

**DESIRE FOR THE OTHER AND THE ITERABLE IDENTITY IN THE SOCIAL
CONTEXT:
A POSTMODERN READING OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' *A STREETCAR NAMED
DESIRE***

NOORBAKHSH HOOTI, ALI SALEHI
Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran

Abstract: *In postmodern outlook, the boundary between the different divisions made inside the mind is blurred. It is the Other of one's self that indirectly defines the identity of a character or makes it abject. The purpose of this study is to recognize the adjustment identity of Blanche in "The Streetcar Named Desire" in diverse social contexts. The identity of Blanche is under surveillance through some key elements in the postmodern bedrock. The chains of signifiers that are produced by the considered character distinguish the mayhem of the mind that is trying to find a new identity in the altered social context. The study aims to unravel the desire for the Other or the hidden alter that is trying to adapt itself to the new environment while the character is unraveled as abject for the others in the special context. The dangling state of Blanche's mind is exposed through multiple features of the concepts to embody the blurring border between the Other and the self.*

Keywords: *abject, alterity, difference, identity, the Other*

1. Introduction

This study commences with the Literature Review followed by the 'statement of the problem'. After that, the related research questions are presented. The prominence of the study and its purposes are clarified in the 'significance and purpose of the study'.

Literature Review

The story of the play happens in the environment of the 1950s in America. This decade can be called the transitional stage from the atmosphere that the Second World War has left. Due to the conditions of that time somehow the reliability in man-made institutions was shackled by such horrible events. N.Hooti and M.Rashidi (2010:1-2) comment that:

Every day we pass one another on the street, yet we do not know each other, and we least bother to enter into relationships. We seem to have lost the sense of communal life as we seem to be phobic to sociability. Eventually, it leads to a world of isolation, a world where man finds himself separated by the cemented barriers of indifference.

Building upon this, we feel the environment suffering from disillusionment. The new concept of the self in the contemporary culture has found a new perplexing meaning in the name

of loss of self. In such an atmosphere, a widely utilized theme in literature has been in the dyad between concepts like reason and emotion, intellect and intuition. The problem of self extends in the context of society and the self is put in the loss of identity. In Lacanian terms, identity can be figured in individual contexts and also in group contexts. On self-realization and personality, Freedman comments:

Personality is suffering. The struggle to achieve personality and its consolidation are a painful process. The self-realization of personality pre-supposes resistance; it demands a conflict with the enslaving power of the world, a refusal to conform to the world. Refusal of personality, acquiescence in dissolution in the surrounding world, can lessen the suffering and man easily goes that way. Acquiescence in slavery diminishes suffering, refusal increases it. Pain in the human world is the birth of personality, its flight for its own nature. (qtd. in Shastri, 1988:3)

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* was widely commented after its publication. Some criticized it of giving the reader an emotional shock and not any spiritual education. On the other hand, Harold Clurman wrote about the impact of the play *that*: "Its impact at this moment is especially strong, because it is virtually unique as a stage piece that is both personal and social and wholly a product of our life today. It is a beautiful play" (qtd. in Hurrell 1961:92). It is said that the play has won the position of being a classic text of American literature. It also represents unique dimensions of human characters' identity in the play. Through the play we recognize that Blanche descends from a noble family and the house of Stella quite unfits her because of her previous noble way of life. In New Orleans, Blanche is put in the new environment to characterize herself again in the different condition. Blanche's identity is in a new context which she has to adapt herself. R. E. Jones comments that:

There are basically two types of women in the plays of Williams : the women who are the relics of the moribund traditional of gentility in which Williams himself was reared, women who are unable to accept the twentieth century and who prefer living in the illusive and legendary world of something that never really was – the mythically cavalier Old South; and the healthy, uncultured, basically sensual women, usually of Latin origin, by whom Williams has been attracted in his more recent plays, and who seem to have been conceived by their creator, if not as representatives of a sort of salvation, then at least as attractive earth-goddesses whose salvation is their own sexuality. (1961:111)

Blanche's character seems to belong to the first group. She may embody the decadence of the aristocratic world which she represents and is confronted with. Hooti mentions:

Williams' world represents the first generation of Americans and their blue-blooded wives. This is a fragile world, which is characterized by short-lived beauty, animal-sex and aristocratic deviations. Generally the world of South in Williams plays is the world of frustrated human desires, ambitions, and failures, a world from which success has been skillfully alienated. It is also the world of the past, available only through memory. However, the characters in Williams plays remain firmly rooted in this anachronistic world of past and refuse to move with the time. (2011:4)

Blanche's identity is left in the aristocratic world of the past and is now unable to rediscover and refine herself. She detaches herself in the new world and lives in a new self-made one, which is full of pretensions. One part of her character seems to be left in the traditional world while she opposes the new world that she is confronted with in Stanley's house. It is interesting to note that even Stella with the same predecessors has adjusted herself and has a life in balance with Stanley, but we see that Blanche cannot stand such a life and wants to change Stella's mind. This is vividly claimed when Williams states that:

In Stella Blanche can see her own self, which is imprisoned in the patriarchal psyche of Stanley. Therefore, she desires to retrieve Stella from the clutches of Stanley. She even tries to provoke Stella against Stanley. This is depicted very vividly at the end of scene IV. In her speech Blanche says, "He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! ... Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is – Stanley Kowalski – survivor of the Stone Age! ...Don't – don't hang back with the brutes!" (1947:163)

On the other hand, Blanche's turn into being a nymphomaniac is the clue of her shunning the past. At first, the death of the family members keeps her alone with a bunch of ideals that she carries; then, the love affair with Allan and Allan's homosexuality that she cannot bear are all the signs of the in-depth chaos inside her. What Blanche is trying to do instead of adjustment is the adaptation of her ideals of the previous life to her new context of life. On the different places, Williams symbolizes the conditions in both places, Hooti comments that:

New Orleans differs from the world of death and destruction at Belle Reve in appending the denial of death to the drama of Desire and Romance. The "Ideal world" of Belle Reve falls a prey to lust and death, thereby generating the thesis that in a biological universe, Romance, if at all possible, is only of a limited duration. (2011:7)

Through this perspective we could state that Blanche is trying to protect her romantic ideal, and both places help to keep alive all her illusions as the disappearance of the illusions makes life difficult for her because of the new environment. On the process of the modification in the identity of Blanche, it could be stated that in the new milieu of New Orleans the destruction of Blanche's character reaches a pinnacle. Many deaths and the ill ended relations with Allan are all push her towards a faster devastation.

2. Statement of the Problem

Conventionally, identity is considered structured, stable, a constant core existing in man's nature and man does not play crucial roles in creating it. On the contrary, in postmodern terms, identity is a multiple rather than unitary core inside human beings. It is a fragmented structure that one molds in one's interaction in the social contexts with the others. Multiplicity of identity is also important in miscellaneous contexts. Blanche's identity brings the characteristics of the traditional way of life internalized in her character in her life in Belle Reve. In the play, this subject is confronted with her new style of life. which needs adaptation to the little society – which is Stanley's apartment that represents the developed ideas against the traditional ones. What is defining the present character of Blanche, shown in her contact with the people in the play roots in her past. This past is the *Other* of her *self* that is indirectly effecting Blanche to adapt whatever she faces with the accepted ideas of the past. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that besides the internal part of her psyche that is affecting her identity, the external elements such as the behavior of the others in the social context are making her abject. Her dangling identity is swinging in the modern and the postmodern ideas. While she is in a quest to stabilize her fragmented identity, we figure out that in the postmodern context, the exact boundary between the absolute concepts are blurred. Blanche is perplexed to find a dominion of structured identity for herself, however she is vacillating in the dyad of the self and the *Other*.

2.1. Research Questions

Observing the identity of Blanche that is molded and depicted variously in different situational context, these questions are tried to be answered in this study:

- 1- How does the difference between the *Other* and the self characterize Blanche?
- 2- Who is defining the subject of signification for Blanche?
- 3- What means mold the identity of the *Other* and the self inside Blanche's psyche?
- 4- How does the double presence in the places produce an iterability in the identity of Blanche?

2.2 Significance and Purpose of the Study

The chaotic state of the character inside Blanche is taken into account. Presenting Blanche as a character moving from Belle Reve symbolizing the values of the past and New Orleans as all the modern way of life which Blanche cannot adapt, Williams portrays the binary state of the previous life with the new one. It is notable that nothing is imposed on Blanche and she has chosen to come into such a kind of life that she is not able to adjust. The *Other* of the main character is unraveled which in Kristeva's idea produces the *Other* that makes the abject of a character. The desire for self-developed identity and also the difference that builds the *Other* that clashes with the identity and simultaneously aids to define it is under surveillance. The poles of self and the *Other* and signification play in the symbolic and imaginary order of Blanche's mind a lenient base for the character of Blanche.

Method

The study mostly uses some critical key terms in literary and cultural theory. These terms are mostly taken from their novel delineations in the postmodern era. Many postmodern writers are taken into account that present their independent definitions and focus on the different layers of life.

A Streetcar Named Desire

The play takes place right after World War II, in New Orleans. Stella is pregnant and lives with Stanley Kowalsky. Blanche Dubois, Stella's older sister, arrives suddenly, with sad news. Belle Reve, the family mansion, has been lost. In the past, Blanche has stayed behind to care for their dying family while Stella left to make a new life. Stanley's coarseness bothers Blanche as well, since he makes no effort to be gentle with her. On Blanche's birthday, Stanley, harshly presents Blanche with her birthday gift: bus tickets back to Laurel. Blanche is overwhelmed by sickness. She cannot return to Laurel, and Stanley knows it. Weeks later, Blanche has suffered a mental breakdown. A doctor and nurse come and take Blanche away to the asylum.

2.2. *A Streetcar Named Desire* from a Postmodern Outlook

In postmodern culture, identity finds an alternate definition. The dangling and unstable state of Blanche's character can be unraveled through some developed postmodern concepts. It is the desire for the Other in Blanche that oriented her as abject in her new social context. Through

this process, Blanche's desire is scrutinized in the play. It seems that it is the power of this desire that never lets Blanche to come out of the chaos of her characterization. The chains of signifiers that are produced by the considered character extricate the turmoil of the mind that is trying to find a new identity in the new social context. The others in the play and Blanche are considered to recognize the main reason behind her that marks her abnormal. The others can be the source of Blanche's abjection and Blanche herself can be the dominant reason behind it. The floppy state of Blanche's mind is uncovered through multiple features of the concepts to exemplify the blurring border between the *Other* and the self.

Abjection

Subject and object of desire in the binary opposition of the psychoanalytic thought find a destabilized position. Each part of this pair has a separate and defined meaning in its specific boundaries. These boundaries provide the blurring framework in which self is untying itself from the *Other*. This attempt is called *abjection* by Julia Kristeva. Julian Wulfreys states that:

While the subject/object structure makes logical meaning possible, the abject produces, or is otherwise comprehensible as, an uncanny effect of horror, threatening the logical certainty of either the subject/object or self/ not-self binarism. Abjection is thus the process of or psychic experience of a *slippage across the boundaries of the self*, and with that a partial erasure of the borders of the psyche which define the ego. The abject is, amongst other things, the fluid locus of forbidden desires and ideas whose radical exclusion is the basis of the subject's cultural determination.... (emphasis added) (2004:1)

Wulfreys draws a connection between the psychic construction of the human body and the part which revolts and simultaneously belongs to that body. He continues that in "literary or filmic" forms of literature we can consider the abject symbolized which can find 'a determinate form outside the self and other than the self and yet cause a visceral, often violent response.' (ibid) Building upon this, it could be claimed that the repulsive and the mysterious in the narrative or the characters in the text preexist in the psyche. Julian Wulfreys clarifies that "... there is therefore a mobile structural relationship to be understood here, whether that which makes me abject is actually external to me or is incorporated with, whether within my body or my psyche." (2004:4). Julia Kristeva in her definition of the term abjection states: "repelling, rejecting, repelling itself, rejecting itself. Ab-jecting." (1982:13). In this relationship, it is intense that the self is reacting an 'other' which is not the self but in a state that the self is responding to. Barbara Creed in her definition of the abject as threatening states that:

Although the subject must exclude the abject, the abject must, nevertheless be tolerated for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define... The abject can be experienced in various ways – one which relates to biological bodily functions, the other of which has been in a symbolic (religious) economy. (1993:9)

The abject seems not to have a particular place of happening. It can happen in any context and in any experience. The nature of the abject threatens and causes bewilderment. It is also invincible from our contextual identity that may be individual or social. Kristeva defines the nature of the abject as an inseparable response in a simile as:

There looms within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ... It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be

assimilated ... Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself. (1982:1)

So, to put it briefly, Wulfreys defines abjection as:

the work of a psychic traversal resulting in a corporal, physiological and psychological response which... breaks up the subject's sense of identity in the very process by which 'I' strive to maintain myself, my identity, my life. Abjection effects a violent revelation to me about my selfhood: that identity, comprehended as a fixed meaning, is only an illusion promoted by the psyche; rather, the self is nothing but a fiction, a series of narratives precariously assembled and always susceptible to the dissolution of its assumed sovereignty or autonomy. (2004:4)

The acceptance of reality versus the delusional world that Blanche is living are totally two opposing poles against each other. Blanche cannot even stand the reality. This is evident when she says: "I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action." (1947:37) In these two different places, the iterable identity of Blanche is vividly depicted. In Belle Reve she longed to retain her gentility while in New Orleans she forces herself to adapt to the new place as her ideal. Thus, the adjustment to the new reality turns to be a delusional reality of Stella's house in Blanche's mind. Blanche's desire is for the *Other* of herself, which she seems to be longing for so much and left behind in her previous living context. This fact is revealed in apt examples in the text of the play. The features of the past that she brings with her are defining her identity in a coalitional way. To be frank, all that she denies or changes for another kind show all that has happened in her chaotic past life. Every object in her new life brings the dead presence of her past life that she collides. According to what was mentioned about the abject by what Wulfreys and Krestiva point to, it could be deduced that what that makes Blanche abject is truly flowering within her *self*. Thus by repelling and rejecting, as Kristeva mentioned, Blanche turns to the state in which she reflects the repellence and the rejection toward herself. Through this process the boundary between the subject/object relationship is lost and then the embodiment of the chaos appears. Blanche cannot ever refuse the previous state of her life and indirectly she is depicting this fact through the comparison between Stanely standing against Stella and her. In another place, she is comparing the vivid difference between their house in Belle Reve and Stella's place in New Orleans. Meanwhile, the clearest thing about the other identity in Blanche's character is when she cannot stand the light in which she is put under. She says:

And turn that over-light off! Turn that off! I won't be looked at in this merciless glare! Come back here now! Oh, my baby! Stella! Stella for Star! I thought you would never come back to this horrible place! What am I saying? I didn't mean to say that. I meant to be nice about it and say – Oh, what a convenient location and such – Ha-a-ha! Precious lamb! (1947:5)

Thus, we could claim that the *Other* which Blanche is fluctuating from it to her present position is her previous identity. The interesting point here is that both the *Other* and the living self of Blanche are intercontextualized in the atmosphere of society. To be clearer, her identity experienced in the previous society is the *Other* which helps her to refine the new identity for herself.

Blanche's character in the play is put under a new disorder. The desire for another state is the drive which characterizes the identity of Blanche. In other words, Blanche is excluded by the previous society she was living in and now she is self-estranged by the new environment again. She is living in a new world in New Orleans where no elegant significance of the past exists. The

play epitomizes a condition in which she is forced to be eccentric again. As Wulfreys mentioned about the literary or filmic forms, it could be claimed that the abject of Blanche made in the middle of her dangling state between the *Other* and the self is embodied in her ostracism which is a kind of another death for her. The reciprocal relation between the social context in which Blanche is living and her state of mind products a fake character inside her that seems to be a shelter under which Blanche is trying to delineate herself. Blanche fails to live in the usual circumstance since she loses the realistic notion of life. In Lacanian terms her character is linguistically present in the symbolic order but under the play of the signifiers she is indirectly epitomizing the hidden part of herself. The idea of suture between the symbolic and imaginary orders of the mind finds meaning here. Blanche cannot find a stable identity for a power in her drives the fluctuation inside herself to shackle the structure of identity under the power that makes her wish for the *Other*. Stuck between the self/not-self dyad, Blanche comes from another context of society. In the new context which is New Orleans, she is diagnosed with her peculiar and odd behavior. It is not known that what makes Blanche abject is really from within or is external to her. A layer of self-made changes conceals her personality. She is neither a new character in the new context, nor the same as she was in the past.

Desire

Reiterating the concept of desire, we could claim that desire sheds light upon the want to be in exhibiting the subject in the chain of signifiers and demand the compliment of the *Other*. Any desire gives a trace to an indirect access to the dominion of the unconscious which enters our language. On the source of desire, Lacan states that:

...if there is desire, it is only because there is the unconscious, i.e., a language, whose structure and effects escape the subject: because at the level of language, there is always something that is beyond consciousness, which allows the function of desire to be situated. (1967:45)

Desire can also be related to identity on the ground that an internal psychic drive such as desire may lead to mold the identity. As Anthony Elliot (1996:40) speculates: 'desire not only drives the individual subject in different directions, it is also constitutive of the representational activity of the subjectivity itself – to, for example, people's core sense of identity.'

It is the unconscious of Blanche behind her conscious that has a blurry presence. This unconscious that brings all the dead presence from Belle Reve is the drive behind desire to function. The hidden part behind the symbolic order of Blanche's significations unravel the desire that finds function in that order. Another crucial point about identity is that we could also consider our identities in a vast hypertextual reality. The expression of "I" resides in the expression of identity. As Irving Cemil Schick makes clear that identity:

is not an artifact but a process, namely its own construction... it only exists as the dual of alterity... both identity and alterity are contained and conveyed through narrative... the notions of identity and alterity, of 'us' and 'them,' are closely linked to the sense of place, that is, to notions of 'here' and 'there'. What seems crucial to this fact is the formation of the sense of the identity in a character which is dependent on a social context. In fact, the external elements may preexist and predetermine the subject's identity. (1999:20)

The values and beliefs that one holds mold one's identity. These values may differ from one to another and even from one group to another but the point is that identity can never be defined as an autonomous entity. It is always definable through "what it is not" (Wulfreys, 2004

:98). Alternatively, identity as Schick (1999:21) represents it, is always a construction: 'Identity is its own construction... and narrative is the medium through which that construction is realized. But the construction of identity is inseparable from alterity – indeed, identity itself makes sense in juxtaposition with alterity.'

Likewise, the process through which Samuel Weber puts identity to be molded should be taken into account.

in order to be *cognizable*, an element must be recognizable as the *same*, which in turn presupposes a process of *com-parison* and *repetition*. It must be compared with earlier instances of itself in order to be recognizable *as a self*, as an identity.

This process of repetitive comparison, out of which self-sameness emerges and which it therefore must *pass through*, introduces an element of *heterogeneity*, of *otherness*, into the constitution of the same. The question, however, now becomes: precisely what is the rule of this heterogeneity in the process of repetition that is presupposed by every identification and by all identity? (1996:96)

Both the external desire imposed on Blanche and the internal ones play crucial roles in molding her identity. Compared with the past of herself in the narrative, her identity is imposed to move from the multiplicity to a unitary form. In fact, through apt repetitions, she displays her past conflicting her present while she can never move beyond one. The oscillation causes her symbolic disasters to appear.

Alterity

Alterity is another subject related to identity. Comparing alterity with abjection we find the alter as an absolute concept in a condition of otherness. Emmanuel Levinas in *Time and the Other* considers an 'absolute exteriority of alterity' opposing the reciprocal state of the idea of the *Other*. The sense of the self is shackled during the encounter with the other so the self knows itself not in self-sameness but in the identity's alterity. He comments that "There is an abyss between... the ego and the alterity of mystery" (1987:81). On the structure of the self the alter Levinas continues that: "in the very heart of the relationship with the other that characterizes our social life, alterity appears as a nonreciprocal relationship." (1987:83). In deconstruction terms Simon Critchley this disjuncture as:

What takes place in deconstruction is double reading that is, a form of double reading that obeys the double injunction for both repetition and the alterity that arises within that repetition. Deconstruction opens a reading by locating a moment of alterity within a text... What takes place in deconstruction is highly determinate form of double reading which pressures alterities within texts. (1999:28)

The complete understanding of alterity lies in the heart of sign. The sign cannot be closed by itself in any act of reading and considering reading as reading of signs, we could claim that no reading can come to a close by itself. On the relation of the difference with the other, Samuel Weber states that:

The Heideggerian and even more the Derridean, notion 'difference' (1996:171) implies a structure of language and a process of articulation that includes a practical, performative moment which, I am convinced, is where one has to start-and probably end- if one is to respond to the trace of the other, to that dimension of alterity to which thinking is so profoundly indebted.

On the other hand, Wulfreys considers being as structured "like a language, it is comprehended through differential relationships, by which meaning and identity are only

available through an understanding of that which belongs to the self-same” (2004:17). He continues that:

alterity is not... a dialectical position but is always already within the same, it is the radical difference – what is termed by Derrida *différance*- that makes possible any comprehension of the same. Because of this ‘I’ can never see myself authentically as absolutely singular or unique. ‘I’ is always traced, haunted, by the marks of alterity. (2004:18)

The Derridean idea of *tout autre* can also be discussed at this point. There has been a wide discussion about true nature of *tout autre* or ‘radical alterity’. When Derrida speaks of ‘radical alterity’, he does not assume a pure exteriority heterogeneity as a hypostasized ‘Other’ would ultimately be subsumed under a notion of the same; he points to an otherness that inhabits the self-identical, not as the result of some subversive or transgressive act but as an alterity that has always been internal to any closed structure, be it linguistic or otherwise.... by bringing the temporal deferral of presence and the spatial distinction that places in relation to an other, *différance* marks the impossibility for an identity to close in itself. In this sense, spacing become indissociable from the concept of alterity. Considering the character of Blanche as our sign, there can be seen That Blanche is bringing the alter with herself to define her character. This is the way through which the text appears to deconstruct itself. All that Blanche does has a clue inside it that leads to the impure identity of Blanche. In fact, what others say identifies her weak character to some extent:

‘Stella: And admire her dress and tell her she’s looking wonderful. That’s important with Blanche. Her little weakness!’ (1947:22)

Or in another place Blanche states that:

‘Blanche: Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.’ (p. 160)

Through the play, there happen a number of repetitions of miscellaneous sentences that are identifying Blanche through the alterations that they make. In fact, every repetition produces an alteration that is simultaneously playing a significant role in the depiction of Blanche’s character. These clues are pertinently seen in the play:

Blanche: Why, that you had to live in these conditions?

Stella: Aren’t you being a little intense about it? It’s not that bad at all! New Orleans isn’t like other cities. (1947:6)

Blanche is opposing the new conditions in which she is exposed to. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Stella is representing an other for Blanche which she could never adapt to be. Blanche’s character in the play is put under a new disorder. The desire for the alter is the drive which characterizes the identity of Blanche. In other words, Blanche is excluded by the previous society she was living in and now she is self-estranged by the new environment again. She is living in a new world in New Orleans where no elegant significance of the past exists. The play epitomizes a condition in which she is forced to be eccentric again. The reciprocal relation between the social context in which Blanche is living and her state of mind products a fake character inside her that seems to be a shelter under which Blanche is trying to delineate herself. She depicts the *Other* of herself that comes out of her reaction toward the others in the environment. She fails to live in the usual circumstance since she loses the realistic notion of life. She is not accepting to forget the previous notion of her life.

She says:

Blanche: But you’ve given in. And that isn’t right, you’re not old! You can get out.

Stella: I'm not in anything I want to get out of.

Blanche: What – Stella?

Stella: I said I am not in anything that I have a desire to get out of. ... He promised this morning that he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. Oh, well, it's his pleasure, like mine is movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other's habits. (1947: 45)

Other

In Lacanian psychoanalysis there is the other and the Other. The other reflects that which is not really other but is a reflection and projection of the ego; the Other reflects a radical alterity which is “irreducible to any imaginary or subjective identification” (Wulfreys, 2004:169). In the definition of the Other Lacan states that:

When the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasized place of just such a knowledge or certainty. Lacan calls this the *Other*- the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers. The *Other* appears to hold the truth of the subject the power to make good its loss. There could be found a distinguishable desire for an *other* from the need in the character of Blanche. To investigate such a subject in her identity we need to contemplate the preceding concepts with desire. For Lacan, desire is an unconscious motivator from which the conscious articulations are symptomatically produced. Wulfreys defines the structures of desire as:

When the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasized place of just such a knowledge or certainty. Lacan calls this the other- the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers. The Other appears to hold the ‘truth’ of the subject and the power to make its loss.... Language is the place where meaning circulates – the meaning of each linguistic unit can only be established by reference to another, and it is arbitrarily fixed. (2004:170)

When Blanche is comparing Stanley's family with her and Stella's predecessors, she says:

There's even something – sub-human – something not quite to the stage of human yet! Yes, something – ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in – anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is – Stanley Kowalski – survivor of the stone age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! (1947:51)

Thus, we could claim that the *Other* which Blanche is fluctuating from it to her present position is her previous identity. The interesting point here is that both the *Other* and the living self of Blanche are intercontextualized in the atmosphere of society. To be clearer, she is not staying in the exact state which may be the symbolic order of her mind which is clarified through her signification, neither she is in the state which recognizes her imaginary order which is depicted in the meaning beyond her diction. She inhabits on the blurring borderline between these two. The concealed part of her character pertains to her imaginary order from which she is departed and her signification through the attempt to adapt herself is reveals her symbolic order. To be clearer, in Lacanian terms her character is linguistically present in the symbolic order but under this play of the signifiers she is exemplifying the concealed part of herself. The idea of suture is embodied here, that is, she is oscillating between the imaginary and symbolic order of her mind. Blanche cannot find a stable identity for a power in her drives the fluctuation inside herself to shackle the structure of identity under the power that makes her wish for the *Other*.

Difference

Derrida defines difference with the use of self-presence. By self-presence, he refers to the unique being of an “I” which has an identity. About difference he states:

But this pure difference, which constitutes the self-presence of the living present of the living present, introduces into self-presence from the beginning all the impurity putatively excluded from it. The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is always already a trace. This trace cannot be thought out on the basis of a simple present whose life would be within itself; the self of the living present is primordially a trace. The trace is not an attribute; we cannot say that the self of the living present ‘primordially is’ it. Originary being must be thought on the basis of the trace, and not the reverse. This protowriting is at work at the origin of sense. Sense, being temporal in nature... is never simply present; it is always already engaged in the movement of the trace, that is, in the order of ‘signification’. It has already issued forth from itself... *the temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a ‘spacing’*. (1973:85)

Building upon this, it could be claimed that there exists a reciprocal relationship between difference and identity. In other words, difference constructs identity and is also produced by it. Considering the features of difference Wulfreys clarifies that:

Because of the spacing and temporality of difference that makes up any ‘living present’, any moment of supposedly pure presence is always marked or traced by the movement of an infinitely divisible instance.... As a result of thinking such spacing and temporal motion, one cannot conceive of an identity or being, an absolutely discrete, full or simple concept, as the source or origin of all subsequent copies or representations. Instead, it is the trace, it is difference that makes available the very idea of a concept or originary being; it is this spacing-temporalizing signifying process which gives access to a meaning or sense... . Any identity, concept, or meaning is therefore written, it is structured by a writing and is an effect of writing and is an effect of writing, if by writing we think the concept beyond the narrow conceptualization as a series of graphic marks on a page or screen. (2004:59)

3. Conclusion

The gap between the self and the *Other* and the fluctuation between the binaries that lack and loss are the sources of them brings a chain of signifiers to existence that in each situation define an identity and an alter that can be identified through the relationships it is exposed to. In fact, the presence of the self is impossible until the presence of the *Other* is taken into account with the self. It is in their reciprocal relation that both find meaning. Blanche’s identity is simultaneously formed by the mutual relation between the two parts of her identity. The presence in two different social contexts gives Blanche to the situation to reiterate herself in the new place differently while the trace of the dead presence of the past is never cleared. The source of signification – which is our source to characterize Blanche- are both the internal elements from the past and the external social exposures. Her identity is always in a state of being. It is in the endless oscillation between two cores that her blurry identity silhouettes.

References:

- Brandt, Joan. 1997. *Geopoetics: The Politics of Mimesis in Poststructuralist French Poetry and Theory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Creed, Barbara. 1993. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. London Routledge.
- Critchley, Simon. 1999. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (1992), 2nd edn. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1973. *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of*

- Signs*, trans. and Introduction by David B. Allison. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Elliot, Anthony. 1996. *Subject to Ourselves: Social Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hooti Noorbakhsh. 2011. "Quest for identity in Tennessee Williams *A Street Car Named Desire*" *Studies in Literature and Language*, 2(3), 18-29.
- Hooti, Noorbakhsh & Rashidi Rostami, Mahroo. 2010. "The impossibility of communication in a world of spiritual impotence in Albee's *The zoo story*". *Annals of Humanities & Development Studies*, 1(2), 1-11.
- Hurrell, John D. 1961. *Two Modern American Tragedies: Reviews and Criticism of Death of a Salesman and A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Jones, Robert Emmet. 1961. *Tennessee Williams' early heroines. Two modern American tragedies: Reviews and criticism of death of a salesman and A streetcar named desire*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Margaret Waller, Introduction by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia Press.
- Schick, Irvin Cemil. 1999. *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse*. London: Verso.
- Shastri, N.R. 1988. *The dialectic of identity: A study of the bellow hero*. Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh: n.p.
- Weber, Samuel. 1991. *Mass Mediauras: Form Technics Media*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Williams, Tennessee. 1971. *The theatre of Tennessee Williams* (vol. I). New York: New Directions.
- Williams, Tennessee. 1947. *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New York: New Directions.
- Wolfe, J. 2004. *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Notes on the author

Professor Noorbakhsh HOOTI 's field of research and teaching is Comparative Literary Studies.