 1038).

To conclude, the characters in this play relate, then, to one another in terms of the Apollonian-Dionysian conflict, but they in addition demonstrate an inner conflict between the same principles. The conflict between Stanley and Blanche may be between Dionysian and Apollonian figures, but the same battle rages within Blanche's own psyche. Her ultimate tragic destruction is inevitable because of her inability to reconcile these two contrasting sets of values represented by Apollo and Dionysus.

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