



**THE ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS THAT ARE  
EXPERIENCED BY BLANCHE DUBOIS TO KNOW HER EMOTIONAL  
REACTION IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**

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***Abstract***

*This research aims to know the psychological conflict of Blanche DuBois and her emotional reaction after facing the conflicts. The research is a qualitative and library research. The data gathered are especially taken from the main source which is the play itself. Besides that, to support the study the writer gets some data from books and internet and the objective theory of literature. The study finds out that Blanche DuBois' emotional reaction after facing: (1) approach-approach conflict is mild because there are all positive goals, she likes and enjoy that psychological conflicts; (2) avoidance-avoidance conflict is self-aggression because she blames herself for this conflict situation and displace aggression because she displaces the frustration to Stella; (3) approach-avoidance conflict is leave the psychological space because she cannot handle her psychological conflict anymore; (4) double approach-avoidance conflict is leave the psychological space because she prefers to refuse all the conflicts, refuse to face reality in her life.*

**Keywords:** literature, psychological conflicts, emotional reaction.

***Abstrak***

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui konflik psikologis Blanche DuBois dan reaksi emosionalnya setelah menghadapi konflik. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dan perpustakaan. Data yang dikumpulkan terutama diambil dari sumber utama yang merupakan drama itu sendiri. Selain itu, untuk menunjang penelitian, penulis mendapatkan beberapa data dari buku dan internet serta teori literatur yang obyektif. Studi ini menemukan bahwa reaksi emosional Blanche DuBois setelah menghadapi: (1) pendekatan-pendekatan konflik ringan karena ada semua tujuan positif, dia suka dan menikmati konflik psikologis itu; (2) konflik penghindaran-penghindaran adalah agresi diri karena dia menyalahkan dirinya sendiri untuk situasi konflik ini dan menggantikan agresi karena dia menggantikan frustrasi pada Stella; (3) konflik penghindaran-pendekatan meninggalkan ruang psikologis karena dia tidak dapat menangani konflik psikologisnya lagi; (4) konflik penghindaran pendekatan ganda meninggalkan ruang psikologis karena ia lebih suka menolak semua konflik, menolak menghadapi kenyataan dalam hidupnya.

**Kata kunci:** sastra, konflik psikologis, reaksi emosional.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

**E**veryone can enjoy a play by watching what the actors or the actresses do or say, but we can enjoy it by reading it, too. According to Kirschner and Mandell (2000), play is written to be performed in an audience by actors who take on the roles of the characters and who present the story through dialogue and action.

The important elements in drama or play are plot and characters. The plot of the drama or play, like a plot of work of fiction, is a sequence of events arranged in meaningful pattern. Beside that characters are also very important elements in drama or play. It is difficult to image a drama or play without characters. In drama or play, characters should already become more or less what they are, and their interaction, perhaps with external events as well as each other, sets a plot of drama or play in motion (Anna and Rosen, 1990).

A character in drama or play not only faces external events, also internal events, such as conflicts that happens within the character and Likumahua (2001) called it psychological conflicts. He said that psychological conflict is a conflict that occurs

within one character as the result of confusion in choosing one out of two equally things.

The reason of this analysis of psychological conflicts of Blanche DuBois is to know her emotional reactions. This is an interesting analysis because in our daily life, we also face psychological conflicts, where we are in a situation or some situations that make us choose. And because of our choices we get the result, it is our emotional reaction. The emotional reaction depends on our choices, we can be happy, sad, tired, or some other feelings. Even emotional reaction can make us frustrated (Bruno, 1974)

Blanche DuBois, as the character who will be analyzed, is a main female character in *A Streetcar Named Desire* written by Tennessee Williams. In this drama, she is a delicate, refined and sensitive character; she lives with her sister, Stella Kowalski; she has to face the masculinity of her brother in law, Stanley Kowalski; and she tries to hide her past life in Belle Reve and in Laurel. In facing those things, she faces many psychological conflicts that makes her giving emotional reaction to the psychological conflict that will be seen in the analysis later on.

## **II. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

## **II.1 Psychological Conflicts**

Likumhua (2001) said that psychological conflict is a conflict that occurs within one character as a result of choosing one out of two equally important things. There are four types of psychological conflict: (1) approach-approach conflict is a conflict between two positive goals, goals that are liked by an individual; (2) Avoidance-avoidance conflict is conflict between two negative goals, a double-bind, a no-win situation. This type of conflict tends to be somewhat more intense and painful than approach-approach conflicts, although much depend on how big the minus appears to the individual; (3) approach-avoidance conflict is a conflict between negative goal (avoidance) and positive goal (approach), the one attracts a character, the other is refused by a character; (4) double approach-avoidance conflict is a more complex situation. In this conflict we face double positive goals and double negative goals.

## **II.2 Emotional Reaction**

According to Lefton (1982), emotion is subjective feeling generally accompanied by psychological change. Bruno (1976) said that the concept of conflict and frustration are closely related. It means that emotional

reaction of someone to conflict is usually frustration. Frustration is feeling upset and discouraged that prevent somebody from doing or achieving something. There are 5 types of emotional reaction to conflict: (1) aggression is typically defined as behavior that has injurious consequences; (2) displaced aggression is other way to express aggression by changing the frustration to other ways; (3) self-aggression is him/herself become the source of frustration; (4) psychosomatic illness is hard illness that someone gets because of the frustration; (5) leave the psychological space is last emotional reaction to conflict. An individual may make a mysterious disappearance, develop amnesia, have a psychotic episode, and regress to a childlike level of behavior, and various ways of refusing to deal realistically with his/her problem.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research is a qualitative and library research. The data gathered are taken from the play and other books. The object of the study is a play which is written by Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The approach of this study is psychological approach because it focuses on individual conflicts. Someone experiences psychological

conflict in his life that makes his/her giving different emotional reaction according to weight or light the psychological conflict he/she experiences. People can observe the behavior of the characters in a roman or drama by using the help of psychological knowledge. Supposing that this characters' attitude are appropriate with what they know of human soul, so they have succeeded using the psychological modern theories for explaining and interpreting literature

#### **IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

##### **1. Psychological Conflicts that are Experienced by Blanche DuBois**

###### **a. Approach-Approach Conflict**

When the first time Blanche DuBois comes to New Orleans, she tries to flirt with Stanley Kowalski, her brother in law.

Blanche: My, but you have an impressive judicial air  
[She sprays herself with her atomizer; then playfully spray him with it. He seizes the atomizer and slams it down on the dresser. She throws back her head and laugh]  
(Scene two, page 138)

In this kind of attitude, we can see two positive goals. The first goal is she likes Stanley Kowalski because he was a stranger for her. She never meets Stanley before because Stella has left the house and comes to New Orleans, looks out for herself and

marries Stanley. She likes to intimate with stranger because she feel safety, no bound, no questions about her past.

The second goal is she wants her sister to divorce her husband because she thinks that Stanley is not a good husband for her sister. She wants Stella to have a husband who has same social status.

###### **b. Avoidance-Avoidance Conflict**

Blanche faces three avoidance-avoidance conflict. First, she pretends to not know about her husband, Allan Grey, sexual orientation because afraid of being left by her husband (a negative goal).

Blanche: ... Deluded. There was something different about the boy, nervousness, a softness and tenderness, which wasn't like a man's, although he was't the least effeminate-looking which wasn't the least effeminate-looking still that thing was there. ... Didn't know that. ... I didn't find out everything after our marriage when we'd run away and come back. ... By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty still which wasn't empty, but had two people in it. ...

....  
After that We pretended that nothing had been discovered.  
(Scene six, page 183)

From the quotation we know that Blanche and her husband 'pretended that nothing had been discovered', so Blanche lives in situation that makes her broken heart (a negative goal).

Second, the death of her family (her father, mother, her sister, Margareth and her cousin, Jesse) makes destruction of her property, the plantation, Belle Reve.

Blanche: I, I, I, took the blows in my face and my body. All of those death. ... But funeral are quiet, with pretty flowers. And, oh, what a gorgeous boxes they pack them away in! ... How in the hell do you think all the sickness of dying was paid for? Death is expensive Miss Stella! ... Belle Reve was his headquarters! ... Which of them left a cent of insurance even? That was all, Stella! And I with my pity salary in school. ... thinking I let the palce go! I let the place go?

(Scene one, page 127)

The quotation above show the avoidance-avoidance conflicts that Blanche faces. She dislikes to sell Belle Reve, her home (a minus), at the same time she has to pay the dead debts (a minus).

The last, when Blanche arrives in New Orleans for the first time, she is shocked of seeing the poor condition and poor situation, how people lived together (white and black color), and how they live in ugly, gloomy flat that only has two rooms.

[Blanche comes around the corner, carrying a valise. She looks at a slip of paper, then at the building, then again of the building. Her expression is one of shocked disbelief. Her appearance is incongruous to this setting.]

(Scene one, page 117)

After living with Stanley and Stella, she sees that Stanley is a rude person and hits Stella sometimes when he drunks.

[... there is a sound of a blow, Stella cries out. Blanche screams and runs into the kitchen ...]

Blanche: I can't live with him! ... But how could I stay here with him after last night with just those curtains between us?

(Scene four, page 161)

Stanley: ... she never had idea of returning in Laurel! They kicked her out of that high school before the term ended and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old-boy! she'd got mixed up with.

(Scene Seven, page 187)

From the quotations we see the first negative goal. Blanche cannot live in that flat, she hates live in poor neighborhood and hates Stanley's behavior. The second negative goal is she cannot go, she has no job and house anymore.

#### c. Approach-Avoidance Conflict

Mitch asks Blanche about her age and past life in Laurel, he wants Blanche to be honest to him. But, age and her past life are sensitive problems for her. She refuses to talk about it and pretends that she is as innocent as her appearance.

Mitch: How old are you?

[She makes a nervous gesture]

(Scene one, page 118)

Blanche: Yes, I want him...very badly! I just think! It happens! I can't leave here and not be anyone's problem.  
(Scene five, page 171)

From the quotations, we see that state of telling her age and her past life in Laurel is a minus. However, the plus is she likes Mitch and think of him as a way of leaving Stanley and Stella.

**d. Double Approach-Avoidance Conflict**

Blanche should choose between having relationship with Mitch and get a permanent life with him (positive goal), but telling the truth about her past life and age (negative goal). Other positive goal is she live alone, not afraid of everything and have relationship with stranger. But, the negative goal is she has no place and job.

**2. Analysis of Emotional Reaction to Conflict**

**a. Emotional reaction of Blanche DuBois after facing approach-approach conflict**

There is no emotional reaction of Blanche in this conflict because there are positive goals. She likes and enjoys the psychological conflict situation.

**b. Emotional Reaction of Blanche DuBois after facing avoidance-avoidance conflict**

In the first conflict, Blanche emotional reaction is self-aggression. She blames herself

of her husband's sexual orientation and her husband death. This emotional reaction becomes psychological illness because she has been in self-aggression for a long time and gets neurosis when talking about her dead husband.

In second conflict, her emotional reaction is displace aggression. She displaces her frustration to Stella. She blames Stella for the loss of Belle Reve because Stella doesn't help her with money for the funeral ceremony.

The last conflict brings two negative goals. She hates to leave with Stanley and Stella, but she has no job and home. Her emotional reaction is displace aggression. She puts her frustration to Stella. She does verbal fight with her and asks why she lives in this condition.

**c. Emotional Reaction od Blanche DuBois after facing approach-avoidance conflict**

Blanche's emotional reaction in this conflict is leave the psychological space. She refuses to tell her age and her past life, so she breaks up with Mitch. She cannot handle her psychological conflict and choose to leave the psychological space. She makes a mysterious appearance in front of people, regress to young behavior and in a various ways refuse to deal realistically with her problem.

d. Emotional Reaction of Blanche DuBois after facing double approach-avoidance conflict.

In this conflict, she leaves a psychological space. She refuses to face all the conflict and reality of her life about her age, her past life. She makes a mysterious appearance with a satin night gown and rhinestone in her hair. She pretends to be a queen and imagine that someone, rich person from Dallas, gives her a telegram: an invitation to a cruise of Caribbean on a yacht. She feels comfort when leaves the psychological space and pretends that everything is okay. She creates a world of fantasy wherein she can rationalize her behavior as being the result of unprotected, sensitive and delicate nature. In doing these, she avoids facing reality of her physical and sensual desire and creates illusion of protection from aliens.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGETION**

Psychological conflicts that are experienced by Blanche DuBois are: approach-approach conflict where she has two positive goals, this conflict has no emotional reaction; avoidance-avoidance conflict where she faces two negative goals of the conflict. Her emotional reaction is self-aggression and

displace aggression; in approach-avoidance conflict she faces a positive and negative goals, but she doesn't choose the positive goal. Her emotional reaction is leave the psychological space; in double approach-avoidance conflict she faces double positive and double negative goals. Her emotional reaction is leave the psychological space.

This study will be developed further becoming psychological conflict that influence the characteristic of Blanche DuBois because she is a complex character and has complex characteristics. We can see the themes, motifs and symbols that implicit in that play. For example, the theme is fantasy, inability to overcome reality and relationship between sex and death; for the motive is light, bathing and drunkenness; and for the symbols are the Varsouvina polka and shadow and cry.

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