

Phenomenological Understandings Of Varsouviana Polka In Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*

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ABSTRACT: *Based on the examination of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of time and its consciousness, this article investigates how Blanche DuBois's secondary memory of the musical tune, Varsouviana, influences on her present perceptions. As the secondary memory not only originates from retentions to perceive events that immediately become the past but also involves protentions to expect the fulfillment of previous occurrences in nearby future, Blanche's present moment haunted by Varsouviana sound cannot exist as itself. Despite the implications of this polka tune, the melody cannot be shared with other characters in that it springs from Blanche's secondary memory. Ultimately, this article argues that Blanche's inability of illustrating the polka tune to other characters causes their misunderstandings of Blanche, who also fails in understanding her self-ego.*

KEYWORDS: *Edmund Husserl, Misunderstanding, Secondary Memory, A Streetcar Named Desire, Varsouviana*

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* treats the past memory of Blanche DuBois, a systematic analysis about the main character's consciousness of time and recollection of Varsouviana polka has been less carried out. In order to supplement the previous studies, thus, this article pursues an interdisciplinary approach to understand Blanche's present perception and her secondary memory, through applying Edmund Husserl's philosophical theory of phenomenology of the consciousness of internal time (1893-1917). This approach contributes to explaining how the music tunes of Varsouviana haunting Blanche as her secondary memory consist of Blanche's current mental state, through focusing on each separate notion of retention, present perception, and protention, all of which are in fact connected as a unity to organize the flow of Blanche's present consciousness.

II. VARSOUVIANA IN A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Useless Attempt to Catch the Trace of Voice in The Broken Tower: An idea of Edmund Husserl regarding the perceptions of temporal objects either as momentary or enduring act (Husserl, 21) is needed to begin with grasping the notion of present moment. Husserl uses an example of a melody to explain this:

The matter seems very simple at first: we hear the melody, that is, we perceive it, for hearing is indeed perceiving. However, the first tone sounds, then comes the second tone, then the third, and so on. Must we not say: when the second tone sounds, I hear *it*, but I no longer hear the first tone, etc.? In truth, then, I do not hear the melody but only the single present tone. That the elapsed part of the melody is something objective for me, I owe – or so one will be inclined to say – to memory... (Husserl, 25)

Even though there is duration of a melody when it is heard, to say strictly, the listeners do not hear the whole melody but only do perceive a single tone consisting of the melody at their very present moment. The perceived tone, thus, immediately becomes the past from the present moment, and the continuity of these elapsed temporal objects composes memory. In this sense, Husserl's analysis of the consciousness of time offers a hint to understand the epigraph of *A Streetcar Named Desire* – this epigraph from "The Broken Tower" by Hart Crane indicates the source from which Blanche DuBois's memory of her past originates. In other words, Husserl's concepts of 'present' which is but to be changed into "immediately past" (Husserl, 26) that is involved in the "primary memory (called as "retention" by Husserl)" enable this epigraph to be re-illuminated as the explanations about the origin of Blanche's secondary memory of Varsouviana. Husserl expounds the difference between "primary memory" and "secondary memory," saying that the former is a "pure and simple (48)" reproductive memory about the phase that has just happened, and the latter occurs when a subject tries to

reproduce or recollect the past in imagination without the perceptions of objects in reality. In this sense, the term of “secondary memory” can be exchanged with “phantasy (47)” which sometimes involves the errors of “representation (47)” in the process of its formation. The epigraph which can be interpreted with Husserl’s theory of the consciousness of time is:

And so it was I entered the broken world
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

In this “broken world” into which the persona enters in order to “trace the visionary company of love,” the “voice” of what the persona is looking for is suddenly transmitted by the wind but it does not stay “not for long.” It appears as “an instant” and soon disappears. However, when Husserl’s idea of the consciousness of time is applied, the situation can be understood with the temporal concepts of present and retention. It is a fact that the persona perceives the voice of the “visionary company of love” in “an instant” of her present moment, which does instantly fall back to the past. In other words, the voice does not continue to sound anymore, even though it is clear that it has existed once a little while ago, and this whole situation forms retention in that the persona still holds the memory about the object which just goes through the transition from “now-moment (Husserl, 26)” of the present to “immediate past.” As it is seen, the reason why the immediate disappearance of the “voice” matters in this passage is because it does not last long enough to “hold each desperate choice,” but in fact this is a natural phenomenon considering the essential trait of the present moment, which is depicted as “an instant” that cannot help but to be elapsed into the past and must be filled with a new now-moment. Husserl explains this with his understandings of phenomenology of time:

The whole extent of the tone’s duration or “the” tone [that belongs to a melody, which is a unity of each separate tone that is heard in each now-moment of a subject who often regards the melody as a “continual flow (25)” rather than a combination of segmented tones] in its extension than stands before me as something dead [since “the” tone does not physically exist in the present moment but only in memory], so to speak – something no longer being vitally generated, a formation no longer animated by the generative point of now but continuously modified and sinking back into “emptiness.” (Husserl, 26)

The short duration of the voice which rings only “an instant” in the wind is thus to be comprehended as the thing that is “something dead” since it is “no longer being vitally generated” or “no longer animated by the generative point of now.” Even though the “each desperate choice” which still exists in the mind of the persona needs a ground to be held fast not to be lost, and the “voice” heard as the trace of “the visionary company of love” is instantly regarded as the solution for the each desperate desire, the instant voice of love cannot be the breakthrough for the desperateness. Phenomenologically, the point of present which has to be occupied with new impression cannot coexist with what is no longer activated but recedes to the past. A problem can arise when this phenomenological fact cannot be accepted by the persona if he or she is still preoccupied with the impression of the past, which can never be restored in the present in any way.

Varsouviana Polka as Secondary Memory: However, this does not suggest that it is undesirable to keep a special memory of what has been found as the ideal in the past. Rather, these phenomenological understandings of time and its consciousness allow more strict way of categorizing the Varsouviana polka tune, which functions importantly as one of the theatrical designs to show how Blanche’s present moments in reality are distorted with her past memory. About the Varsouviana polka, Annette Davison mentions the opinion of Irene M. Selznick who refers it as “memory music,” explaining “the music that Blanche remembers was playing when her husband shot himself” (Davison, 402, 404). Also, in the sense that this polka tune is closely related to Blanche’s private memory of her past, Mary Ann Corrigan calls it as “subjective music” since “only Blanche and the audience hear the Varsouviana polka, which was played as Blanche’s husband shot himself. The music, through its association in her memory with impending death, becomes a symbol of imminent disaster” (Corrigan, 52). Corrigan’s interpretation implies that there is a role of foreshadowing in the polka tune, which is often followed by “imminent disaster,” but Elia Kazan holds a different point of view since he feels that “if any incidental music were heard prior to the cue, it would suggest that the Varsouviana was also incidental rather than subjective – that is, heard only by Blanche” (qtd. in Davison, 407). Kazan’s view is that the interference of the polka tune in Blanche’s mind occurs incidentally as well as intermittently – which suggests that Blanche cannot control the appearance of the music to her mind, and this is ultimately connected to the lacking of subjectivity of Blanche whose mental state haunted by the memory of the past. Both Davison and Corrigan mention that

Varsouviana is the music about Blanche's memory, however, to be more exact, this belongs to the secondary memory, which has its distinctions from those of primary memory of retention. Husserl explains the concept of secondary memory through comparing this with primary memory:

If retention attaches itself to the actually present perception, whether during its perceptual flow or in continuous union with it after it has completely elapsed, it is natural to say at first (as Brentano did) that the actually present perception becomes constituted as presentation on the basis of sensations and that primary memory becomes constituted as representation, as re-presentation, on the basis of phantasies. Now just as re-presentations can attach themselves immediately to perceptions, they can also occur independently without being jointed to perceptions, and these are secondary memories. (Husserl, 37)

The major difference between primary and secondary memory is that the secondary memory can appear "independently" without the stimulations on perceptions, but the primary memory – regardless of whether it appears while the "perceptual flow" is going on or after the present perception is just ended – is necessarily "attached to" sensations. Different from the primary memory which is originated from the perception of what has 'just' happened, the secondary memory which is elapsed version of the primary memory but able to appear on the consciousness through imagination without stimulations from outside has possibility of being "modified" during its process of representation (Husserl, 43).

Tonality of Varsouviana in Blanche's Secondary Memory: As a medium to remind Blanche of her past, thus, Varsouviana polka tune is not about the pure memory of the polka melody but it springs as her second memory – "phantasy" as Husserl calls it – and in this phantasy there are not only some modifications of the melody itself but also connotations that signify the complicated psychology of Blanche. In the first place, the tonality of this polka tune is to be examined in that there seems to be incongruence between the tonality of music and the situation when this Varsouviana tune firstly appears. It is the Scene 1 where the music of Varsouviana rises up for the first time when Stanley asks Blanche about her previous marriage, and this first appearance of the polka tune is important because it sets up the impression of a discrepancy. The first Varsouviana cue is depicted in this passage:

STANLEY: Haven't fallen in, have you? (*He grins at Blanche. She tries unsuccessfully to smile back. There is a silence*) I'm afraid I'll strike you as being the unrefined type. Stella's spoke of you a good deal. You were married once, weren't you?
(*The music of the polka rises up, faint in the distance.*)
BLANCHE: Yes. When I was quite young.
STANLEY: What happened?
BLANCHE: The boy – the boy died. (*She sinks back down*) I'm afraid I'm – going to be sick!
(Williams, *Streetcar*, 15)

Even though the music of the polka is featured while the speech of Blanche depicts the tragic happenings at the moments when the boy she has "fallen in" love with was dead, Davison points out that the tonality of this polka tune has to be major tone rather than minor, saying that "Blanche's explanation – that her young husband died – contrasts with the tune's major key and light, sunny character. This disjunction implies there is more to be said on the matter" (Davison, 407). Often, tonality of music is associated with the emotions of characters, and Davison also indicates this through mentioning the opinion of Selznick who says, "The minor Varsouviana is her [Blanche's] unhappiness. The major Varsouviana is the nostalgia," adding her own opinion that Selznick's analysis is "astute and highlights the complexity of the relationship between Blanche and her memories of the Varsouviana" (Davison, 408). It is thus suggested from Selznick's idea that the major tone in this Scene 1 also implies the "nostalgia" of Blanche even though Blanche remembers "the boy died," and Elia Kazan's director's note supports this idea since "Even the Allan Grey incident, as she [Blanche] now tells it and believes it to have happened, is a necessary piece of romanticism" (Kazan, 46). However, at this scene in which the major polka tune is conveyed for the first time with its seeming incongruence on Blanche's emotional mood to recall the death of Allan Grey, it might be difficult for the audiences to match the major tonality of the music with the connoted meaning of her romantic past in the polka tune. For this reason, the modification of the tonality of Varsouviana continues to be done in Blanche's mind when the polka tune appears again as Blanche explains her previous love to Harold Mitchell (Mitch), and in this scene the desired effect of the specific usage of the tonality of polka gets clearer than before. Considering the whole context where Blanche is waiting for Mitch's proposal for marriage in Scene 7, the change of the tonality from minor to major gets congruent with the situation where

Blanche recalls Allan Grey's death but at the same time finds a hope to escape from her loneliness through the relationship with Mitch. The stage direction by Tennessee Williams is thus:

BLANCHE: Afterwards we [Blanche and Allen Grey] pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yet, the three of us [Blanche, Allen Grey, and an older man whom Allan Grey falls in love with] drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

(*Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.*)

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later – a shot!

(*The Polka stops abruptly.*)

(*Blanche rises stiffly. Then, the Polka resumes in a major key.*)

(...)

(*Mitch gets up awkwardly and moves toward her a little. The Polka music increases. Mitch stands beside her.*)

MITCH: (*drawing her slowly into his arms*): You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be – you and me, Blanche? (*Streetcar, 67*)

The purpose of the usages of major and minor keys in this passage is easy to be apprehended: the accompaniment of a minor key is congruent with the atmosphere as Blanche explains her past when she has danced with Allan Grey who suddenly ran to the lake and shot himself, and the sound of the major key during the story of Blanche of her past shows that Blanche perceives inner thoughts of Mitch when he comes toward Blanche to propose marriage to her. However, the Varsouviana polka tune itself, regardless of the variations of the tonality, has the attribute of ambivalence to Blanche in that it recalls her romantic love when she was young as well as the end of it due to the death of whom she loves.

Protentions and Expectations in Varsouviana Polka Tune: Not only the modifications of the tonality of Varsouviana polka music in Blanche's secondary memory, but also the protentions of Blanche who expects unfortunate happenings whenever Varsouviana appears on her mind can be explained by Husserl's theory for the perception of the consciousness of time. As Husserl mentions that "every memory contains expectation-intentions whose fulfillment leads to the present (Husserl, 54)," Blanche also has the anticipation with the anxiety that something tragic would happen again in her future as it has been done in the past whenever she listens to the polka sound. Basically, the relation between Husserl's theory and the usage of Varsouviana in *A Streetcar Named Desire* depends on the fact that the memory of the polka tune has been followed by the non-musical memory of Allan Grey's death, which gives profound impact on Blanche's mental state at that moment, and this musical and non-musical happenings remain as a unity which can be called as "act-continuum (Husserl, 25)" in Blanche's memory. Husserl expounds how the process of this protention in secondary memory can be achieved, saying that "They [protentions] are not only there in the process of catching what is coming; they have also *caught* it. They have been fulfilled, and we are conscious of this in the recollection" (Husserl, 54). In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, what 'have been caught' in Blanche's consciousness is of course Allan Grey's death, which was "coming" after the Varsouviana, but this does not mean that this must happen again whenever the polka tune is replayed. Husserl specifies the meaning of protentions in the context of recollection as he compares the notions of recollection and protention:

And if the original protention belonging to the perception of the event was *indefinite and left open* the possibility of things' being otherwise or not being at all, in the recollection we have an expectation settled in advance that does not leave all of that open, unless in the form of an "unfinished" recollection, which has a different structure from the *indefinite original protention*. (Husserl, 55, *emphases added*)

Different from the concept of recollection which is simply indicating the playback of what has happened, protention involves the qualities of being "indefinite" or "left open." In a similar vein, the result of tragic event that Blanche expects to come whenever the polka tune comes into her mind is still opened not to be actualized even though it has once happened in her past. However, even when the probability of the happenings of something tragic is undecided, the anxiety still remains. Thus, the Varsouviana polka depicts this anxiety which is caused by the protentions of Blanche, and the end of Scene 8 captures this very well:

STANLEY: Sister Blanche, I've got a little birthday remembrance for you.

BLANCHE: Oh, have you, Stanley? I wasn't expecting any, I – I don't know why Stella wants to observe my birthday! I'd much rather forget it – when you – reach twenty-seven! Well – age is a subject that you'd prefer to ignore!

STANLEY: Twenty-seven?

BLANCHE: What is it? Is it for me?

(He is holding a little envelope toward her.)

STANLEY: Yes, I hope you like it!

BLANCHE: Why, why – Why, it's a –

STANLEY: Ticket! Back to Laurel! On the Greyhound! Tuesday!

(The Varsouviana music steals in softly and continues playing. Stella rises abruptly and turns her back. Blanche tries to smile. Then she tries to laugh...) (Streetcar, 80)

The play of Varsouviana polka here, when Stanley gives a ticket to Blanche to go back to Laurel, is later implied by the directions of Tennessee Williams with a sense of foreboding of her misfortune as this polka tune at the end of Scene 8 lasts to the beginning of Scene 9. Davison mentions the extension of this polka sound, "In production, Williams's next Varsouviana cue was begun earlier: when Stanley presents Blanche with a bus ticket to Laurel toward the end of scene 8, rather than at the start of scene 9" (Davison, 408). Varsouviana tune in Blanche's mind at the beginning of Scene 9 which starts "a while later that evening" is depicted as this: "*The rapid, feverish polka tune, the "Varsouviana," is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song*" (Streetcar, 83). This stage direction denotes that the polka sound also functions as "the sense of disaster closing in on her," such as a foreshadowing of a tragic event which is about to be happened later in this scene. This sense of foreboding, as mentioned earlier, is based on her strong memory of the past in which the musical sound is followed by unmusical event of Allan Grey's death, and these two happenings have flowed in Blanche's mind as connected events. In addition to this, another reason why Husserl's explanation of the secondary memory can be applied to this passage is that he also mentions the "freedom" of the reproduction of secondary memory (Husserl, 49). According to Husserl, the representations of events in secondary memory is "something free, a free running through: We can carry out the re-presentation "more quickly" or "more slowly," more distinctly and explicitly or more confusedly, in a single lightning-like stroke or in articulated steps, and so on" (Husserl, 49-50). One of the differences between the first memory and the secondary memory is, the latter has the freedom to re-present the elapsed events with the mode that the subject wants, even though Husserl also mentions that there is a possibility that the reappearance of past events through the secondary memory cannot correspond to the appearance of the reality when it has happened (Husserl, 51). In the secondary memory, thus, Blanche reproduces the tone and speed of Varsouviana according to her mood; not only can the tonality of the music hover between major and minor but also the speed of the polka tune can be "rapid, feverish" to put emphasis on Blanche's nervousness when she gets the sense of protension.

A Devise of Polka Tune to Show How Blanche's True Self Cannot Be Seen from Outside: The fact that the polka tune cannot be heard by other characters, however, implies that Blanche's all psychological processes evoked by Varsouviana cannot be shared with them, either. What has been seen by other characters looking at Blanche is thus not enough to understand her: her present moments are continuously being lost between her preoccupations with the moments of her past which have been passed too soon to catch the desperate wishes of her present and her sense of protensions from that music followed by Allan Grey's death – and it is Varsouviana that captures all these mental processes that cannot be listened to other characters. In Scene 9 where Mitch reappears to Blanche after she is "stood up (Streetcar, 76)" by Mitch as he does not come to her birthday party, Blanche's sense of alienation from others, which is partly because of the haunting Varsouviana unheard to others, is portrayed. Blanche fails to describe the sound of Varsouviana in her head to Mitch whose visit to Blanche temporarily makes the tune stop haunting her, so she says, "You've stopped that polka tune that I had caught in my head. Have you ever had anything caught in your head? Some words, a piece of music? That goes relentlessly on and on in your head? No, of course you haven't, you dumb angel-puss, you'd never get anything awful caught in your head!" (Streetcar, 84). This polka tune is in fact not different from the indication of "the sense of disaster closing in on her" in that Blanche is in this situation expecting a negative remark from Mitch who comes to break off his engagement with Blanche, and this expectation is realized as Mitch says "I wasn't going to see you anymore" (Streetcar, 85). Still, Mitch does not apprehend what Blanche is talking about in this scene:

BLANCHE: Something's the mater tonight, but never mind. I won't cross-examine the witness. I'll just – *(She touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again.)* – pretend I don't notice anything different about you! That – music again ...

MITCH: What music?

BLANCHE: The "Varsouviana"! The polka tune they were playing when Allan – Wait! (*A distant revolver shot is heard. Blanche seems relieved.*)

There now, the shot! It always stops after that. (*The polka music dies out again.*)

Yes, now it's stopped.

MITCH: Are you boxed out of your mind? (*Streetcar*, 84-85)

As Tennessee Williams says, "Some are a little better of a little worse but all are activated more by misunderstanding than malice. A blindness to what is going on in each other's hearts (Williams, *Selected Letters II*, 95)" in the letter to Elia Kazan in April 19, 1947, Mitch at this moment shows his blindness to the mental state of Blanche. In this passage, their conversation is slightly fragmented because the questions of Mitch who keeps asking "What music?" or "Are you boxed out of your mind?" show Mitch's lacking of understanding of Blanche who is desperate to get out of from the haunting sound of polka, even though this is not the first time when Blanche tries to explain Varsouviana in her mind to Mitch at the end of Scene 6 where the tonality of the polka is freely changed in Blanche's secondary memory. In this sense, the polka tune is a physical device which shows audiences that there is a gap between the present perceptions of each character on the stage, and this gap which occurs from the fact that one character cannot see the inside of the other character from the outside establishes the major theme of this drama, which is explained by Tennessee Williams in the same letter to Elia Kazan:

We see from outside what could not be seen within, and the truth of the tragic dilemma becomes apparent. It was not that one person was bad or good, one right or wrong, but that all judged falsely concerning each other, what seemed black to one and white to the other is actually grey – a perception that could occur only through the detached eye of art. Naturally a play of this kind does not exactly present a theme or score a point, unless it be the point or theme of human misunderstanding. (*Selected Letters II*, 96)

This theme of "human misunderstanding" questions the capability of human "perception" in having "detached" point of view to look at the inside of others, and Tennessee Williams emphasizes this theme at the end of Scene 9 through the speeches of Mitch, and at this moment the Varsouviana is conveyed again:

BLANCHE: After the death of Allan – intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with ... I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection (...) My youth was suddenly gone up the water-spout, and – I met you (...).

MITCH: You lied to me, Blanche.

BLANCHE: Don't say I lied to you.

MITCH: Lies, lies, inside and out, all lies.

BLANCHE: Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart...

(*A Vendor comes around the corner. She is a blind Mexican woman in a dark shawl, carrying bunches of those gaudy tin flowers that lower class Mexicans display at funerals and other festive occasions. She is calling barely audibly. Her figure is only faintly visible outside the building.*)

(...)

MEXICAN WOMAN: Flores. Flores para los muertos...

(*The polka tune fades in.*) (*Streetcar*, 87-88)

In fact, this passage involves all symbolic factors in this drama: the image of the epigraph is shown again as Blanche's youth is "suddenly gone up" like the instant disappearance of "the visionary company of love," and the appearance of the blind Mexican woman selling flowers is easily overlapped with what Tennessee Williams says in his letter to Kazan to explain the theme of *A Streetcar*, "A blindness to what is going on in each other's hearts" (*Selected Letters II*, 95). In this passage, Mitch asserts that he has seen the "inside" of Blanche as well as her "outside," both of which are described by Mitch as "all lies." Blanche refutes this as she says, "Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart," to insist that she does not fall under the self-deception. However, her denial of self-deception cannot be fully supported when it is considered that she has made herself believe the things that are not true about herself, as she denies her sensual desire which does in fact exist under her refined self.

Self-Misunderstanding of Blanche and Varsouviana Melody: In the letter of Tennessee Williams sent to Elia Kazan in April 19, 1947, his thoughts on the fundamental cause of human misunderstandings of others are mentioned: "Vanity, fear, desire, competition – all such distortions within our own egos – condition our vision of those in relation to us. Add to those distortions in our own egos, the corresponding distortions in the egos of

the others – and you see how cloudy the glass must become through which we look at each other” (*Selected Letters II*, 95). Regarding the remarks of Tennessee Williams who argues each of people has distortions in their egos, which correspond to the distortions of others’ egos when they try to understand others, it is to be considered that Blanche is not an exception from those whose unconscious distortions in their own egos make false external images of themselves. Elia Kazan explains Blanche’s misunderstanding about herself in his director’s notes:

There is another simpler and equally terrible contradiction in her own nature. She can’t face her physical or sensual side. She calls it “brutal desire.” She thinks she sins when she gives in to it, yet she does give in to it, only from loneliness; but by calling it “brutal desire,” she is able to separate it from her “real self,” her “cultured, refined self.” (Kazan, 50)

The discrepancy between Blanche’s thoughts and acts, which is implied in “She thinks she sins when she gives in to it [brutal desire], yet she does give in to it,” is caused by her flaw in misunderstanding her own ego: Kazan indicates that Blanche’s articulation of “brutal desire” in Scene 4 where she blames the sensual love between her sister Stella and Stanley is from the belief that she is different from them, but the “brutal desire” is in fact another side of Blanche’s self which is covered as the “cultured and refined self.” In a similar vein, Tennessee Williams also mentions in his letter to Audrey Wood, March 23, 1945 that even though Stanley is regarded as “completely antipathetic types” by Blanche, she is “repelled and fascinated by his coarse strength” (*Selected Letters I*, 557). Here, the seemingly “cultured and refined self” of Blanche is consistent with the fundamental implications of Varsouviana, which “haunts her as an aural trace of her lost innocence and gentility” according to Philip C. Kolin who says:

The ambient New Orleans music [Jazz sound of Blue Piano] and related neighborhood sounds contrast with the leitmotif of a delicate, old-fashioned faraway-sounding “Varsouviana” heard only by Blanche and that haunts her as an aural trace of her lost innocence and gentility, becoming more pervasive and distorted as the play progresses toward its tragic conclusion. (Kolin, 157)

Kolin’s opinion that there are progresses as the play goes towards its ending, where the meaning of Varsouviana tune is contrasted with that of the jazz tune of Blue Piano, can be more supported through the comparison between the last two scenes in which Blue Piano and Varsouviana are alternatively played. Davison’s explanation of Blue Piano offers a ground to understand this contrast between Blue piano and Varsouviana, because she mentions that during the productions of this drama does this blues (or jazz) tune focus “more on setting the locale [the place of New Orleans], and on presenting the latent physical sexuality that lies at the heart of the play” (Davison, 412). However, the scrutiny of the two last scenes reveals that the connotations of Blue Piano and Varsouviana are not completely the opposites, when it is considered that the same images are repeated in both Blue Piano and Varsouviana scenes at the end of this drama. To put more in detail, the descriptions in the beginning of the rape scene with the melody of jazz tune of Blue Piano, when Blanche and Stanley remain together in the house after Stella goes to hospital to give birth, are quite similar to the illustrations of the next scene where Varsouviana tune is accompanied to the air:

STANLEY: You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a paper lantern (...) Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor! I say – Ha!–Ha! Do you hear me? Ha – ha- ha! (*He walks into the bedroom.*)

BLANCHE: Don’t come in here!

(Lurid reflections appear on the walls around Blanche. The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form. She catches her breath, crosses to the phone and jiggles the hook. Stanley goes into the bedroom and closes the door.)

Operator, operator! Give me long-distance, please. ... I want to get in touch with Mr. Shep Huntleigh of Dallas. He’s so well-known he doesn’t require any address. (...) No, wait! ... One moment! Someone is – Nothing! Hold on, please!

(*She sets the phone down and crosses warily into the kitchen. The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle.*) (*Streetcar*, 94-95)

The jazz sound of Blue Piano starts as soon as Stanley comes out from the bathroom, and in this rape scene, the Blue Piano tune symbolizes “the latent physical sexuality that lies at the heart (Davison, 412)” of Blanche and Stanley. It is to be noted that the “lurid reflections” on the wall nearby Blanche and the “inhuman voices like cries in a jungle” match the context of this scene where both two characters express their hidden desire out of

themselves, and it is interesting that these images are also repeated in the last polka scene, when Blanche is about to be dragged out of the room by the Doctor and Matron whose visit is to bring her to mental institution:

STANLEY: Did you forget something?

BLANCHE (*Shrilly*): Yes! Yes, I forgot something!

(*She rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The "Varsouviana" is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. Blanche seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.*) (Streetcar, 104)

In this final Varsouviana scene where the same images of "the cries and noises of the jungle" as well as the "lurid reflections" appearing on the walls" are shown, the previous rape scene accompanied with the melody of Blue Piano is easily reminded of. Even though the meaning of Varsouviana at this point has ambiguousness in that the polka tune can reflect various aspects of the psychology of Blanche who is now destined to be sent to the mental institution due to her inability of adapting herself to the new mode of life in New Orleans, those repeated images that have already been featured with Blue Piano suggests that Varsouviana is not simply about Blanche's romantic past and her "lost innocence and gentility." Thus, this polka tune expresses what has been hidden in Blanche's own consciousness, which also keeps "brutal desire" described by the previous Blue Piano tune.

III. CONCLUSION

The importance of background music is easy to be overlooked, especially when the audiences have wrong belief that background music simply reflects the situations of main characters. However, the Varsouviana tune in this drama is designed to transmit the complicated mental state of its only listener, Blanche DuBois, and this conveyance of this melody can be more closely scrutinized when Husserl's phenomenological explanation is applied to this text. Regardless of the significant connotations of Varsouviana, it can still be hard for audiences to grasp the functions of this musical tune when they feel unfamiliar to the plot, so more detailed stage settings are needed to be developed in order to emphasize the intended effect. Also, in this article, as mentioned above, Edmund Husserl's phenomenological explanation of the consciousness of time makes detailed understandings of Blanche DuBois's memory available. Depending on Husserl's theory, the epigraph quoted from Hart Crane's "The Broken Tower," which is used in this drama to symbolize the romantic moment of the past of Blanche who cannot capture it anymore in her present, provides the grounds to comprehend the phase of retention which has the potential to be changed later into Blanche's secondary memory. Secondary memory, the term of which can be replaced with "phantasy" by Husserl, enables the restored information of the past experience of Blanche to be reproduced or represented in her present moments, and during the phase of representations does the modification of the information occur. These sorts of modifications are observed in the changes of tonality and tempo of Varsouviana in Blanche's mind. In addition, the sound of Varsouviana polka tune to Blanche functions as a foreshadower of a tragic event in her nearby future, and this can be more thoroughly understood when Husserl's notions of pretensions in secondary memory is referred to: the musical memory of polka tune and non-musical memory of Allan Grey's death work as an unity to Blanche who is hearing the polka tune in her present moment, so she cannot help but expect that something similar to the death of Allan Grey would happen in her nearby future while the polka is still heard. However, all these aspects that are implied through the polka tune cannot be shared with other characters, and this is how all misunderstandings of Blanche by other characters start. Lastly, it is argued in this paper that Varsouviana ultimately suggests Blanche's misunderstanding of her own ego, the distortion of which causes other characters' misunderstandings of Blanche who unconsciously hides her sensual desire under the cover of her self-belief that she is still innocent and refined, which are also conveyed by the leitmotif of Varsouviana.

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