



QUEST FOR BEAUTY IN THE PLAYS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS “CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF ”

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ABSTRACT

In 20th century generation, this study is an attempt to have deep journey into the disturbed and alienated worlds of the characters of Tennessee William's, "*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*", which are in constant quest for beauty in the Plays. It is the complicated situations and hardship for the protagonist for the existence. She has never known the warmth of the family life like other characters of Williams in the plays. Despite the odd and loneliness, she beautifully handles the situations positively and wins the battle.

Keywords: Beauty, Williams, Plays, situation, Protagonist

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INTRODUCTION

Maggie, Blanche, Dubois and Myrtle are the heroines who find themselves in more complicated situations for the existences characterized by Tennessee Williams. Despite the desperate situation they tackle the odd situation beautifully. They are less fortunate than other female characters of Tennessee Williams. They have never known the warmth of a family life that other female characters have. Maggie, Blanche, Dubois and Myrtle have no one at all. Despite the desperate and loneliness they beautifully find out the solution of the situation. It is the woman who stands behind a successful man without taking credit for anything. Such a woman operates from outside the marriage, she comes in direct confrontation with the family of the person, the taboo and society at large not to mention her need for financial independence. Such roles thus cannot be played by a weaker woman because of inherent difficulties. She remains constantly on the horns of dilemma, if she loves her man and seeks

her own fulfilment in giving him fulfilment, she rankles like a wound in conventional societies. If on the other hand she accepts the latter's dictate she has to neglect her own genuine nature. It is here that she finds herself on shaky grounds and tries to change her status of mistress to that of a wife, mistakenly believing that marriage is inevitable for a lasting relationship. The responsibilities of such a female protagonist is rather tough.

An unadopted or negative such woman character can become a femme fatale. Because of the intimate knowledge of her man's unconscious needs, wishes and ambitions – she can lapse into the role of a seductress weaning him away from everything else. Irene Claremont de Castillejo remarks:

"If so she may lure him away from his real destiny or the practical necessities of outer life in favor of some illusory anima ambition and so ultimately ruin him."
(I.C. DE Castillejo p.66)

She might try to keep him tied to her apron-strings use all feminine wiles and guiles to emasculate his urge for achieving miraculous heights or at least his cherished goals. Her possessive love and inordinate solicitude might make him seek her image in other women and cripple him psychologically. Another characteristic of a negative character of such woman is her lack of commitment to permanence in outer relationship. She might throw her hands up too soon and walk away to seek and give fulfilment to another man. Edward C. Whitmont comments:

“Indeed she may, like her male counterpart, puer aeternus, shy away from making any concrete commitment and forever lead a provisory life of emotional wandering.” (E.D. Whitmont p.179)

Exhibitionism and egotism are other negative characters in such a woman. Such female character mediates the personal unconscious of her man unnoticeably; quietly without looking for credit or reward.

Such woman has to be brave enough to face the world, work for her own financial independence and simultaneously bring the beauty out of her man. She might use her maidenly softness now and alternate it with aggression and wilfulness then, all in the service of the relationship. Secondly, it is not necessary that this woman can only be the other woman and not one's wife. In fact, the converse is as true, though rare. Blessed is the man who has a wife with an ornament of this personality in her. And lastly the characters mentioned above are prototypical.

Tennessee Williams crated beauty of this women traits in *Cat on a Tin Roof*. Maggie, the wife of Brick polity is companion to him at the sexual live. she is a beautiful sleek slender and a soft woman immensely conscious and proud of her looks unlike the other heroines of Tennessee Williams who are more often than not past their prime Maggie is youthful lusty and charming Williams describes her as a “pretty young women” with a voice that “has range and music” (p.111) a gay, charming simile,(p.113) a woman who has “lovely bare arms” (p.111) and “giggles with a hand fluttering at her throat and breast and her long throat arched” (p.114) and her speech is oddly funny, because her

eyes “constantly twinkle and her voice shakes with laughter which is barebelly indulgent.(p.113) she has a bitchy humour (p.114), which Williams featured to alienate with her husband for time being. In other words, she is a sensual relaxation and full-bosomed appeasing nature of woman, who has kept herself attractive for the conquest of her alienated husband. She is “Great the greatest” (p.172) in bed. She has an intense love for Brick and she would not lock at any other man: “I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just see you.....But don't continue my torture. I can't live on and on under these circumstances.”(p.123) Immediately after her marriage with Brick, she tries to obliterate her identity in his love for football. Brick Recalls :

She went on the road that with the Dixie stare. Oh she media a great show of being the world's best sport. She wore a – tall bearskin cap ! A shako, they call it, a dyed red ! – cut up' crazy! Rented hotel ball rooms for victory celebrations, wouldn't cancel the when it turned out defeat... (p. 172)

Maggie has been presented in the play as a beautiful mistress for whom love of the man is supreme. She has sacrificed herself for him in the past and continues to do so when the play opens.

Quest for beauty, Maggie is more into the pour and tempt to sex than into other components. She is aware of the spell she can cast upon men by her bewitching looks and figure. She has exploited them many a lime to gain favor, love and attention. She is conscious of Big Daddy's eyes which seem to pry into her person. She flirts with him now and then knowing his lasciviousness :

Big Daddy harbors a little unconscious Lech for me... way me always drops his eyes down my body when I'm talking to him drops his eyes to my boobs an' likes him old chops! Ha ha ! (p.113)

This charming woman has exercised her powerful beauty in the post and forced Brick to marry her.

She has deliberately exercised her charms on Big Daddy to dodge the danger of being cut off from his inheritance in view of Bricks about the attentions she receives from men while walking on the road side. She tells Brick about them:

They still see me, Brick and they like what they see. Un-huh. Some of them would give their Other men still want me Why, last week in Memphis everywhere that I went men's eyes burned holes in my clothes at the country club and in the restaurants and department stores, there wasn't a man I met or walked by that didn't first eat rue up with his eyes and turn around when I passed him and look back at me. Why, at Alice's party for her new York cousins, the best looking man in the crowd – followed me upstairs and tried to force his way in the powder room with me, followed me upstairs and tried to force his way in! (p.128-129)

She talks of this handsome man as having a "letch" for her. By way of comment, one may add that her reputed bobbing of others "letch" for her comes from her idea that this way she also has his desire for her. Bricks who has not been sleeping with his wife ever since his friend Skipper died has made Maggie as nervous as a cat. She has begun to feel that Brick's premeditated casting her aside means her defeat and of her lack of charms, to evoke sexual desire in her man. She therefore, talks of others "letch" for her so as to arouse the sexual passion in him. She exposes the powerful battery – her breasts and her hips – to Brick and says:

You know, our sex life didn't just peter out in the usual way, it was cut off short, long before the natural time for it to, and it's going to revive aging, just as sudden as that. I'm confident of it. That's what I'm keeping myself attractive. For the time when you'll see me again like other men see me look Brick! [She stands before the long oval mirror, touches her breasts and then her hips with her two hands.] How tight my body stays on me! Nothing has fallen off me – not a fraction (p.128-129)

Her exhibitionistic use of her sexual attraction also sets her up in the beautiful modality of feminine character. But her exploitation of her sexual charms to gain her selfish ends makes her a powerful and dangerous model of feminine character. The animus of Maggie would clearly seem reflected in Big Daddy. Her lust for beauty, for life, for love, for children, for money, for comfort and for talking, all would reveal her connection with the old man. Her aggressive, tireless spirit and strength are much like Big Daddy's who started from a scratch to become the biggest landlord of the Delta, just as Maggie has fought her way up to Brick. Her desperate but spirited attempts at the revival and restoration of her conjugal life are identical with Big Daddy's vigorous enthusiasm for life with which he seeks to defeat death. Her talk of other "letch" for her can be equated to potency even on his deathbed "I still have desire for women and this my sixty-fifth birthday." (p.155) When Maggie is sleeping with another man sneakily so that Brick could not catch her off for faithlessness and adultery, she echoes Big Daddy's desire which he plainly announced to his creaky son Brick:

All I ask of that woman [Big Mama] is that she leave me alone. But she can't admit to herself that she makes me sick. That comes of having slept with her too many years. Should have quit much sooner but that old woman she never got enough of it – and I wash good in bed I never should have wasted so much of it on her.... They say you got just so many and each one is numbered. Well, I got a few left in me a few, and I'm going to pick me a good one to spend 'em on! I'm going to pick me a choice one, I don't care how much she costs. I'll smother her in minks Ha ha! I'll strip her naked and smother her in minks and choke her with diamonds! (p.157-158)

Thus, Maggie combines in herself the sexuality and aggressiveness of Big Daddy. Moreover, she delights in Big Daddy's use of four-letter words and laughs heartily at his jokes. She shares Big Daddy's love for Brick and hatred for Mae and Gooper, and their little children, whom she calls 'no-neck monster.' (p.109) She leniently and delightfully

reports Big Daddy's strong dislike of their children to Gooper. Maggie adds, "well I swear, I simply could have di-iced." (p.110) The affinity between Maggie and Big Daddy is sensed from her remark:

Big Daddy dotes on you, honey, and he can't stand Brother Man and Brother man's wife, that monster of fertility mea; She's downright odious to him. know how I know ? By little expressions that flicker over his face..... (p.112)

Moreover, Maggie's concern at Bricks alcoholism and avoiding sexual intercourse with her is echoed by Big Daddy. Only she and Big Daddy try to break into the wall of his calmness to evoke the confession from him about his relations with skipper. Big Daddy fails to cure Brick of his alcoholism where as Maggie is beautifully determined to persuade him back to life as well as back to her bed, because she cannot afford to lose as she tells Brick:

Born poor, raised poor expect to die poor unless I manage to get us something out of what Big Daddy leave when he dies of cancer!(p .82)

Maggie knows that time is running out of her. Big Daddy has not got long to live. she has also to contend with Gooper and Mae who seem to hold a better identity than what Maggie has. Gooper is an established lawyer. He has been running the plantation for Big Daddy for three years. So he has the right to that Big Daddy would give it all to him. Beside, they are productive; they have five children and the sixth is on its way. Gooper's wife a former carnival queen, is socially superior to Maggie; She is from a very rich family. As a contrast, Brick has no career. He has give up being a sports announcer and is now concentrating on drinking. Brick and Maggie have no children and will never have any unless Maggie succeeds in compelling does not concerns for the property at all. He does not care to defend himself when Gooper and him back to their bed. Bricks does not concern for the property at all. He does not care to defend himself when Gooper and Mae make comment the malicious act about his relationship with skipper and about his conflict with Maggie, Which they believe would only bring the

younger couple disadvantages. It seems that Maggie has all elements against her winning. Despite all these, Maggie is determined to win.

In fact, Maggie has constantly found herself in a contest. She has never attained anything without having to fight. For it, and she seems to enjoy it. The fact that Maggie has a Diana Trophy won at the inter collegiate archery contest symbolically justifies that Maggie can be a beautiful (Fighter) combatant. Maggie loves and admires Big Daddy because he, too had all hostile elements against him and he could overcome them and prosper. Since her childhood she had to fight against poverty and humility accepting the hand-me-down clothes from rich cousins whom she hated. Then she had to fight for Brick's love against his love for football stardom and lay down two to him saying, "Now or never," which made Brick marry her. And later she found out that skippers love for Brick was not what suspected Brick, Being puritanical as he is. When she compelled the truth which at the same time destroyed skipper and Bricks fantasy she is severely punished by her husband's detachment. While she is flighty against Echo Spring, Bricks favorite drink, in order to regain his affection, Maggie faces another crisis; Big Daddy is dying of cancer and Gooper and Mae are trying to win his favor and to cut Brick out of the plantation. Maggie is suspicious about their plan to put Brick in Rainbow Hill where alcoholics and drug addicts are treated. For Maggie Brick, through his self-destructive acts, is helping the hostile couple to succeed:

Well, you've been doing' just about everything in your power to bring it about, you've just been doing' every thing you can think of the aid and abet them in this scheme of theirs ! Quittin' work devoting yourself to the occupation of drinking! Breaking' your ankle last night on the high school athletic field: doin' what ? Jump in' hurdles ? At two or three in the morning ? Just fantastic! Got in the paper... (p.83)

The fact that Maggie tribulation simultaneously involves marital and monetary crises makes her act like a cat on a hot tin roof. She refuses her to jump the theroof when her husband tells her to do so. Maggie accepts that She has gone through "Hideous

transformation", and become hard ! Frantic! – Cruel because she can't afford to be thin skinned any more." (p.84) Maggie is a woman of strong will. She is determined to win both wars from the very beginning :

But one thing I don't have is the charm of the defeated my hat is still in the ring, and I am determined to win! and Later tonight I'm going to tell you I Love You an' maybe by that time you'll be drunk enough to believe me (p.86)

Another great motive , besides dreadful poverty, that keeps Maggie on a hot tin roof is true love that she has for Brick. Maggie love Brick sincerely, devotedly and intensely. To Brick, she describes how miserable and lonely she is since Brick has turned towards her:

Living with someone you love can be lonelier- than living entirely alone-- if the one that Y' love doesn't love you..(p.87)

Then she goes on told never make love to her thought he would stick the longest and sharpest knife straight into her heart. The reason that she does not do it because she is going to win him back. Maggie is so urgently in love with love to each other so that she would full him. When her husband tells her to find a lover so that she can jump off the hot to and will not!" (p.88) Maggie still takes good care of herself because thoughts that Brick would one day come back to her. Other men openly reveal their desire for her and many of them are socially distinguisher and very qualified. Even Big Daddy has have eyes foe other men as she empathetically confesses to Brick when he tells her to take a lover :

I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed I Just see you !why don't you get ugly Brick, why don't you please get fat or ugly or something so I could stand it ? (p.89)

Instead of finding other men she would rather have him back. Maggie, the cat has become a very fearful and humble wife when she tries to ask for a pardon from Brick :

Oh Brick! How long does it have to go on ? This punishment ? Haven't I done time enough haven't

I served my term, can't I apply for pardon ?(p.90)

She keeps telling her husband that "Skipper is dead !" (p.91)

But she is alive: Maggie the cat is alive....(p.92)

Maggie is a very interesting and beautifully characterized motivator because she is both romantic and practical being a romanticist she like many other people, falls for Brick, who is a football hero. she is capable of comprehending her husband's noble ideals. While Brick is blind of sleazy realities and thought that skipper is love for him is pure friendship, Maggie can tell with the instinct of a possessive wife that skipper alone was concealing desire for Brick. And in order to protect her husband, she had to force Skipper to make his confession. Although she accepts that she is not good ,because it is hard for any person in her condition to be good, Maggie claims that she is honest. And she asks Brick to give her credit for that:

..... Brick, I'm not good. I don't know why people have to pretend to be good, nobody's good. The rich or the well -to-do can afford to respect moral patterns, conventional moral patterns, but I could never afford to, yeah, but I'm honest! Give me credit for just that, will you please? (p.93)

Experiences teach Maggie to be practical and to fight for survival. She does not want to be safe alone. She insists that Brick must be also safe. She knows what Gooper and mae are planning and she knows also that their chances of running over Big Daddy's heart are very little. Maggie knows that Big Daddy hates Gooper, mae and their children. And this is understand able. Although Gooper and mae keep picking on Maggie for her failure to attract Brick to bed and on her being childless, their marital relationship is far from being an ideal one. All we see what is going on between mae and Gooper are "a fierce poke, a low kissing sound and a grimace of fury." (P. 94)

They simply represent greed and lust. They are predators whose greed is thinly covered from Big Daddy and big Mama. They propagate in order to gain inheritance. They do not even bother to think of proper names for them as Maggie remarks to mae :

Dixie, Tricia, Buster, Sonny, Polly!_ sounds like four dogs and a parrot..... animal act in a circus! (p.95)

In fact the fight between Gooper and his wife against Maggie is not an equal fight. Though Gooper career as an attorney and mae's claim of superior social status, they are obviously and rapidly losing to Maggie who is fighting alone for her self and Brick. with the shrewdness of cat, Maggie comments would turn whatever Gooper and me say to their disadvantage, while Maggie is gaining favor for Brick. Gooper and me are losing fast because they fight emotionally while Maggie the cat fights coolly and calculatingly with feminine beauty. In Act Three, when the play is reaching its Climax, and Big man realizes that Big Daddy is going to die soon, Gooper tells his mother that :

A family crisis brings out the best and the worst in every member of it (p.96)

They openly show their jealousy towards Bricks, their malice and threatening remarks towards relation ship with skipper. They mock Maggies for being deserted by Bricks and insult her for being childless . They look down on Brick for being an alcoholic, a jobless and an immature adult. They listen in the conversation between Big Daddy and Brick and between the latter with his wife. They even peep thorough the keyhole and find out that Brick sleeps on a sofa while Maggie sleep alone in the big bed.

Gooper lack of sympathy and concern for his father disgusts Big Mama since Gooper does not vary if his parents will be hurt by his acts, Big Man can not see why she should care for his feelings. She should care for his feeling she therefore openly announces that Brick is his fathers only love and Bricks child is his only dream :

Oh, Brick son of Big Daddy! Big Daddy does so love you! Y' know what would be his fondest dream come true? If before he passed on, if big Daddy has to pass on you gave him a child of yours a grandson a much like son a his son is like Big Daddy.....(p.162)

And this gives Maggie enough clues to win a victory. Immediately Maggie makes an announcement that Big Daddy's dream is coming true - that:

Brick and I are going to ---- have a child !
(p.98)

Mae may call Maggie a liar, but we all know that Maggie is going to keep her word, She tells Brick that she went to see her doctor and was told that this is time of the month for her to conceive. When Brick asks, But how are you going to conceive a child by a man in love with his liquor? Maggie answer, "By locking his liquor up and up and making him satisfy my desire before I unlock it !" (p.99)

CONCLUSION

As the curtain falls, we see Big Mama rush in for the medicine that will help Big Daddy pass away peacefully. The grandchild that Brick is going to give him will complete the cycle of life. Thus, this is the beauty which Maggie created to Big Daddy and family with her feminine quality. Maggie may be quality of lying. But hers is a white lie that offers the dying man his last happy moment. The lie also goes Big Mama, the widow-to be happiness and security. And we know that Maggie is capable of making the dream come true. Maggie will be like the fierce goddess Diana, who watches over her family and the plantation. Brick's surrender to Maggie at the end of the play is surrender to the feminine beauty, which means dropping the ego in order to reconnect with the springs and beauty of life. He drops his ego and walks into her arms which hold him, gently in order to rejuvenate :

- Take hold of you.- Gently ,
gently with love hand your life back to you ,
like something' gold you let go of.
I do love you, Brick, I do! (p. 173)

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