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by Renée Ruggeri

*A Streetcar Named Desire* is arguably Tennessee Williams’ most famous work because the play has some of literature’s most iconic characters. Countless interpretations of the main character, Blanche DuBois, have been made on stage and screen and in scholarly work. Some scoff at Blanche: critic John Mason Brown referred to her “pathetic pretensions to gentility even when she is known as a prostitute in the little town in which she was brought up” and “her love of the refined when her life is devoted to coarseness” (Berkman 34). Leonard Berkman pities her and view her as a “misunderstood” character (34), a tragic figure trying to start a new life for herself in New Orleans. No matter the interpretation, Blanche is doomed as soon as she steps off the Desire streetcar in New Orleans. The more she tries to embody the culture of the Old South, and enact the role of the lady, the more obvious her façade becomes, as it is impossible for her to hide her past in New Orleans.

# Blanche Dubois: An Antihero

[Lauren Seigle](http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/journal/past-issues/issue-2/seigle/from-the-writer)  
(WR 100, Paper 2)

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Tennessee Williams’s play A Streetcar Named Desire presents an ambiguous moral puzzle to readers. Critics and audiences alike harbor vastly torn opinions concerning Blanche’s role in the play, which range from praising her as a fallen angel victimized by her surroundings to damning her as a deranged harlot. Critic Kathleen Margaret Lant claims that Williams prohibits Blanche from the realm of tragic protagonist as a result of his own culturally ingrained misogyny, using her victimization as an intentional stab at womanhood. At another end of the spectrum, critic Anca Vlasopolos interprets Blanche’s downfall as a demonstration of Williams’s sympathy for her circumstances and a condemnation of the society that destroys her. Despite such strong convictions, debate still exists over Williams’s intentions in the weaving of Blanche Dubois’ tale and the purpose of the play’s moral ambiguity. Throughout the play, Williams’s sympathies lie with Blanche; this sympathy proves Williams is not misogynistic but rather condemns the environment that has brought about Blanche’s tragic circumstances.