A DECONSTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS OF BLANCE DUBOIS AS THE MAIN CHARACTER IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisa tentang karakter Blanche Dubois di dalam drama karangan Tennessee Williams, seorang penulis dari Amerika, dengan judul A Streetcar Named Desire. Drama ini merupakan drama tragedi yang disertai dengan konflik-konflik kehidupan dan percintaan. Blanche Dubois sebagai karakter utama dalam drama ini mengalami konflik yang rumit baik konflik dengan dirinya sendiri dan juga konflik dengan karakter yang lain. Di sini penulis akan menganalisa perkembangan karakter Blanche Dubois apakah karakternya mengalami perubahan yaitu dinamis atau statis yaitu tidak mengalami perubahan karakter sama sekali dengan menggunakan teori plot. Setelah itu, penulis akan membuat kontradiksi dengan cerita sebenarnya yang ada dalam drama ini dengan menggunakan teori dekonstruktif. Bagi sebagian pembaca yang membaca drama ini akan turut merasakan kehidupan Blanche Dubois yang tragis tapi penulis akan membuktikan bahwa kehidupan Blanche tidaklah tragis dengan mengemukakan bukti-bukti berupa kutipan-kutipan percakapan di dalam drama ini.

Kata-kata kunci : Dekonstruktif, karakter, statis dan tragis

A. INTRODUCTION

Drama is one of literary genre. Drama is one type of literature that presents a picture of life of a certain time. It imitates reality through representation rather than narration. It tells a story through the speech and action of the characters. Drama can be differentiated into ancient and modern drama. A Streetcar Named Desire is one of Tennessee Williams’ works. It belongs to modern drama because it is written in 1947.

I am interested in Tennessee Williams’ works of literature especially A Streetcar Named Desire because he can arise the readers emotion through his plays. William reveals his bitter life into his works and some of his works are
I present this analysis because I will use the deconstructive analysis in analyzing the main character named Blanche Dubois with her complicated problems. First of all, I will explain about Blanche’s character development as the dominant character whether her character is static or dynamic. After that, I will deconstruct Blanche’s character by using related theories and quotations so that I can find the valuable findings that have never been discussed before.

Theoretical Review

There are many theories related to character stated by several theorists, namely M.J. Murphy, C. Hugh Holman, and William Harmon. According to M.J. Murphy in Understanding Unseen, he divides character into a few ways. One of them is personal description in which the author gives a description of the character’s physical appearance. The second way is character as seen by another. Here we are paying attention to the other’s opinion about the character. The next way is the use of speech. Whenever the character speaks, whether it is to himself or in conversation with others, readers will always be given such a clue about the character. Another way that is also important for readers is learning something about the character’s past life. Here we can find out what events shape a person’s character. The next way is conversation of others. The author can also give us clues to a person’s character through the conversations of other people and the things they say about him. The sixth way is reactions. Here, the author can also give us a clue to a person’s character by letting us know how that person reacts to various situations and events. The last three ways are direct comment of the author about the character, the thoughts of the character which is directly given by the author, and mannerism which are related with the character’s manner and habit (1970: 161 – 173).

According to Holman and Harmon, a character may be either static or dynamic. A static character is one who changes little (1986: 83). Things happen to such a character without things happening within. The pattern of action reveals the character rather than showing the character changing in response to the actions. Sometimes a static gives the appearance of changing simply because our picture of the characters is revealed bit by bit. A dynamic character, on the other hand, is one who is modified by actions and experiences,
and one objective of the work in which the character appears is to reveal the consequences of these actions. The theories of characters are used to distinguish between the static and the dynamic character also the personal description of Blanche Dubois as the main character.

The next theory is plot. There are many theories of plot according to different sources but I only use the theory of plot stated by Stanton in An Introduction to Fiction. He says that there are laws of plot which are divided into three sections that are beginning, middle and the end. Plot is reasonable and logical. Sometimes plot gives the reader a shock and it makes the reader curious (1965: 14). This theory is used to analyze Blanche’s character development from the beginning until the end.

The theory of deconstructive analysis is stated by Subur Wardoyo in A Road Map into Literary Research Method. He states that there are three steps process in the deconstructive analysis, first is locate an opposition, second is determine which member is privileged and the last is reverse and undermine the hierarchy (p. 350-351).

Another theory of deconstructive is stated by Jacques Derrida in An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism. He is post-structuralist from France. He states, “Deconstruction is political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought and, behind that, a whole system of political structure and social institutions maintains its force” (1986: 54).

One post-structuralist, Michael Foucault, argue that Derrida’s own decision to avoid questions about the extent to which the text arises out of and reflects underlying social practices itself reflects a social practice.

Another theorists who are unsympathetic to Derrida’s writing. In their view, deconstruction is as a movement or a field. They sometimes call it deconstructionism. Based on their view, “Deconstructionism is a form of relativism or nihilism, and a strategy of textual criticism which scrutinizes the superficial features of the author’s language rather than his or her deeper arguments”.

Deconstructive term has been controversial. It is accused as nihilistic, parasitic and silly. Although Derrida claims that deconstruction is a political right, however, some of its harshest criticism comes from the political left. Depite this controversy, deconstruction remains a major force in contemporary philosophy and literary criticism and theory.
According to Eagleton the main characteristics of deconstruction are that it rejects any notion of totality and that it is against the privileging of the unitary subject. He also writes that,

Many of the vauntedly novel themes of deconstruction do little more than reproduce some of the most commonplace topics of bourgeois liberalism. The modest disownment of theory, method and system; the revulsion from the dominative, totalizing and unequivocally denotative; the privileging plurality and heterogeneity; the recurrent gestures of hesitation at indeterminacy; the devotion to gliding and process, slippage and movement the disaste for the definitive — it is not difficult to wee why such and idiot should become so quickly absorbed within the Anglo-Saxon academies (1986 : 56).

Those theories of deconstructive above are used to prove to the readers that Blanche's life is not tragic.

B. ANALYSIS

1. Blanche’s Character Development

Blanche Dubois as the main character in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is static character. From the beginning until the end of the story, her character does not change. In the beginning, Blanche is introduced as an unstable woman. It is because of her nerve and heavy burden of her past life. She is a young girl when she marries Allan. Eventually it turns ot that, her husband, but her husband cannot accept his own reality. Her commits suicide by shooting his head. Left by her husband, Blanche becomes unstable. She seeks protection from one man to another in order to fill her empty heart.

Blanche. .... That's why I’ve been—not so awf’ly good lately. I’ve run for protection, Stella, from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof—because it was storm—all storm, and I was—caught in the center ... People don’t see you—men don’t—don’t even admit your existence admitted by someone, if you’re going to have someone’s protection. (p. 169).

Blanche is a glamorous woman who is accustomed to live in luxury. Thus she is fussy with Stella’s home condition because she will stay there. Blanche does not have any idea that Stella lives in the slum area.
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Blanche. ..... You sit down, now and explain this place to me! What are you doing in a place like this?
...... Why, that you had to live in these condition! (p. 121)

Blanche is an expressive woman. She cannot keep and take the burden by herself. Therefore she likes to tell her burden like the lost of Belle Reve and her homosexual husband. She is also hopeless and tends to blame Stella for not taking the responsibility of losing the Belle Reve.

Blanche. I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! ... And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I left the place go! ... How in hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella! And old Cousin Jessie's right after Margaret's her! Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep! ... Stella, Belle Reve was his headquarters! Honey-that's how it slipped through my fingers! ... (p. 127).

Blanche. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's ... (p.182)

Blanche is also a possessive woman. She is worried of Stella's marriage life. She does not give consent when Stella marries Stanley. Blanche regards that Stanley's attitude and movement is like animal. Therefore Blanche is scared of him and she tries to influence Stella to leave him.

Blanche..... There's something downright-bestial-about him!
You're hating me saying this, aren't you? (p.163)

Blanche is sensitive woman and easy to get nervous. When Blanche is reminded about her past life, especially about her marriage, she begins to faint. Blanche has married once but unfortunately her husband is dead.
Stanley: You were married once, weren’t you?
Blanche: Yes. When I was quite young.
Stanley: What happened?
Blanche: They boy – the boy died. (She sinks back down). I’m afraid I’m going to be sick! (Her head falls on her arms) (p.130)

Blanche is a liar. It is proved in the event that Blanche is afraid to tell her real age to Mitch. She is scared that Mitch will leave her because she really wants Mitch. She hopes that Mitch will become her husband. Blanche also covers her dark past life to Mitch. Unfortunately, she has to receive the consequence of her lie. She is refused by Mitch after knowing her past life.

Blanche: I mean I haven’t informed him – of my real age!
I want to deceive him enough to make him – want me …
Yes – I want Mitch … very badly! Just think! If it happens!
I can leave here and not be anyone’s problem … (p.171)

Blanche is also a woman who is unable to control her intention and desire because of her nerve so she dares to seduce the magazine’s seller by saying, “Well, you do, honey lamb. Come here! Come on, over here like I told! I want to kiss you just once – softly and sweetly on your mouth” (p. 174).

Blanche is despair and lonely therefore she lives in illusion as her compensation. She does not want to live in a real world because reality gives her pain and sorrow. Thus she covers her past life to everyone. In her opinion pretending is important to her because it is half of a lady’s charm.

Blanche: I don’t want realism
Blanche: I misrepresent things to them. I don’t tell the truth. I tell what ought to be truth. (p. 204).

In the middle of the story, Blanche’s burden life is heavier than before. She should accept the pain after she is raped by Stanley. Blanche’s weak condition is exploited by Stanley.

(She moans. The bottle – top falls. She sinks to her knees. He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed) (p. 215)
At the end of the story, Blanche's character is the same as the beginning. Her character is still unstable. Blanche's unstable character brings bad impact to her so that her life falls into insanity. It is proved on the last scene when Blanche is expecting the gentleman from Dallas who is only in her imagination. Whereas, every one has prepared Blanche's departure to a mental hospital. When the doctor and the matron come, Blanche is refused to go with them because they are not the people she expects to come. Then Blanche is forced to go with them but she becomes hysterical. Seeing her condition, the doctor becomes personalized and he asks gently to Blanche to go with them. Finally Blanche goes along with them to a mental hospital.

Doctor Miss Dubois

(She turns her face to him and stares at him with desperate pleading. He smiles; then he speaks to the matron).

It won't be necessary.
Blanche Ask her to let go of me
Doctor Let go
Blanche Whoever you are I have always depended on the kindness of strangers. (p. 225).

2. Deconstruction of Blanche's Character

In applying Subur Wardoyo's theory of deconstruction toward Blanche's character, the first step is to locate an opposition. In A Streetcar Named Desire, there are clear oppositions between Blanche Dubois and Stanley Kowalski, his brother in law, also between Blanche and her inner conflict. Blanche has been raped by Stanley Kowalski and when she tells the story to her sister named Stella, she is being ignored.

Stella I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.
Eunice Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going (p. 217).

From the conversation above Stella thinks that Blanche is insane and her mind is full of illusion.
The second opposition is between Blanche and her inner conflict. Blanche lives in her own world. She likes to create illusion. She considers herself as a rich person that once she used to be. She keeps pretending to live as glamour as rich people. She also likes to seduce men even boys that finally it makes her fired from school.

Stanley ........ She didn't resign temporarily from the high school because of her nerves! No, siree, Bob! She didn't. They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! a seventeen-year-old boy — she'd gotten mixed up with!

The second step is to determine which member is privileged. The dominant character is Blanche Dubois. She becomes the center of attention in this paper. All problems that I am going to analyze come from Blanche's character.

The last step is to reverse and undermine this hierarchy. It means that I will make contradiction with the real story. In A Streetcar Named Desire, Blanche is as the main character whose life is tragic. In a story Blanche becomes the character who is defeated by other character, namely Stanley, Stella, Mitch, the man whom she loves very much. In a story, it is clearly shown that Blanche is the character who holds the important role. When people read A Streetcar Named Desire, they will have a pity on Blanche. She is the victim of raping done by her brother in law and she is treated with injustice. When she tells the rape's story to her sister, she is being ignored. Furthermore, she is regarded as an insane woman so that it makes her sent to the mental hospital. Another bitter story from Blanche is that when she is left by Mitch, a man whom she loves so much. Mitch refuses to marry Blanche because she once to be a prostitute.

Mitch I don't think I want to marry you anymore
You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother. (p.207).

In fact, Blanche can be a normal woman when she realizes her life has already changed from the rich person to the poor. For being a prostitute, in my opinion is her life choice.
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Blanche ... People don’t see you – men don’t – don’t even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you’ve got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you’re going to have someone’s protection. (p.169).

She uses to live in glamour and when she falls into poverty, she is not ready yet to receive her reality. That’s why she chooses the easiest way to get money by being a prostitute. Giving response to her problem of being raped, she has a role in it. She likes to flirt men even boys.

Blanche Well, you do, honey lamb. Come here! Come on over here like I told you! I want to kiss you just once – softly and sweetly on your mouth. (Without waiting for him to accept, she crosses quickly to him and presses her lips to his). (p.174).

It is possible when Stanley is tempted seeing her behavior and attitude so that is makes him raping her. Responding to her illusion, it is influenced by her past experiences. She once married when she was young but unfortunately her husband was getting suicide. Then it makes her like to create illusion, such as telling to Stanley that she has many admirers who are falling in love with her. In fact, all of her stories are only her illusion.

Stanley Was this before or after the telegram came from the Texas oil millionaire?
Blanche What telegram? No! No, after! As a matter of fact, the wire came just as
Stanley As a matter of fact there wasn’t no wire at all! There isn’t no millionaire! And Mitch didn’t come back with roses I know where he is (p.212)

In my opinion, Blanche can live normally if she can open her mind and can think positively toward her past bitter life. She can fill her loneliness by doing some useful activities, such as being a good teacher like she used to be. She should erase the negative thinking about money from her mind because money is not the most important thing. The most important thing is our faith to God.
Blanche’s faith to God is not strong so that she can fall into the darkness of life. When she has strong faith to God, she will be able to control her emotion and desire.

C. CONCLUSION

From the description of Blanche Dubois’ character, I can conclude that Blanche belongs to a static character because from the beginning until the end of the story, her character is still unstable.

There are several theories of deconstruction, but I only use Subur Wardoyo’s theory to contradict Blanche’s character with the real story. The first step is to locate the opposition. Here, it is clearly seen that the opposite is between Blanche and Stanley. The next step is to determine which member is privileged. Blanche is the main character and she is the one whom I analyze. The last step is to reverse and undermine this hierarchy. Blanche’s character is not pity as people think because in my opinion her life is not tragic. She can live as normal as others when she realizes of her mistake of her past and try to improve it by living in a positive way.

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