

Lecture 78: A streetcar named desire: The death of romance.

Our lecture is 78 and it's my second last lecture on Tennessee Williams A Desire: A streetcar named desire. I began approaching the play in the last lecture and I'd like to focus on it as none of the play I would say it is the best play of Williams and it is also the most remarkable blend of the comic and the tragic vision in the world's literature/ it not that kind of the vision of comic but the vision of the grotesque. But it is about life forces that nourishes the vision of the comedy. But I have to begin with the tragic character who was Blanche Dubois. And she is Williams' the most main and I think complex figure all of his plays among of his plays. Like Amanda Wingfield she has the romanticism of the past turned in colours, her old home state Belle Reve which has been sold we learnt early in the play/ she's come to the war, she's tell her sister Stella that it had been sold/ it seems to headen and that she has lost the garden in which she had been expelled from. And the references as when she talks about it what it was like however really larded with notations of death as well all people were dying in the Belle Reve and she says that Belle Reve was plunged into death. That grim reaper has set up his tent on the doorstep. Belle Reve was his headquarter and she talks about how dirty death is, how you are cautiously tending to the sick bodies, you are tensely tending to the people who were gasping for breath and bleeding/ and this was there no money, they were all spent, but first of all was the sense of the death itself on the headquarters there. I wanna suggest that because I indicated it's eros sententiosus it's loving dance it's doom battle or the interact in this text. Belle Reve's the place that is dignified with innocence, romance in the past, but also with death. And of course for Stanley who was Stella's husband he isn't interested in this poetic explanations who wants to know where the money is, after all this was the plantation of some sort in Mississippi and presumably something was guarded for and she has no money and she keeps him to explain it all one explanation she gives it wonderful that how it got lost or how it was lost. She says epic fornication and I think that it's an interesting line that this world, this is the result of the accesses of their sudden family leaving, we never get much detail, but epic fornication.

But the lost past contains more than just Belle Reve. Stanley who was hoping to find some legal documents which will tell where the money is, where to have a lawyer's judicated it, comes across what is called love letters yellowing with its antiquity and they start growling around these letters and Blanche also goes crazy and she wants to stop ingradually this other information about the past began to some sort of sip out in to the play.

The first notation of it was remarkably critique and brief and all Blanche can say to Stanley is what he says what all that she can say is "The boy..the boy is dead".

Then she thinks she's afraid she's gonna be sick. We are needless to say that play is going to attract many, many pages, much later in the play we get the story of this other earlier love that she is remembering . there was an early marriage that she had made, she talks about having met that boy when she was only 16 and it was some sort of utterly galvanizing experience of love, she calls it like a blending light. And there was something special about that boy or something different as nervousness, softness, tenderness, which wasn't like a man's. she says it was feminine-looking, she can't figure out what it was, something very special about him. He seems to need her for some help that she couldn't give him and she feels like she fails him some way but she doesn't know exactly what it was.

And the way she finally comes to understand it that she found it that she loved him as she says unendurably, but unable to help him, unable to help herself. She said in the worst possible way she found out that she suddenly came into a room, that she thought was empty, but there were 2 people in there, not a boy and a girl, but 2 men in the room and the last reference to this is Stella's version of it to Stanley and it is interesting given Williams own orientation, Stella refers to the marriage as she was only a child, Blanche was, and she married a boy, Stella says, who wrote poetry, very good-looking and Blanche worshiped him and Stella says, this beautiful and talented young man was a gentleman. And the play really never calls it in question. It's an interesting sort of displacement of homosexuality that it's part of Blanche's own erotic background that she's only sort of, she's failed it around and the part of it her husband Allan Grey was the one who was homosexual and yet she loved him terribly, we think he loved her too and she couldn't save him and then she, we can learn around, later seems to have betrayed him.

Well, you get a sense in this play that sexuality and romance are doomed. That a lot of people are dying because they love, the character who is going to be sort of the king of romance for Blanche who interacted with the Stanley's buddy Mitch, we learn even Mitch who's gonna be to place in a gentleman's colour has also lost someone, and you get the sense that loving kills in this text. Also if you remember when I said earlier that in Williams' repeating-motive is that character who are fixted with great romantic memories. In the course of the play we'll recollect with memories , use we intergraded form and come back and decided to play in the past or some way, but it's also the past repeating itself. In a kind of degraded fashion and so the story of Blanche's betrayal of Allan Grey, it's going to get replayed and twice. One point also the play we have the plan of Mexican woman in the dark shole who appears and says: "Flores, flores para los muertos". Flowers for the dead and I think that it is final notation, for what this play is about. Flowers for the dead. And what can you do for the dead? Will flowers be commemorated with the dead? Can we ever pay an attribute to the dead, to get cleared their own dead memories, not

just the dead are others but the dead selves about their own past. And the text is some sort of Blanche's self that desire is the only response to it. And you get the sense that Belle Reve where she had her past life, Belle Reve was seemed to be under the sign of dying, and death was also there for in a course of play when one had to respond by desire, one had to respond by eros and we can learn it gonna be her secret that she had had astonished history at Belle Reve, a very kind of, a sort of scandalous history. And we are also to understand that that history was of response to this only presence of death around her. Death is her great enemy. And in a much more sort of tender earth way it's the enemy in the way for all of us, that she lives in time, she is growing older. And she is upset with aging in this play, you remember in the text there are the sweet parts of youth, it's one of the most point of Williams' seems that we lose our beauty that's the most wonderful thing about us ever essent or at least they are doomed that we can retain them. And Blanche is preticles aware of the woman that all she has is her beauty. And as she grows older there would be no one to take care of her and she is used to, you can easily do sociological analysis reaffaying women and the way women have been talked, this is only the kind of curse they have. But Blanche lost about her age, she refuses to be seen in a sharp light. Mitch doesn't know how old she is. She meets Mitch only in dark places and her sort of signiture gesture is always to put sort of college screen overlap she can bear the bold light and she is drawn and I'd like to say damp porishly drawn to youth. We've learnt that she had a scandalous love affair when she was a teacher with a 17-year-old student at her school. And of course the school there was a scandal to get her out. She's been fired/ Stanley is gonna find out all this, he can do a lot of researching of this. And in case we all get it Williams actually puts into the play little veniet of a young boy coming to the door and Blanche can not resist him: "Young man, young, young, young man. Has anyone ever told you that you look loke a young prince in the Arabian nights? No man, we all do harilem. Come in. come on over here like I told you. I wanna kiss you, just once, softly, sweetly on your mouth ". And she doesn't wait for him even to except that she runs across and presses her lips to his. "You were longer, be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good keep my hands off children". And that's the scene that you in the lights of today's culture particular much more told when the play was written we are so sensetised to sexual abuse to children that yet the scene a certain beauty, a certain pathos because we know that it has to do with her tried to hold on to youth itself remains me the scene in the scent of fury were benging the last, the young girl because for her, for him it was vergeon of Carry. Well, Blanche in the play is honest, she is not quite a magician in a town Wildshild, but she tries to be, but it's not easy to out with time or harsh reality, she tells stories constantly about her glamorous escobate, that's what she liked, Amanda Windshild about all her bouse. And she predictly talks about famous Shap Hartley, about fabulous wealth and about how drawn he was to her.

And this is of course what she was dreaming of, she's able to lend someone, like Shap Hartley, and she wants to write to him, she is gonna send him a telegram, she is a kind of perfect gentleman colour, who was going to rescue her from this nightmare reality that she is leaving him. She articulates the need the rational for softness and kindness and gentleness in this play. The protection the people need against brutality and it's particularly woman's argument and this in the speech that I can consider as pathos she talks about what it was like at Bellereve as she realized that she was losing her youth, losing her beauty and what sort of courage does the woman have to play: "That was never hard, self-sufficient enough, when people are soft. Soft people have court favour of heart, Stella. You've got to be seductive. Put on soft colours the colours of butterfly wings and glow mickle little to magic just in order to pay for one night shelter". That's why I've been not of alluding to the things that she has done, the scandal she has been involved in, it's only kind of desperate desire for protection. People don't see you mended even if you met existence at least to make love, do you? This is you got to have your existence admitted by someone. "Soft people have got Sharma and glow, put paper lantern over the light". That's what she needs. She drinks around the play to boast her spirits, she flirts with Stanley, she flirts with Mitch, she needs kindness, she tells Stella that she's got to, Stella has got to take her in. In her tiny apartment, where there's almost no room. She needs help.

Her fate is of course to meet Stella's husband, Stanley Kovalski. He's a magnificent creature I think in this play. He's healthy, he is happy, he's robust, he's animal like in his power and he's an authority. The first time we see him, he is throwing meat to Stella. He couldn't be more apt. Stella calls him a different species. She is right. She likes to go out with him, to watch him bowl, and they all bowl with his brilliant colour shorts, it's actually compared with Van Gogh painting with their hanging over together, bowling, doing a male things, bright colours against soft and lights that Blanche needs. And he's special and Stella says that in Blanche's there is no understand loke where is he special. What's special about him? She says: "I'm sorry, I've noticed that he isn't genius even Stanley's forehead." And Stella says: "It isn't honest forehead". And it isn't genius. And we quickly enough come to understand what they are talking about, that he is the incarnation of animal sexuality, animal power, and there's no getting around it, there's a kind of aura, a prestige, an authority, a magnetism in this play for everyone including Blanche, but Blanche also finds something horrifying about Stanley and about the fact Stella could be so drawn to this brute and she in a very wonderful speech gets a kind of dominion account of Stanley that she says: "Some human in him, yes something ape-like about him like on one of those pictures in some scenes I've seen in the anthropological studies. Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right back. There he is – Stanley Kovalski, survival of the Stone age

bearing a romy home from the killing in the jungle and you, you here waiting for him. Maybe he'll strike you, or maybe grunt, kiss you, there's kisses have been discovered here. Night falls and other apes gather when for the cave, like him, it's villain, annoying and hoaking. Poker night you call it. This party of apes . And she says: "You know we are long way from being made god, but Stella, my sister, there has been so progress since then. Such things as art, as poetry, and music, such kinds of new life have come into the world since then. In some kinds of people some tender of feelings have had some little beginning ." and finally she says: "In this dark march tort wherever it is we will culture, don't hang back with the brutes." It's quite a brillianf speech, don't hang back with the brutes. So it's really underrecovered evolutionary side of the play. Even now it has appeal as it has its magnetism, its prestige. He beats Stella, she comes back for more, everyone knows that wonderful film with Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh with hid "Steeeeaaaa!" and she is there, she puts her hands against her swelling belly and they two kissed, met each other physically. He is there making her doubtedly noble life moving for her and he tells "I pulled you out of that Bellereve, you know the place with columns and villas, and now when your sister's gone from here we can go back to make a kind of noises we make at night with all lights turning", because they're pretty well at the night things go on between them.

He, Stanley. And Stella are the comic principle of life. It's not an accident that she is pregnant, Stella, that there's gonna be a baby born. In this play life will go on, and it crosses that belly. Dying after dying they can live. The comic and the tragic principles clash, can own here, but this is not just a principle of comedy. He is also a new man. He's fresh, vulgar, utterly coming sensical, he's utterly pragmatic, he's pretty shrude, he's very industrious, he's a captain of the bowling team, and that may not mean much, but it means something. He is the leader of this group, he's been success in the war, he is going to succeed. Stella knows that she is not wrong and he does succeed, he succeeds against splanch. He's meaningly suspicious about the sale of Bellereve, and he explains it wonderfully, here's man's saying that the Napoleonic code protects his rights in this affair and in other words as Stella's husband, he has the right to her property too. And he wants to look at the various clothing that Blanche has brought, her furs, they all fake, he is not willing to admit that. "I got an acquaintance with dealers this sort or merchantdise." He looks at her furs, later he looks at her jewellery and she says it's Rhein stones, stella says "It's Rhein stones" – "And what Rhein stone?" – "Glass," Stella says. – "Are you kidding? I have an acquaintance with workers in the jewellery store, I'll have to make an appraisal of this".

This is the guy who always knows somebody who has a little bit of very small money toexpertise and measure these things and document giving a kind of pragmatic information, that you need. Stanley Kovalski a part of the American and he doesn't much appreciate the way Blanche talks

about him, in particular she calls him a polack. “You, healthy polackm- she says.- without nerve in your body.” Could she know what exactly it feels like? “I am not a polack, people from Poland are pols, not polacks. For what I am is one hundred per cent American, born and raised in the greatest country on the earth and part of hell of it. Don’t ever call me polack.”

He is not take anything from these women, he is the king of fed up people, let them know what they’ll do. I think here we can see a kind of nostalgie from Tennessee Williams’ part for sexual poise, for innocence, for authority, for creature whose totally homely and flash exactly what Williams is not. And we also see in him Williams’ worst nightmare: brutality and ebemy of dream, the denial of beauty, that never survive. This play reaches its crescendo in the scenes where Blanche and Stanley do their numbers and of course they are made for, it’s natural dramatic outcome of Williams’ own torments. Thos play, these 2 figures and in one of the scenes Blanche is singing. She is in the bathroom. And there’s a curtain over it and she is singing while Stanley is having his conversation with Stella reporting researching he’s done, uncovered her taurted background. And he is explaining that” you got to realize she’s been lying to Mitch, she says she told Mitch that she is still a sort of virginal, she never, she only been kissed, he said – no, no, she is not lily at all, ha-ha”. And he explains he’s got information from Lorele in Mississippi when one of his supply people of the plant got down there knows her, she’s famous in Lorele, he says as if she was president and she’s famous in the worst kind of way, she’s connected with floorpats hotel Flamingo. And this is all got with Blanche singing in the bathroom and she is singing: “Say, its only a paper moon

Sailing over a cardboard sea

But it wouldn't be make-believe

If you believed in me”.

And then the next line is. And now what about Flamingo? Stanley: will she stay there. – No, she stayed at Bellereve, - Stella says,- no, no.

This is the way she stayed. And you go on to people of Flamingo which have seen pretty rough things they themselves are astonished by dame Blanche, that they call it – dame Blanche’s behavior. And there’s again the cut: It’s a bun and baily world just as phony as it can be. But it wouldn't be make-believe

If you believed in me”.

One aafter that Stella says: “what contantable lie”, she says to Stanley. And this is really kind of put kind of musical, this is poetic. And then she is going to explain he’s gonna tell all of the dirt on Blanche who continue singing without knowing it is : Without your love

It's a honky-tonk parade. Without your love

It's a melody played in a penny arcade.

And he of course has checked on everything altogether. Here is reback to “The Great Gatsby”. This is the conflict between the realist desgender, diflashing of criticism, of information, documentation and proof versus the grand structures of make believe, of desire and romance. And I think that it's transform to really faboulous kind of music in this text. Magic. We all know how this story is going to come to an end. And it will end up with a more brutal encore between Stanley and Blanche and in particular it's when Stella is at the hospital, she is in labour and it just the two left in hot, stimmy, sensual apartment in New Orleans and Blanche is increasingly coming at hinched and she starts think about rescue, about Shap Hartley again and she talks about, she invents the story that Shap Hartley “invited me on the cruise on the Caribbean, the problem is clothing, I torted my tracks seeing what I have suitable for the tropics.” And she is wearing some gorgeous stones wjich can't be real and Stanley says: “Isn't that gorgeous diamond tiara?” – “Oh, that's only Rhein stones.” – “Gush,-says Stanley. I thought it was Tiffany diamonds”. And he is taking off his clothes, unbottened his shoes, but he does retain around her. Well, this scene continues to build up as she talks about her romance with Shap and her grand new adventure that is coming in the next chapter. And Stanley of course is going to defliate that. She talks it all preceeding by the telegram she says she got from Shap Hartley. As a matter of fact Stanley says: “there was no worry at all. Oh, there is no millionaire and Mitch didn't come back with roses because I know where he is. Oh, that's god damn thing, but imagination. Ph, and last and can see tricks. Oh, and look at yourself, just take a look at yourself – in a wore out unmuddy grow out fetre randed 50 cents of some red peacock and with a crazy crown. What queen do you think you are? Oh, god, I've been on you from the start, he says, now what did you pull over as this boy has? You come here and spankle the place with pomade, spray perfume, cover the lamp with paper lantern. And a lone hole the place turned into Egypt and you are the queen of the Nile sitting on your throne and swinning down my liquor. Ha-ha, did you hera me? Ha-ha-ha.” Ang he walks into the bedroom. And stage directions start talking about luring reflections around Blanche, shadows of menessing and grotesque form. And then you began to hear noises in the background and human noises like cries in the jungles and we see flames in the background and she's desperate young on the phone: “Operator, operator, give me long distance, please. I wanna get in touch with Mr. Shap Hartley at Dallas. He is well known, he does require any address, just ask anybody who...” and of course this is never going to happen. And we know how this is going to come to its close. Stanley who is more or less desrobing, anyway they are moving sort of inadvertently close and close into the bedroom and

finally she walks by him, staying there “get by me, go ahead you, you stand over there. You can’t have been walked the room by me. Now what you there? But I’ve got to get out somehow.” This is the present of her life. “You think I’m in affair with you? Ha-ha.” And then human voices go, they rise up and he takes steps towards her come to think of it. “Maybe you wouldn’t be bad to in affair with you?” and she starts moving backward and backwards further into the bedroom. “Stop, stay back, don’t!” and of course she takes the bottle, she breaks it, she says: “I can twist this broken into your face”. – “I bet you wouldn’t do there.” – “I would, I will if...so, you want some rofells? All right, let’s have some rofells”. And he springs toward her, overturns the table, grasps the bottle, catches her arms. “Tiger, tiger, drop that bottle, drop it. We’ve had this date with each other from the beginning.” And then the curtain goes down there, he would rape her, but the play isn’t in there. The last scene that rendezvous. Is the rendezvous I think of Williams’ life and we know all the elements that finally come together in a kind of brutal collision course we had that rendezvous from the beginning.

At the end 3 weeks later there’s a baby and Stella is there and they have to more or less find a strategy to get Blanche out. And in this point she has moved not much merry and as in O’Neil’s plays further and further into madness and they have to make the doctor appear to be Shap Hartley, his gentleman colour, who is going finally take her out of this nightmare. And she keeps assisting gentleman out expecting from Dallas, she looks at doctors “You are not a gentleman that I was expecting”. She tells Stella: “That man is not Shap Hartley”. And they’re all trying to manage her and you’ve got this scary-looking nurse who’s ready to use violence on her and then they’re griming and the noises on the background all the jungle figures there and finally the doctor says to her: “”Miss Dubois, and he smiles . he tells it’s not necessity to knock this violence. And he takes her buddy arm and she holds his arm. – Whoever you are I’m always dependant on the kindness, strangeness”. It’s a very lovely accident to madness. But the play closes with the baby and the loving parents with the animal sense and new life. Who is the same? This is the way they’re all raised up for Williams. Thank you.