

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

Tennessee Williams is widely considered as the greatest playwrights in the history of American Drama. He was born on March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi. He received some of top theatrical awards for his literary works. He won the Pulitzer Prize for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and reached a wider audience. His masterpieces include *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Rose Tatto*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Summer and Smoke*.

The writer chooses two plays that bring him to his popularity; *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. *The Glass Menagerie* was premiered in 1945, it consists of seven scenes and four characters. The writer takes three main characters to be analyzed. *A Streetcar Named Desire* was published in 1947, it is generally considered Williams' greatest works. *A Streetcar Named Desire* consists of twelve characters and eleven scenes. However, the writer will not take all of the characters to be analyzed. The writer will only focus on analyzing two female characters and some male characters that support the research.

The Glass Menagerie and *A Streetcar Named Desire* took place in the American industrial society. Female characters in this society tend to be powerless, they often come up with their inferiority while men are the superior who have control over women, as Millet's in Selden's *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, "Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women" (2005:123). Patriarchal norm places women as the second, there have been just something that women cannot do better than men. This ideology indirectly becomes a cultural mindset which put the women's right aside, it also gives the limited space for women to get the equal right.

Male writers often present stereotypes of female characters, as a wife and mother to play their roles in a submissive and powerless condition. The portrayal of female characters in these plays represent the sort of challenges that women have to face in the 20th century, they all are oppressed by the patriarchal norm. According to Hooks in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, stated that “patriarchal system believes that men are all-powerful, major class, oppressor-the enemy, women are the oppressed-the victims. Men are the basic form of domination. Women who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically, and spiritually-women who are powerless to change their condition in life, they are a silent majority” (1984:1). Williams presents these female characters not to be dominant in their society, their characters seem to be the reflections of women with the lack of voices and being dependent on men while men impose their will on women and try to convince them as their inferiority.

The writer has some reasons for choosing these plays. The writer is interested in analyzing the issue about stereotypes of major characters that focuses on male and female. The writer assumes female characters in these plays are not only represented as submissive ones as most of literary work written by male writers. They are showing their ability to maintain their dignity; they have different ways of thinking with patriarchal women.

1.2 The Identification of Problems

Women in patriarchal belief are considered as uneducated, weak, and dependent. The writer argues that Williams’ female characters are not fully accepting the images that usually adhered to women in patriarchal society; they are not entirely intimidated women. In contrast, they show their ability and different way of thinking to face their problem. These female characters try to show that they are not truly passive. The writer does not only analyze the female characters, but she also analyzes male characters. The writer assumes that Williams’ male characters in these plays are not only represented as the superior one but also, at some

point, they are represented as the inferior characters. The writer assumes Williams create dynamic characters that did not firm in one stereotype. Thus, based on Cixous' perspective in Patriarchal Binary Thought the writer thinks Williams shows ambiguous ideas in presenting these characters.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

In this research, the writer focuses on the stereotypes of major characters; male and female characters, especially their traits in facing their lives. The writer only focuses on these plays and do not take any consideration towards Williams' life. The writer proposes two research questions; it will be the limitation in conducting this research. The research questions that the writer investigates are:

1. What are the uncertainty stereotypes that represented by main characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie*?
2. How are the ambiguous characterizations in these two plays?

1.4 The Objectives of the Research

This research aims to find out the stereotype of major characters that is constructed by Tennessee Williams in *A Street Car Named* and *The Glass Menagerie*, and map out the analysis into Patriarchal Binary Thought proposed by Helene Cixous. The writer assumes that Williams has an ambiguous perspective towards gender roles as seen in the stereotype of major characters. The writer hopes this research will be useful for the other researchers and will enrich the literary research.

1.5 The Review of the Related Studies

Many researchers have read and discussed Williams' plays, among them is Daniel Brent Barnard in his dissertation entitled *The Symbolism of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie: An Inductive Approach* (2007), His research focuses on how Williams transforms

the language of the symbol to be his fictions character. He argues that *The Glass Menagerie* every element of the play totally serves as a symbol, which amplifies the struggle between Laura and her anxiety. He states that (2007), “Williams expressed himself in the language of symbols. They were not ornaments to his work but were to his mind the only satisfactory means of expressing himself as an artist, and predate almost every other consideration in the process of composition”. He believes that this play is dedicated to the way Williams express himself is concerned with the message contained in symbols rather than just an art. This research supports the writer’s opinion above about the hidden meaning through the symbols in Williams’ play *The Glass Menagerie*. In conclusion, this research has a contribution to strengthen the idea of the writer in doing this analysis.

The second research is a journal article of Williams’ plays written by Dr. Sneha Sharma entitled *Concept of Morality in Tennessee Williams’ The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire* (2014). The result of her analysis refers to the main characters Blanche and Amanda, who tries to escape from her nature as the feminine patriarchal society that Williams presents in these plays, Sharma states that, “escaping from the reality of their own true nature by the exercise of simulation and dissimulation is also a breach of the facet of true morality”, (116). She surely argues that Williams’ those female characters try to escape from their own nature as a feminine, and she concludes that it is a kind of moral deviation. This research by Sharma gives the information about moral values related to the nature of masculine and feminine roles.

Journal article written by Wei Fang entitled *Blanche’s Destruction: Feminist Analysis on A Streetcar Named Desire* (2008), this analysis focuses on one female character; she focuses on Blanche, who was known as the representative of a delicate and fragile woman in this play. Wei-fang finds the typical heroine from the perspective of feminism in terms of social culture, economic factor and women’s psychology as the main factors for Blanche

destruction. According to Wei (2008), she states that “Blanche may suggest that if women place their hope and fortune on men, their oppressed and subordinate status can never be changed, and their dream of a happy life is bound to break. In short, women’s economic dependence on men in patriarchal society serves as one of the factors that result in Blanche’s destruction” (104). The researcher argues Blanche tries to break the rules of the patriarchal norm, but when she fights for the equality it becomes the main problem that brings her to the destruction. However, this research shows how we have to do the research about feminism, especially representation of women. At last this research becomes the strengthen ideas of this research.

Fourth, an undergraduate thesis entitled *Stereotypical Gender Roles and their Patriarchal Effects in A Streetcar Named Desire* (2012), written by Christian Bauer, it reveals how women dependent on men in facing their unfair life dominated by men’s power. In this research, Christian examines the stereotypical gender roles, and he identifies certain gender stereotypes defined in literature. The intention of this research is the similarities and differences between the defined stereotypes of the three main characters in the play. Christian finds that there are three stereotypes; they are the submissive wife, the Southern Belle, and the Macho. Christian concludes that Stanley Kowalski gets his roles as the true nature of patriarchal ideology. This research is very useful to enrich the writer’s knowledge and understanding about the patriarchal society.

Fifth, an undergraduate thesis written by Ruth Foley entitled *Women as Victims in Tennessee Williams’ First Three Major Plays* (2013). Foley uses three plays which are *The Glass Menagerie*, *Summer*, and *Smoke*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She argues that Williams’ works show about helpless women who are victims in Southern patriarchal society, either destroyed in their search for identity and security. She states, “Williams dramatizes the plight of women by indirectly making his audience aware of female victimization through these

means” (7). Based on her analysis she believes that Williams’ plays are relevant to the predicament of women in western society at the time. This research has contributions to strengthen the idea of the writer in conducting this analysis.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The aspect of feminist literary criticism is to define women’s roles in a particular society very precisely applies to these plays, particularly the theory about images of women. The writer will analyze these plays by using feminist critics to prove whether the playwright’s ideas support feminist or not.

Literary works become one of the medium of women’s movement; it started when women writers have their freedom to express women’s voices through literary works. Feminist literary criticism is used to analyze the images of female characters in these plays. As Barry in his supporting book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural theory*, Barry states that “The feminist literary criticism of today is the direct product of the women's movement of the 1960s. This movement was, in important ways, literary from the start, in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their playwrightity and their coherence” (1995:122).

Furthermore, to support and strengthen the analysis of this research, the writer applies Patriarchal binary thought that is proposed by Helene Cixous. She is a French feminist and also as a writer. This critic applied to examine how the images of women in patriarchal society, as Cixous’ in Tyson’s book *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* he states that,

language reveal[s] what she calls *Patriarchal binary thought*, which might be defined as seeing the world in terms of polar opposite, one of which is considered superior to the other. Examples include such hierarchical binary oppositions as head/heart, father/mother,

culture/nature, intelligible/palpable (that which can be understood by the mind versus that which can be felt by the body), sun/moon, and activity/passivity. Opposition like these organize the way we think, and for each opposition Cixous asks, “where is [the woman]?. That is, which side of each opposition is assumed to define some aspect of the female? Clearly, according to patriarchal thinking, the woman occupies the right side of each of these oppositions, the side that patriarchy considers inferior” (1999:100).

These binaries explain about the opposition between men and women in many societies based on the patriarchy. Based on the patriarchal norms, female characters are always on the negative sides, it is regarded as the passive one. Along with the history of feminist criticism, patriarchy puts female characters into the inferior one, while men are always in the superior. As Cixous cited in Tyson’s *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, “The question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition activity/passivity. Patriarchal thinking believes that women are born to be passive while men are born to be active because it is natural for the sexes to be different in this way. Thus, if a woman is not passive she is not really women. Of course it follows that women are naturally submissive to men, that men are natural leader” (1999:101). Patriarchal belief puts women as the second form of domination, while men are the basic of domination.

Therefore, based on these binary oppositions the writer wants to examine Williams’ major characters by using these binary oppositions. These binaries are going to determine whether Williams’ female characters set new images of women or the way around.

The writer also uses Intertextual Criticism since the meanings that produce and find within language are relational. They depend upon processes of combination and association within the differential system of language itself. This relational aspect of language cannot be avoided, as Barthes’ in Graham Allens’ book entitled *Intertextuality New critical idiom* (2011):

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture ... the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely (9).

Intertextuality is a literary device that creates an 'interrelationship between texts' and generates related understanding in separate works. A literary discourse strategy utilised by writers in novels, poetry, theatre and even in non-written texts. This concept concerns much more than simply identifying literary references or inspirations. Rather, the idea of intertextuality is an expression of the complicated dependence of literary works on all the literature that has come before them. To put it another way, people share a wide variety of experiences in literature, and intertextuality occurs where authors use these shared experiences to communicate their ideas with their audiences. Therefore, perhaps the best definition of intertextuality would be the use of complex literary relationships as a means of communication.

1.7 The Methods of Research

1.7.1 Collecting the data

In conducting this research, there are three steps will be followed. The first step is collecting data. The method used in collecting the data is library research method and supported by two kinds of data: primary data and secondary data. *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams are the source of the primary data and the secondary data are from other materials, supporting books, internet web page which is concerning feminist approach, and any related sources.

1.7.2 Analyzing the data

The second step is analyzing the data. The first step is the writer reads the story intensively so the writer can understand the whole story. Next, the writer starts noting the important description and dialogue, which indicates the building of the analysis. After that, the writer tries to elaborate the characters of women that are built by Williams through the female characters in these plays, and relate them to Cixous's explanation about the patriarchal binary thought of men and women.

1.7.3 Presenting the result of analysis

In presenting the result of analysis the writer will analyze by using qualitative research. According to Bodgan and Knoopbiklen, "qualitative research is descriptive, the data are collected in the form of word or picture rather than numbers. The result of the research contains some quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation" (1982:28). This method provides an analysis, evaluation or judgment of the quality of a literary or artistic works, dramatic performance, art exhibit or dramatic production.

