Romana S. Vuletić
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies,
Seoul, South Korea
PhD Candidate
romivuletic@gmail.com
0009-0008-7679-6398

UDK: 821.111(73)-2.09 Tennessee, W.
doi: 10.19090/zjik.2025.15.123-135
originalni naučni rad

BLANCHE DUBOIS: A DUAL SYMBOL OF SOUTHERN DECAY AND MODERN FEMALE SEXUALITY IN *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*

ABSTRACT: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, written in 1947, is among the most highly regarded pieces of the 20th century. The play centres on Blanche DuBois, a former Southern belle often regarded as a symbol of the decaying South, owing to her appearance, attitude, and situation. This paper discusses why many critics see Blanche in relation to the South. Then, the paper proceeds to present a feminist reading of the play, where she can be seen as a representation of emerging female sexuality. Compared to her sister Stella, the typical desired model of a woman in the patriarchal society, Blanche is regarded as the opposite, an unwanted model that would become one of the major objectives of the second wave of feminism and sexual freedom almost 30 years later. Therefore, this paper aims to show that Blanche is not only a remnant of the traditional values of the South but also a symbol of modern female sexuality and freedom that opposes the accepted patriarchal ideal of American women in the late 1940s.

Keywords: second-wave feminism, feminist literary analysis, Blanche Dubois, sexual freedom

Born and raised in South Tennessee, Williams mostly placed his plays in the decaying South, where traditional values are being eroded by modernization. The formerly rich Southern culture lost the war against time and can only be preserved in myth and memory. However, Williams' most famous characters cannot adapt to these drastic shifts, so they frequently represent Southern ideas progressively losing cultural importance. Because of this, these characters fabricate stories about their life to keep up the ideal version of themselves. Williams wrote the play *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1947, which is among the most highly regarded pieces of the 20th century. The play centers around Blanche DuBois, a former Southern belle who leaves her once-prosperous situation to move into a run-down apartment in New Orleans her younger sister and brother-in-law rented. Blanche is often considered a symbol of the decaying South, starting from her appearance, attitude, and situation. She also serves as a representation of two clashing ideals. First, the critics' view of Blanche within the context of the South will be discussed. The paper will then apply a feminist literary approach in the interpretation of the play. In contrast to her sister Stella, who fits the

conventional ideal of femininity in a patriarchal society, Blanche symbolizes the antithetical, undesirable archetype that would emerge as a primary focus of the second wave of feminism and sexual liberation nearly three decades later. The purpose is to demonstrate that Blanche is not only a symbol of Southern traditional values but also of a model female sexuality and independence that defies the patriarchal ideal that was widely held for American women in the late 1940s.

The protagonist, Blanche DuBois, was raised in Belle Reve, a family house outside of Laurel, Mississippi, which belongs to an old and affluent Southern family. With all the wealth, enslaved people, and attention from gentlemen, she and her younger sister Stella enjoyed the best of a pampered and privileged upbringing. During their teens, the wealthy plantation was reduced to ashes as a punishment for the questionable activities and decisions the family's male members engaged in, leaving just the home and about twenty acres of land. Soon after, Blanche's parents, sister Margaret, and an elderly relative, Jesse, all passed away shortly after her husband did, leaving psychological and physical consequences. Over that time, Stella had moved out and lived with the Polish immigrant Stanley Kowalski, only stopping by for funerals. Blanche quickly realized that the inheritance was slipping from her grasp and that she had no way to get it back after having to pawn it to pay for the funeral and medical bills.

Blanche's alienation is a product of her personal and social circumstances. The first description that introduces her as a character paints a picture of a lonely, lost woman inappropriately dressed for the occasion. George Toles suggests that her entrance is a sign of "great emptiness" because she lost all the assets that supported "her life in this alien realm" (2010: 71).

> She is daintily dressed in a white suit with a fluffy bodice, necklace, earrings of pearl, white gloves, and a hat, looking as if she were arriving at a summer tea or cocktail party in the garden district. […] Her delicate beauty must avoid a strong light. There is something about her uncertain manner, as well as her white clothes, that suggests a moth (Williams 1947: 3).

As this passage suggests, judging by her outer appearance, Blanche occupies the position of an outsider who cannot fit in. Her isolation comes not only from her clothes but from social circumstances and her past experiences. *A Streetcar Named Desire* presents the conflict between the old traditional values of the South and the newly emerged American materialism. Hern and Hooper describe it as "an old-world graciousness and beauty running decoratively to seed versus the thrusting, rough-edged, physically aggressive materialism of the new world" (1984: 24). It could be said that Blanche is a true manifestation of this decaying beauty, hopelessly looking for a way to find a place in modern society. She desperately clings to the ideal of a Southern woman

who now belongs to the almost mythical past. The remains from the once rich and thriving South can be found in one decaying house and in land sold out slowly to cover the expense of funerals.

A seemingly unending streak of deaths has taken its toll not only on Dubois's financial situation but also on Blanche's sense of loneliness and belonging. Being constantly surrounded by death and loss only further solidifies her isolation. As a response, Blanche turns to desire because it could be seen as the opposite of death, according to Hern and Hooper. Blanche is not alone in this world since she has a younger sister. Still, the existence of a living close relative does not have a desirable effect on Blanche's situation. It could be said that her sister Stella abandoned her, judging by Blanche's words, "Where were you! In bed with your–Polack!" (Williams 1947: 19), or at least Stella was not present when the situation required. She left Blanche to take care of family circumstances while she was busy making a new life in New Orleans.

Another reason Blanche is considered a representative of the old South, unlike Stella, is her social mobility. Stella's departure from the South and her assimilation into modern American culture through her marriage to Stanley Kowalski represent her detachment from the past. Stella embodies the practical abandonment of old Southern ideals in favor of a more pragmatic, if harsh, reality without the ability to go back to the South. On the contrary, Blanche appears able to move back and forth between the old South and the modern New Orleans, but not without repercussions. Her return to the South is physical and a withdrawal into a nostalgic and decaying past. Each return to the South is an attempt to reclaim a sense of identity and stability, but it is ultimately futile, mirroring her mental instability. The instability is characterized by her oscillation between moments of lucidity and madness, reflecting the disintegration of the Southern aristocratic values she represents.

In addition, she clashes with Stanley since they are examples of opposing worlds. Rachel Van Duyvenbode connects the conflict of cultures to the racial segregation and sentiments of the old South. As Van Duyvenbode suggests, there is "the deep significance of miscegenation in the South's psychosocial history and the fetishization of blood" (2010: 134), hence Blanche's distaste for Stanley since he is of Polish descent and has much darker skin than she. Furthermore, Blanche's French ancestry has a "mythical association with the old colonial South" (Van Duyvenbode 2010: 136). Her white clothes remind Stanley of his inferior position in society since he is "the dark other" (Van Duyvenbode 2010: 136). Stanley's Polish descent and darker complexion symbolize the new, diverse America that is at odds with Blanche's antiquated notions of racial purity and social hierarchy. Her revulsion towards Stanley

is more than personal since it is grounded in the historical context of the South's obsession with racial purity and the fear of miscegenation. Blanche's mythical ties to the former colonial South and her French ancestry further distance her from the contemporary world Stanley stands for. Her white attire is a visual representation of both her fragility and detachment from reality, and her supposed purity and superiority. The visual disparity heightens the tension between her and Stanley, as Stanley sees her clothing as a constant reminder of his marginalized status in a society still grappling with racial and cultural hierarchy.

Harold Bloom also calls Blanche's representation of the South "noble, but it is now humiliated"; hence, she is "nostalgia and hope" and "the desperate exceptional woman" (2010: 3). She personifies the nostalgic glamour and the inevitable downfall of the old Southern way of life. Her desperation and exceptionalism are her attempts to hold onto a past that is slipping away. Michael Paller sees her as "the faded, shattered daughter of the South" (2010: 148). She is a relic of an antique era, unable to find her place in the modern world and ultimately destroyed by it. Therefore, Blanche DuBois is a complex symbol of the old South, whose social and physical mobility is the tension between past and present. Her interactions with Stanley bring these tensions to the forefront, showing the cultural and racial conflicts that define their world. Through Blanche, it is possible to see the illusions of grandeur and purity that the old South clung to, revealing the deep-seated insecurities and prejudices underpinning its society.

Before looking at how Blanche could represent modern sexuality, it is important to understand the historical and political context. The "Golden Age of American Capitalism" (Litonjua 2013: 61) began in 1945 and continued through 1960, when the gross national product more than quadrupled. There were low levels of unemployment and inflation, and salaries were high. Because the variety and accessibility of consumer products increased along with the economy, middle-class individuals had more money to spend than before. Contrasting this picture of prosperity was the fear of Communism, most commonly known as the Red Scare. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, which grew more intense in the late 1940s and early 1950s, gave rise to the Red Scare, which was a panic about the alleged threat presented by Communists in the United States. The Red Scare sparked a number of measures that had a significant and long-lasting impact on the American government and society. In addition to this, sex and sexuality were almost equally threatening to the nation's moral order as Communism. The situation began to change in the 1970s when the second wave of feminism was in full force, focusing on the sexual freedom of women.

The history of modern feminism begins in 1848 at the Seneca Falls conference, where nearly 200 women gathered at an upstate New York church to discuss women's social, civil, and religious positions and rights. The first wave of feminists campaigned tenaciously for the right to vote for over 70 years, marching, lecturing, protesting, and being arrested, mocked, and subjected to violence to obtain the right to vote, own property, and receive an education. The 19th Amendment, providing women the right to vote, was enacted by Congress in 1920. In principle, it gave all women the right to vote, but in reality, it was still impossible for women of color to vote, especially in the South. The publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 marked the start of the second wave of feminism, where the author calls out the institutional misogyny that taught women that their place was in the home; hence, they can only be unhappy as housewives because they were either broken or perverted. The second notable feminist theorist is Simone de Beauvoir, whose The *Second Sex* was published in France in 1949 and in the US in 1953, where the author expressed how a woman "wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her. The modern woman accepts masculine values; she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, and creating on the same terms as men" (qtd. in Walters 2005: 98). The second wave of feminists would continue by arguing that issues that appeared to be rather personal, such as those involving sex, relationships, access to abortions, and domestic work, were structural and political issues that were crucial to the struggle for women's equality.

Blanche is primarily seen in relation to the first wave of feminism. She is a highly educated woman working and earning in order to support herself and what is left of the once-prosperous state. This is something that was not encouraged in post-Second World War America. The general sentiment of the time can be described in one sentence since it was a period "when a woman may relax and stay in her beloved kitchen, a loving wife to some man who is now fighting for his beloved country" (Anderson 1944: 237). It is important to note that both men and women conformed to strict gender standards and social expectations throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, which is often considered a period of conformity. Women were thought to identify primarily as mothers and wives, and the stability of the family was a key component of a strong and prosperous society. As a result, it was widely accepted that a woman should take care of her husband and children while staying at home.

This can also be seen in the play when Blanche and Stella are compared. The younger sister appears to follow the traditional patriarchal roles imposed on her gender. As M. Judith Bennett points out, the married women's predicament is "a condition of public invisibility, especially in economic matters" (2006: 89), which mirrors the

situation with the married couple in the play. Stanley serves as a prototype of toxic masculinity that Kirby Fenwick describes as "male dominance, emotional repression, and self-reliance" that results in aggression and superiority in men (qtd. in Casey 2020: 116). Stanley's love of labor, fighting, and sex is evidence of his animalistic physical energy. He frequently expresses his displeasure at being referred to as "Polack" and other pejorative terms, even though his family is from Poland. By insisting that he was born in America, is an American, and can only be called "Polish," he tries to insert his credibility and dominance; thus, Blanche does not fit into the new, diverse America that Stanley represents, since she is a relic from an old social structure.

Blanche makes Stanley feel inferior, not only because of her Southern nobility but also because she is challenging his male-dominated household, given that she can fit into the description of a modern woman proposed by Simone de Beauvoir, since she is taking action, thinking, and working on the same (similar) conditions as men. Therefore, Stanley has a problem with it since Blanche's presence questions his superiority based on his gender. The best example of the power dynamics between Stanley and Stella and Stanley and Blanche can be seen in the poker scene.

> STELLA: How much longer is this game going to continue?
> STANLEY: Till we get ready to quit.
> BLANCHE: Poker is so fascinating. Could I kibitz?
> STANLEY: You could not. Why don't you women go up and sit with Eunice?
> STELLA: Because it is nearly two-thirty. [Blanche crosses into the bedroom and partially closes the portieres.] Couldn't you call it quits after one more hand? [A chair scrapes. Stanley gives a loud whack of his hand on her thigh.]
> STELLA [sharply]: That's not fun, Stanley. [The men laugh. Stella goes into the bedroom.]
> STELLA: It makes me so mad when he does that in front of people.
> (Williams 1947: 44, 45)

The room where men are playing poker can be understood as a public space occupied and only available to men. As a traditional passive wife, Stella only asks about the end of their game without crossing the boundaries "between private and public" (Minow 2000: 127) or, in other words, the male and female spheres. Stella's reluctance to cross into the male-dominated public space of the poker game shows her acceptance of traditional gender roles. Her passive way of questioning the end of the game is her internalizing these boundaries, while Blanche's boldness in attempting to join the game challenges these societal norms. When seemingly coming close to the public male-dominated space, Stanley asserts his dominance by inappropriately touching Stella and laughing about his wife's discomfort. Gerard Casey connects "rape culture, sexual

assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and generalized misogyny" (2020: 12) to toxic masculinity, all the terms that the third wave of feminism would address. Stella only voices her discomfort in private with her sister, suggesting her inferior position in their relationship.

However, Blanche acts completely differently, asking to join in, alluding to her ability to move between male and female spaces, public and private. Stanley promptly rejects her in an attempt to keep the boundaries intact. Even though Stella is positioned between Blanche and Stanley throughout the performance, she chooses her husband, who represents her present and future, as the play's finale suggests. Stella seems to be demonstrating her practical side, which led her to leave the bankrupt Belle Reve life years ago, and now reminds her that she has a child to raise. By having Blanche committed to a mental hospital and selecting Stanley, Stella completely embraces her role as a mother and wife. Her choice reflects the limited options available to her and women in general in the 1940s, where personal safety and the semblance of stable family life take precedence over confronting the painful truth of her sister's accusations of sexual assault. Stella and Eunice's conversation on the rape is rather unclear since Stella says, "I couldn't believe it and go on living with Stanley," while Eunice replies, "Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going" (Williams 1947: 144). Eunice's advice to "not believe it" is essentially a survival mechanism rather than a genuine disbelief. The dialogue shows the societal pressure on women to endure and continue despite personal traumas. Her choice to stay with Stanley and commit Blanche to a mental institution can be seen as a survival strategy in a patriarchal society that offers women limited agency.

As suggested, it can be accepted that Blanche is a good example of the first wave of feminism due to her financial independence, education, and work experience. However, she could also be read as a predecessor to the second wave of feminism, concerned with sexual freedom. First, Blanche fell in love and married a young boy in her youth. She was madly in love, so far as she worshipped the ground he walked on. Alan was homosexual, and due to an unfortunate turn of events, he took his life. Love that Blanche lost so young pushes her into the vicious circle of "nymphomania, phantasmagoric hopes, pseudo-imaginative collages of memory and desire" (Bloom 2010: 4). She needs a way to fill the void that makes her feel constantly lonely; hence, she engages in meaningless sexual relationships. This ultimately forces her to quit her job since she had an affair with her seventeen-year-old student, as seen in the lines, "Now run along, now, quickly! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good--and keep my hands off children" (Williams 1947: 89). It appears that nothing stops her from seeking meaningless flirtations with men and boys around her.

It is interesting to note that Blanche is highly aware and even accepts her sexuality. She does not shy away from these intimacies, just the opposite; she needs them to "fill my empty heart with," as she puts it. Gulshan Rai Kataria first describes Blanche as "a negative hetaira woman" (2010: 23) or a woman who likes giving and receiving love. However, it may not always be with the person to whom she feels an emotional pull. Considering these circumstances, as Signi Falk maintains, she becomes "a sentimental prostitute" (qtd. in Kataria 2010: 25), but she could be far more than the proposed term. Blanche is a highly educated woman, which was not common during this period, when she worked and provided for herself until the incident with her student. Even though she is always walking a fine line between sanity and madness, she is aware of her beauty and power over men. This could be seen in how she interacts with men, especially Mitch. Since she is aware of her fading beauty, she only comes out during the night and avoids direct light. It is often attributed to her moth-like appearance, but it could be read as Blanche knowing how to represent herself to achieve her goal, in this case, seducing Mitch.

Blanche seduces men in order to fulfil her needs, not male needs. This certainly can be interpreted as sexual freedom. The term "sexual revolution" is widely used to describe how society is changing concerning sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Sexual behavior has traditionally been defined using the nuclear family as a normative focal point of reference. The terms "premarital, marital, extramarital, and occasionally postmarital" are constantly used to describe sexual conduct. Practically all descriptions of sexual behavior as "conforming, normative, deviant, or changing" (Clavan 1972: 296) are predicated on social expectations that men and women will play their respective roles in nuclear families or the anticipation of the establishment of such a family. As an unmarried woman without the possibility of marriage, Blanche defies the expectations imposed on her sex. Moreover, she freely engages in sexual relationships and uses men to satisfy her needs. Women's accomplishments in society's legal, economic, and other realms have frequently been linked to women's rights and their increased sexual freedom. In this regard, it is easy to see why Blanche has more sexual freedom than her sister, since she is financially independent and has a higher education. Unlike Blanche, Stella accepts her submissive position in the patriarchal society as she puts up with her husband's sexism, violence, and mood swings. Blanche, on the other hand, keeps reminding Stella that it is acceptable to live out her sexual fantasies with a crude man like Stanley but not to marry him.

Emma Goldman, a significant anarchist activist for feminist politics of the time, believed that genuine sexual freedom was incompatible with the capitalist system. The bankrupt institution of marriage was established by capitalism, and women are

forced into repetitive reproduction for its sake. With this arrangement, women are bound to males, and their labor is exploited both by not paying them for it and by claiming the offspring of that sexual labor. It is possible to say that marriage and the persistent nature of reproductive sexual labor keep women bound to specific men while simultaneously maintaining their class subordination to men. They lack personal property, control over their labor, and get no compensation for the physically taxing tasks they perform. With this in mind, Stella has no sexual freedom. She is bound to her husband, going as far as to stay with him after he hit her when she was pregnant and after sexually assaulting her sister. In the case of Blanche, she can establish "herself as a personality and not as a sex commodity" (Hemmings 2018: 133) because she rejects her job as a sexual laborer, as a submissive sexual role, and instead claims her sexual freedom.

Blanche's radical approach to sex and sexuality is not accepted by the patriarchy. Stanley can be described as a true traditional representative of a patriarchal system since, as Kalvin Bedient puts it, "this is veritably the story of patriarchy" (2010: 37). As Blanche poses a threat to his masculinity and dominance, Stanley resorts to rape, which is a cruel act usually committed out of the need to demonstrate power with "the idea to humiliate, demean, or degrade the wife" (Koprince 2010: 56) or, in this case, a wife's sister. Arthur Ganz reads the ending as Blanche being punished for her rejection, which Williams considers a sin. Blanche tells Mitch about the day she found out that her beloved young spouse was a homosexual and the effects of her disgust and repulsion. Rather than being punished for her mistakes in her younger days, she is punished because she goes against the norms of the late 1940s.

The double standard has often meant that premarital expression is acceptable for men but not for women. A woman having sexual freedom poses a threat to the patriarchy and the idea of a nuclear family. In this case, Stanley resorts to rape in order to first assert his dominance and then punish Blanche for challenging the norm. Even though Blanche freely engages in a sexual relationship, one without her consent pushes her completely into madness since it takes away the body autonomy she previously had.

Blanche's psychological state and her mental collapse provide additional basis for a feminist critique of the patriarchal systems in post-war American society. Phyllis Chesler outlines in *Women and Madness* that women are often labeled insane because they reject or cannot survive within the confines of narrow femininity. This punishment is institutional as "madness and asylums generally function as mirror images of the female experience, and as penalties for being 'female,' as well as for desiring or daring not to be" (1972: 96). Blanche is a clear example of this because of her sexual history, emotional expressiveness, and inability to fit the mold of the ideal woman, which forces her removal from society. On the other hand, Stanley, who is violent, dominant, and

emotionally crude, is never punished, not even for raping Blanche. His behavior is tolerated and even reinforced, reflecting the double standard Chesler exposes, where male aggression and sexuality are normalized, while similar traits in women are criminalized and medicalized. As Elaine Showalter observes in *The Female Malady*, "the correlation between madness and the wrongs of women became one of the chief fictional conventions of the age" (1985: 10). Together, these feminist readings reveal that Blanche's institutionalization is a result of society's tendencies to marginalize and infantilize women to silence female resistance while protecting male dominance.

In conclusion, the play features death, mental, and physical illnesses, which further contribute to the withering state of the South. Blanche, surrounded by death and disease, cannot function correctly without the old South, which now only exists as an unreachable myth; thus, she isolates herself using different means. Because of her promiscuity, Blanche is defying the social norms for women. Having sexual freedom was not acceptable during the late 1940s, post-World War II; hence, Blanche has to be punished for her choices. Although it is easy to conclude that Blanche only depends on the kindness of strangers, she can support herself and fight for her estate, which was in debt due to the epic fornications of her male ancestors. She represents Southern belles and the old South, but Blanche can also be a predecessor of the second wave of feminism. As Simone de Beauvoir says,

> Too many women cling to the privileges of femininity, while too many men are comfortable with the limitations it imposes on women. Today, women are torn between the past and a possible, but difficult and as yet unexplored, future (qtd. in Walters 2005: 99).

The time that she is referring to is also set in the late 1940s, possibly 1949, when the book was first released, which is close to the play set in 1947. It could be said that Stella clings to the privileges of femininity, meaning she will be financially secure as long as she stays with Stanley. At the same time, her husband seems to enjoy all his benefits as a man and the limitations imposed on his wife. On the other hand, Blanche is torn between the past (the old glory of the South and her status as a Southern lady) and the future (the second wave of feminism), where she will not be condemned because of sexual freedom and expression.

REFERENCES

Anderson, M. (1944). The Postwar Role of American Women. *The American Economic Review*, *34*(1), 237–244. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1818698

Bedient, K. (2010). There Are Lives that Desire Does Not Sustain: A Streetcar Named Desire. In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, New Edition* (pp. 35–48). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Bennett, M. J. (2006). *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bloom, H. (2010). Introduction. In Bloom, H. *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee A Streetcar Named Desire* (pp. 1–6). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Casey, G. (2020). *After #MeToo Feminism, Patriarchy, Toxic Masculinity, and Sundry Cultural Delights*. London: Imprint Academic.

Chesler, P. (1972). *Women and Madness*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.

Clavan, S. (1972). Changing Female Sexual Behavior and Future Family Structure. *The Pacific Sociological Review*, *15*(3), 295–308. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/1388348

Ganz, A. (1962). The Desperate Morality of the Plays of Tennessee Williams. *The American Scholar*, *31*(2), 278–94. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41208948

Hemmings, C. (2018). *Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence & the Imaginative Archive*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Hern, P., & Hooper, M. (1984). Commentary and notes on *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by T. Williams. In Williams, T., *A Streetcar Named Desire*. *Student Editions* (pp. xiv–lvi). London: Methuen Drama.

Kataria, G. R. (2010). The Hetairas (Maggie, Myrtle, Blanche). In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, New Edition* (pp. 7–34). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Koprince, S. (2010). Domestic Violence in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, New Edition* (pp. 49–60). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Litonjua, M. D. (2013). State vs. Market: What Kind of Capitalism? *International Review of Modern Sociology*, *39*(1), 53–87. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43496479

Minow, M. (2000). About Women, about Culture: About Them, about Us. *Daedalus*, *129*(4), 125–145. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20027667

Paller, M. (2010). Room Which Isn't Empty: *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the Question of Homophobia. In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, New Edition* (pp. 145–162). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Showalter, E. (1985). *The Female Malady*. London: Virago Press.

Toles, G. (2010). Blanche DuBois and the Kindness of Endings. In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire. New Edition* (pp. 61–82). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Van Duyvenbode, R. (2010). Darkness Made Visible: Miscegenation, Masquerade and the Signified Racial Other in Tennessee Williams' *Baby Doll* and *A Streetcar Named Desire.* In Bloom, H. (Ed.), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, New Edition* (pp. 133–144). New York: Chelsea House Publication.

Walters, M. (2005). *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, T. (1947). *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from /http://jhampton.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/53101025/Streetcar.pdf

Romana S. Vuletić

BLANŠ DUBOA: DVOSTRUKI SIMBOL JUŽNJAČKOG PROPADANJA I MODERNE ŽENSKE SEKSUALNOSTI U *TRAMVAJU ZVANOM ŽELJA*

Rezime

Drama *Tramvaj zvani želja* iz 1947. godine jedno je od najznačajnijih dela 20. veka, a smeštena je u ambijent propadajućeg američkog Juga, prostora gde se tradicionalne vrednosti suočavaju s modernizacijom i društvenim promenama. Glavni lik, Blanš Duboa, često se tumači kao simbol tog nestalog sveta. Ona je bivša južnjačka dama koja pokušava da očuva dostojanstvo kroz iluzije o sopstvenoj prošlosti. Međutim, ovaj rad analizira Blanš kao predstavnicu savremenih, suprotstavljenih vrednosti: ženske seksualnosti, unutrašnje slobode i odbacivanja patrijarhalnih uloga. Nasuprot Blanš stoji njena sestra Stela, koja prihvata život u skladu sa zahtevima

patrijarhalnog društva. Kroz ovo poređenje prikazuju se dva modela ženstvenosti: jedan koji je društveno prihvaćen i drugi koji izaziva osudu i nelagodnost. Upravo ta suprotnost čini Blanš relevantnom iz feminističke perspektive. Iako je njena prošlost obeležena gubitkom i kontroverzama, njeno ponašanje otkriva emancipatorske potencijale koji najavljuju ideje seksualne slobode i ženskog subjektiviteta karakteristične za drugi talas feminizma.

Ključne reči: drugi talas feminizma, feministička književna analiza, Blanš Duboa, seksualna sloboda