

**DEFENSE MECHANISM IN THE MAIN CHARACTER OF TENNESSEE  
WILLIAMS' A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**

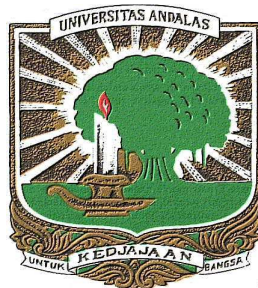
**A Thesis**

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment to  
The Requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Sasatra*

**Written By:**

**MEIRIZA LIDYA**

**04 185 006**



**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF LETTERS – ANDALAS UNIVERSITY**

**PADANG**

**2011**

## ABSTRAK

Dalam skripsi ini penulis menganalisis sebuah drama karya Tennessee Williams berjudul A Streetcar Named Desire. Skripsi ini membahas gangguan kejiwaan seorang tokoh perempuan yang berperilaku aneh di dalam drama ini. Perilaku-perilaku aneh yang dialami Blanche Dubois adalah: takut berada di ruangan yang bercahaya terang, sering mandi air panas ketika suhu udara sedang panas, suka berbohong dan suka berhalusinasi. Analisis ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan kondisi-kondisi kejiwaan yang dialami Blanche dan penyebab dari kondisi kejiwaan nya tersebut. Selain itu, analisis ini juga bertujuan untuk menjelaskan mekanisme pertahanan diri yang digunakan oleh Blanche untuk melindungi diri nya dan untuk mengurangi dan menghilangkan ancaman, dorongan, dan konflik.

Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif, yaitu dengan mengambil kutipan-kutipan sebagai pembuktian dan pendukung analisis dalam skripsi ini. Hasil dari analisis tersebut dipaparkan melalui metode deskriptif. Dalam analisis data penulis mengaplikasikan teori Psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud, yang mengarahkan analisis pada kondisi-kondisi kejiwaan serta teori mekanisme pertahanan diri yang juga dikembangkan oleh Sigmund Freud.

Dari hasil analisis data ditemukan kondisi-kondisi kejiwaan seperti: Phobia, Hallusinasi, perasaan bersalah dan psikosis. Kondisi-kondisi kejiwaan ini adalah gambaran dari konflik yang terjadi antara struktur kepribadiannya: the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Serta perilaku yang ditampilkan tersebut dominan muncul dari perilaku yang tidak disadari (*the unconscious*). Penyebab dari kondisi kejiwaan itu adalah: kehilangan harta warisan leluhur, kematian suami, kehilangan pekerjaan dan diperkosa adik iparnya. Dari penelitian ini penulis juga menemukan tiga mekanisme pertahanan diri yang digunakan oleh Blanche, yaitu: *fantasy* (fantasi), *denial of reality* (menyangkal kenyataan), dan *regression* (regresi).

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

Human beings have mind or soul that makes them different from other creatures and it is used by the human beings to control their life. According to Freud in Guerin, “by using their mind consciously or unconsciously, human beings organize and coordinate all of their actions by means of their mental process.” (123). Human can feel, memorize, and think by using their mind or soul which is known as psyche, and it can be studied in a specific discipline which is called psychology.

Furthermore, psychology takes the important role in literature, because the composition of literary work in its story could not be apart from the psychological aspect. According to Thomas, the relationship between literature and psychology “is that both of sciences are from the same branches that are humanity sciences.” (10). It can be concluded that all psyche problems and conflicts that human faced in their life can be existed in the literary work.

Here the writer chooses a play to be analyzed. Because it is the kind of literary works beside novel and poetry that portrays human life. In this case, the writer analyzes Tennessee Williams’ play which is entitled A Streetcar Named Desire. Tennessee Williams (March 26, 1911- February 24, 1983) was an American playwright. He had written many plays and got two Pulitzer Prize and four New York Drama Critics’ Circle Awards, beside A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), his other great work are The Glass Menagerie (1944), The Rose Tattoo (1950-1951), Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955), Orpheus Descending (1957-1958), Sweet Bird of Youth (1959), and Night of the Iguana (1961).

It is interesting to analyze A Streetcar Named Desire by using psychological approach because this play portrays the life of a woman that has strange behavior namely Blanche Dubois. The strange behaviors such as: she often takes shower and bathing on hot tub when temperature is hot, she feels scared to stand up in the bright light, she always lies, and always wants to be seen perfect in front of men. All of the problems are caused by some factual backgrounds that influence the life of Blanche Dubois such: marital failure with her loving husband who commits suicide, losing her own home Belle Reve which made her poor, her scandal in Laurel. Then, she always forced her sister to leave the house where she stayed with her husband, because that house is the picture of the poor people's house.

From the fact above, the writer assures that the past memory and the traumatic experience that happened in the life of Blanche Dubois, give the big influence to her attitude as seen in the drama A Streetcar Named Desire.

Based on the explanation above, the writer wants to analyze this play by applying psychological criticism and entitled this thesis **“Defense Mechanisms in the Main Character of Tennessee Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire.”**

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

The play entitled A Streetcar Named Desire tells us about a woman that has psychological conflicts in her life, her name was Blanche Dubois. She cannot accept the reality that happened in her life that made her behavior strange. Such as: often talking lie, afraid to stand in the bright light and often bathing in hot tub when the season is hot. The strange behaviors of Blanche Dubois are caused by some factual backgrounds such: loss of her home plantation, the death of her husband, losing her job, and raped by her brother-in-law.

So, in conducting this research, the writer focuses on the analysis of the strange behaviors which is shown by Blanche Dubois (the main character), the self defense mechanisms which are used by Blanche to face her conflicts. The strange behaviors of Blanche and the way that she uses these defenses are the main problems that the writer wants to analyze.

### **1.3 Objective of the Research**

The objective of the study is to describe the strange behaviors of the main character (Blanche Dubois) as seen in Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire by searching her psychological conditions, and analyze the causes of her psychological conditions, and to find out what kind of self defense mechanisms which are used by the main character in facing her conflicts.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

In order to focus the analysis, the writer has to limit the problem of analysis. The writer focuses on:

1. The psychological conditions of the main character in Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire.
2. The causes of the psychological conditions of the main character in Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire.
3. The type of defense mechanisms, used by the main character in Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire.

### 1.5 Review to Previous Study

The analysis that is related to the play A Streetcar Named Desire, the writer finds a thesis by Harsudasev, a student of English Department of Andalas University Padang which analyzes this play in Linguistics study area. Her thesis entitled Preliminary Analysis of Situation-Sentences in Tennessee Williams "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1998), in her research she focuses on the situation sentences in conversation in the play A Streetcar Named Desire. Because situation sentences are very important elements to begin a conversation. By knowing and understanding how to begin and use a good start to speak to someone, whom we know well or whom we do not know yet, we will create a good conversation and even a friendly one and we hope that our conversation will have a communicative impression. These situation sentences include greetings, calls, exclamations, requisitions, requests and statements.

Another researcher who has done a research on A Streetcar Named Desire is Nicole Morgan (2003) cited in <http://www.helium.com/>. In her analysis she found that Williams' work is often considered as "one of the most savage indictments of culture in our time" and A Streetcar Named Desire is no exception. The play challenged the taboo issues of violence, homosexuality, and promiscuity whilst the 1951 film adaption caused great controversy despite censorship carried out by the Motion Picture Association of America and the Catholic Legion of Decency. Since it is Stanley's rape of Blanche that leads to her inevitable demise, it is important to consider the significance that Williams use of violence bears to the play as a whole.

Thus, the previous study that used same criticisms, psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud is the writer found as a thesis of English Department, Andalas University, conducted by Destri Zulaika (2005). In her research Destri Zulaika focuses on the impact of superego on Esther's personality in the novel Bell Jar by Sylvia Path. She found that the main character

Esther Greenwood is categorized as a young woman for she is still nineteenth years old. Normally, in that age the teenager has some personality developments and self-reorganizations. What happens to Esther is contradictory which cannot balance between her needs, her instinct, and the norms which exist around her. Moreover, it gives negatives effect to her personality in brings her to the dark world named madness.

Then, another student named Noveriandi (2005). In his research, he focuses on the effects of psychological problem on the main characters in the novel Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill's. He found that the main character in this novel: Mary Tyrone and James Jr. Tyrone have ill psychological problems (disappointment and fear) which give the effect to each character by incidence of drug addiction and alcoholism. Mary is addicted to morphine and James drinks whiskey as an escapist. He analyzes the effect of these main characters' psychological problems by applying Freud's psychoanalysis on three zones human personality: the id, ego, and superego and also scrutinizes their ego defense mechanisms. They used: Denial, Projection, Rationalization, and sublimation.

It is different from entire researches, the writer focuses her analysis on psychological conditions of the main character, and then how the main character uses the ego defense mechanisms in solving her conflicts. The writer uses Sigmund Freud theory (three psychic zones: the id, ego, and superego) and defense mechanism.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

After analyzing Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire, the writer gets full description of kinds of self defense mechanisms that is presented by Williams in his play. The main character in this play (Blanche Dubois) has tragic experience in her life that lead her into strange behavior, such as often talking lie, afraid to stand under the bright light, often bath even the season is hot soaks her body long time in the tub. All the strange behaviors of Blanche were the reflection of her psychological condition such: phobia, hallucination, feeling of guilty, and psychosis.

The causes of Blanche strange behavior came from her life background, such as: loss of her ancestral home, the death of her husband, losing her job, and raped by her brother in law. She tries to forget what happened in her life, but she cannot remove those all from her mind. Therefore, to overcome her conflicts Blanche seems to use the self defense mechanisms to reduce her anxiety and to make her three psychic zones (id, ego, and superego) in balance. The self defense mechanisms that she uses are fantasy, denial of reality, projection, and regression.

Fantasy used by Blanche when she cannot face the reality that she was no boy friend and no husband anymore. Blanche told things not as it was, but she wanted things to be, such as have a rich boy friend and have a trip with him during the Christmas holiday, and she has the fantasy that Mitch will marry her. Blanche uses this defense mechanism in order to fulfill her desire that undiscovered in the reality. It is to reduce the anxiety because of the problem.

Blanche also uses denial of reality as self defense. She uses it when she refuses the reality which happens in her life that she was not rich anymore. Therefore, she always acts like a rich person, the way of her life still looks like a noble, although she got the wealth by



prostitution. She uses denial of reality in order to defense her life from her weakness to confront the truth and to reduce the anxiety. And the last, regression, she uses it to reduce her disappointment or anxiety because of the lost of her ancestral home, the lost of her job, and the lost of her loving husband that leads her to looks the pleasure by drinking alcohol.

By analyzing the play A Streetcar Named Desire from psychological aspects of Blanche, the writer finds out that the past memory become one thing that most influential thing in Blanche life. It influence of a whole life of Blanche as we can see in this play. The traumatic experience of Blanche became psychological problem that disturbed the stability of Blanche's id, ego, and superego. This disturbance triggers the strange behavior that turns her into madness.

Finally, the analysis in this writing focuses on the psychological problem and the self defense mechanisms of the main character in Tennessee Williams A Streetcar Named Desire. However, there are more possible things that could be analyzed in this play. Therefore, the writer suggests the other researchers in the future to investigate the other possible things of A Streetcar Named Desire which are not analyzed in this writing.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bogdan, Robert C. Qualitative Research Education: An Introduction to the Theory and Method. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc, 1982.
- Coleman, James C. Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life. California: Scott Foresman and Company, 1976.
- Davidoff, L Linda. Introduction to Psychology, second edition. Japan: McGrawhill International Book Company, 1980.
- Endaswra, Suwardi. Metodologi penelitian Sastra. Yogyakarta: Pusataka Widyatama. 2003.
- Encyclopedia Britanica Vol.5. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britanica. 1974.
- Fromm, Erich. Psychoanalysis and religion. New York: Avon Books. 1988.
- Guerin, Wilfred L, et al. A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999.
- Gibaldi, Joseph and Achtert, Walters. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Third Edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America. 1988.
- Harsudasev. Preliminary Analysis of Situation-Sentences in Tennessee Williams "A Streetcar Named Desire". Padang: Faculty of Letters Andalas University. 1998.
- Kenney, William. How to Analyze Fiction. New York: Monach Press.
- Klarer, Mario. An Introduction to Literary Studies. New York: Routledge. 2004.
- Mandrake, Raleigh. Psikologi Abnormal. Yogyakarta: rake Press. 1976.
- Morgan, Nicole. <http://www.helium.com/items/1210362-violence-in-a-streetcar-named-desire>. 2003.

Noveriandi. The Effects of Psychological Problems on the Main Character in Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night. Padang: Faculty of Letters Andalas University, 2005.

Thomas and Debold. Psychology: A Systematic Introduction. New Mac-Graw Hill Company.1971.

Williams, Tennessee. A Streetcar Named Desire. Canada: Penguin Canada Books, Ltd. 1947.

Zulaika, Destri. The Impact of Superego on Esther's Personality in Silvia Path's Bell Jar. Padang: Faculty of Letters Anadals University, 2005.

Zaviera, Ferdinand. Teori Kepribadian Sigmund Freud. Jokjakarta: Prismasophie, 2007.

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/com](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/com). The Definition of Psychosis. 2010  
[www.phobialist.com/](http://www.phobialist.com/). The Phobia List. 2010.