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~~by David M. B. Brown~~

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Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist and founder of the modern school of psychoanalysis, found sex to be a major human motivational force. Tennessee Williams, adapts, as a basic part of his framework, this motivational force in a Streetcar Named Desire. The basis of the action of the play is a conflict in the Blanche-Stella-Stanley triangle, in which Blanche and Stanley both compete for Stella's affection.

Freud points out that there are sexual ties between siblings in the family group, and Williams exploits this fact. These sexual ties are subliminal, or latent, and seldom result in the sex act. Stanley's and Stella's sex life is very real, on the other hand, and Stella enjoys the animality that Stanley provides. Blanche offers Stella reminiscences of their semi-aristocratic life on the family plantation, or the "womb." Blanche can be seen as a woman who never left, or regressed to, one of Freud's stages of human psychological development that entails attachment, in a subliminal sexual way, to members of the conjugal family unit. Her motivation to estrange Stella is based on this. Stella's sexual motivations are identical to Stanley's. They both assumed mature adult sex lives, and are quite happy with the way they are living.

With women's liberation rampant in our culture, Stella has degenerated to become less than an admirable figure, and I am sure her dependence on, and choice to stay with Stanley, is poorly received by female readers. Stella's sexual dependency on Stanley shows itself early in the play. Stella says, showing her near addiction to Stanley's sexual excitement, "When he's away for