



Blanche Dubois Travels in Time: A Study of *Blue Jasmine* (2013)

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the influence of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) on the development of the main female protagonist's personality in Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine* (2013). While *Blue Jasmine* loosely adapts the structural framework of Williams's play, the character of Jasmine Francis emerges as a contemporary reconfiguration of Blanche DuBois, offering a complex portrayal that oscillates between assertions of autonomy and moments of fragility and failure. This conflictive depiction challenges a cohesive feminist interpretation, instead presenting a character whose agency is both advanced and undermined within the narrative. Whereas Williams's work reinforces traditional gender paradigms, Allen's adaptation interrogates and selectively subverts these conventions, creating a portrayal that is simultaneously progressive and ambivalent. By juxtaposing representations of femininity across two distinct historical and cultural moments, *Blue Jasmine* reflects the evolution of gender discourse while exposing the enduring complexities and paradoxes of feminist struggles in a patriarchal society. This intertextual analysis accentuates the continued necessity of engaging with gender dynamics to advance the pursuit of genuine equality.

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Following the success of *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), Tennessee Williams embarked on crafting another theatrical masterpiece, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947),¹ which not only won him the Pulitzer Prize, but also secured his position in literary history.² Set against the dynamic and richly textured backdrop of New Orleans—a city Williams knew and admired—the play vibrates with the rhythms of its streets and the subtleties of its culture (Adler 3). The debut of *A Streetcar Named Desire* marked a transformative moment in American theater, garnering numerous accolades, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, which attest to its significant cultural impact (Adler 19–20). The characters of Blanche DuBois, a fading southern belle, and Stanley Kowalski, a brutish yet compelling figure, transcended the stage to become iconic representations within popular culture, reflecting the play's remarkable and lasting influence (Oakes 373). This influence was further amplified by its adaptation into a cinematic masterpiece directed by Elia Kazan (1951), featuring performances by Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh. The cinematic version confirmed the play's status and reinforced its cultural resonance across multiple mediums.³

The theme of rejuvenation in cinema attains a sophisticated articulation in Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine* (2013). In this work, the iconic character of Blanche DuBois from Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* is reimagined, assuming a transformed yet thematically aligned central role. While *Blue Jasmine* is officially classified as an original screenplay, as recognized by the Academy Awards, it is widely regarded by critics as a free remake of Williams's play. Numerous scholars have scrutinized the film's multifaceted dimensions, particularly its intertextual connections with *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Palmer; Wolcott; Handy; Landau; Trnková; Foster; Lee; Ingham 173; Mirčetić; Balestrini). The critical acclaim the film has received, including an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award, underscores its significant contribution to the cinematic landscape (Kapsis; Leslie 138–139).

An in-depth analysis of *Blue Jasmine* underscores Allen's significant divergence from both Elia Kazan's faithful adaptation, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), and Bahram Tavakoli's Iranian appropriation, *The Stranger* (2014). The character of Jasmine Francis, in particular, exemplifies the shifting gender norms of contemporary America, positioning the film as a profound commentary on the representation of women in the twenty-first century. Allen's reinterpretation not only revitalizes Williams's narrative but also serves as a critical reflection on societal transformation. While scholarly studies offer varied perspectives on the film's success, Kapsis identifies *Blue Jasmine* as one of Woody Allen's most notable accomplishments, aligning with Blanchett's advocacy for the importance of promoting "movies about women" (Leslie 139).⁴

However, despite extensive scholarly attention dedicated to the film, there remains a compelling need for critical analysis of the representation of the female protagonists in *Blue Jasmine* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. As Palmer asserts, *Blue Jasmine* not only offers an authentic homage to Williams but also demonstrates an acute engagement with the sociocultural currents of its contemporary moment (90–91). Given that both narratives are rooted in analogous cultural frameworks, this study endeavors to elucidate the transformations in the depiction of women occasioned by the temporal and contextual disparities between the two works. Accordingly, this analysis seeks to articulate the continuities and divergences in the characterizations of Jasmine and Blanche within their respective narratives.

1 Initially, Tennessee Williams referred to the opening scene as *Blanche's Chair in the Moon*. However, he iteratively revised and refined the title, evolving it to *The Poker Game*, before ultimately settling on the title *A Streetcar Named Desire* (see Bloom 18).

2 The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the reviewers of the article for their invaluable suggestions and constructive comments.

3 Scholars have extensively examined Elia Kazan's American adaptation, with contributions from Murphy; Kolin; Nazemi et al. ("Trans-Mediation of Gender"); and Staggs providing valuable perspectives. Complementing this discourse, Nazemi et al., in two articles ("The Representation of Women's Gender Roles" and "A Feminist Study of Otherness"), conduct a comparative analysis of Williams's play and its Iranian adaptation, elucidating cross-cultural themes.

4 For scholarly analyses of the representation of women in *Blue Jasmine*, refer to the works of Belot; Marston (86–110); Veneralda and Mintarsih; and Pikouli.

2. BLUE JASMINE VS. STREETCAR

Literary adaptations are not mere reproductions of their source material but are instead dynamic revisions that offer fresh perspectives and often amplify marginalized voices (Sanders 18–19). Wagner elaborates on this concept by describing adaptations as involving processes of “transposition,” “commentary,” and “analogy” (qtd. in Whelehan). These reinterpretations can critique their originals (Sanders 18) and recontextualize them for contemporary audiences through methods such as “proximation” and “updating” (19). Such strategies are particularly evident in cinematic reinterpretations of canonical literary works, which both honor and transform their source narratives to address modern sensibilities.

A comparative analysis underscores this dynamic through Jasmine’s character, who serves as a modern parallel to Tennessee Williams’s Blanche DuBois. Both characters seek refuge in their sisters’ homes amid financial and emotional turmoil, reflecting shared struggles of displacement and dependence. Jasmine, like Blanche, is overwhelmed by debts and incapable of sustaining independent living arrangements. Her mental instability, marked by obsessive self-dialogue, intense anxiety, and substance abuse, echoes Blanche’s self-awareness, alcoholism, and flirtatiousness, and both characters’ problems are tied to the trauma of their failed marriages. Jasmine’s turbulent relationship with her late husband, Hal Francis—a corrupt businessman whose criminal activities and subsequent suicide deeply impact her life—parallels Blanche’s painful history with Grey, whose revelation of his homosexuality and suicide followed her severe condemnation.

In seeking a fresh start, Jasmine turns to her sister Ginger’s home, only to encounter additional conflict, particularly with Ginger’s new boyfriend, Chili. This tension recalls Blanche’s fraught interactions with Stanley Kowalski. Jasmine’s encounter with Dwight, a wealthy diplomat, and her fabrications about her life—including claims of being an interior designer and of her husband’s death from a heart attack—underscore her fragile mental state. The breakdown of their relationship, triggered by Augie’s (Ginger’s ex-husband) disclosure of Jasmine’s deception, further parallels Stanley’s crucial role in uncovering Blanche’s past and dismantling her relationship with Mitch. The film concludes with Jasmine sitting alone on a park bench, immersed in nostalgia and anxiety as she reflects on her shattered past—a poignant moment that mirrors Blanche’s institutionalization following her mental breakdown caused by Stanley’s assault. Despite differences in their cultural and temporal contexts, Jasmine and Blanche endure similarly tragic arcs shaped by personal vulnerabilities and societal forces, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Williams’s narrative in contemporary adaptations.

3. JASMINE VS. BLANCHE

Blue Jasmine shares important themes with Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* just as the characters’ life trajectories in the film bear significant parallels to those of their counterparts in the play, and yet, as we shall see, their responses to the situations are at times meaningfully different, representing temporal and spatial transformations. Critical comparisons between *Streetcar* and *Blue Jasmine* often showcase the centrality of their female protagonists. Marston underlines that both narratives feature a female lead characterized as “simultaneously melancholic and delusional”, engaging with the mythic construction of white, upper-class identity and its intrinsic links to US national identity (89). In this vein, *Blue Jasmine* represents “a less violent” reinterpretation of Williams’s work (Weiss 2), transposing the tragic arc from a post-war milieu to the context of late twentieth-century affluent consumer culture. Unlike Blanche’s reliance on ancestral heritage, Jasmine’s social standing is derived from a fabricated identity sustained by her marriage to a wealthy partner.

Handy posits that *Blue Jasmine* draws significantly from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, portraying Jasmine as “an updated version” of Blanche. He argues that while Blanche clings to the illusions of Southern aristocracy, Jasmine’s delusions are deeply rooted in the modern fantasies of Manhattan and Hamptons affluence. Handy further emphasizes the shared narrative arc in both works, noting how the protagonists’ upper-class pretensions are ultimately shattered by the harsh realities of working-class life. Similarly, Ingham characterizes the film as “an oblique homage” to the play, suggesting that, although the director may not explicitly acknowledge its intertextual foundation, *Blue Jasmine* closely mirrors the plot and structural framework of *A*

Streetcar Named Desire (173). Palmer also asserts that “Jasmine must be counted as not only an homage to the playwright but also a reimagining of his landmark drama and one of the more unusual ways that *Streetcar* continues to live on” (88). This interpretation underscores Jasmine’s character as shaped by both Williams’s creation and the distinctive socio-economic and cultural dimensions of the film’s production context. As a result, *Blue Jasmine* emerges as a hybrid text, blending the core elements of Williams’s drama with contemporary themes and sensibilities.

Robbins emphasizes that texts are deeply rooted in their specific historical, geographical, and cultural milieus, necessitating critical analyses that account for both their creation and reception (qtd. in Jarekvis 16). Through this lens, examining *Blue Jasmine* in comparison with *A Streetcar Named Desire* provides an informative illustration of how contextual shifts reshape narrative structures and characterizations. The present analysis will demonstrate that Jasmine operates as a contemporary counterpart to Blanche, shedding light on the evolving socio-cultural dynamics that influence the representation. By situating Jasmine within the framework of a twenty-first-century reality, the film reimagines Williams’s themes to reflect the complexities of modern affluence and identity construction.

3.1. FROM FLIRTATIONS TO FINANCIAL SCHEMES

Verna Foster identifies a notable divergence between Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Woody Allen’s *Blue Jasmine*, noting that the latter omits a central, sexually charged conflict akin to the dynamic between Blanche and a Stanley-like counterpart (190). In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, themes of sexuality are intricately woven into the narrative structure. Blanche’s past is marked by her tenure as a prostitute at the Flamingo Hotel (Williams 138–139) and impulsive acts of intimacy, such as her kiss with a young stranger (95). The text further emphasizes Stanley’s sexual assault of Blanche (151) and Stella’s reconciliation with Stanley through a passionate sexual encounter (70–71). Similarly, Palmer argues that *Blue Jasmine* represents a “slant refashioning” of *Streetcar*’s plot, characters, and themes, with “Lady Fortune” supplanting the play’s focus on “Desire” (93–94). Specifically, while Blanche’s desires are characterized by a “physical component” that manifests in her scandalous affairs, Jasmine’s aspirations are primarily concerned with “material comfort and social standing” (94).

In contrast, while *Blue Jasmine* engages with motifs of desire and intimacy, Jasmine’s characterization departs significantly from that of Blanche. Jasmine exhibits unwavering devotion to her late husband, Hal, frequently recalling their sexual relationship with affection (00:01:57). Even when approached by potential suitors, such as Chili’s friend (00:31:29) or the dentist (00:48:27), Jasmine remains loyal to Hal’s memory. The film depicts moments of tenderness between Jasmine and Hal, as well as with Dwight (00:01:57, 00:53:19, 01:08:06), evoking a parallel to Blanche’s relationship with Mitch. However, Jasmine refrains from engaging in casual sexual encounters, adopting a cautious and measured approach to romantic involvement, which further distinguishes her from Blanche.

Jasmine’s romantic interests are primarily marked by financial considerations, as she gravitates toward partners of higher socioeconomic status. Her prioritization of economic stability over emotional or physical intimacy constitutes a significant departure from Blanche’s overtly sensual demeanor in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Jasmine’s reserved and conservative stance toward sexuality challenges traditional gender norms, privileging financial security over passionate desire.

On the other hand, Ginger, while embodying certain traits reminiscent of Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, diverges from her behavioral patterns in pivotal ways. Whereas Stella persists in her loyalty to Stanley despite his assault on Blanche, Ginger betrays Chili by engaging in a romantic liaison with an older, wealthier man (01:18:42). Furthermore, unlike Stella, who endures her marriage to Stanley despite financial adversity and a volatile dynamic, Ginger divorces Augie due to monetary challenges. Allen’s representation of female gender roles thus departs significantly from Williams’s portrayals, reflecting shifting societal norms and expectations.

Gauntlett’s concept of the “new democracy of emotions” further reflects this paradigm shift, by emphasizing the contemporary prioritization of personal happiness and fulfillment in

relationships over adherence to traditional ideals of fidelity (Gauntlett 4). Ginger epitomizes this modern sensibility, opting to end her relationship with Augie when it ceases to fulfill her emotional needs and pursuing new opportunities with partners such as Chili and Al. These choices illustrate the evolving dynamics of romantic relationships in contemporary society, where individual contentment increasingly governs relational decisions.

3.2. EXTRAVAGANCE BECOMES AN OBSESSION

Language, fashion, technology, and the arts are continually subject to historical evolution, a process that profoundly shapes the contextual frameworks of adaptations, even within one given cultural milieu (Hutcheon 144). These transformations are frequently driven by shifting factors such as audience preferences, the artistic vision of the adapter, and societal norms (142). Consequently, a meticulous analysis of consumption practices is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying these adaptations. In this context, consumerism emerges not only as a reflection of societal values but also as a lens through which to interrogate the evolving roles of women, revealing persistent gendered constraints.

In *Blue Jasmine*, Woody Allen reinterprets *A Streetcar Named Desire* to reflect a contemporary societal landscape characterized by “social disgrace and psychological disintegration” within a dehumanizing capitalist system that privileges style over substance and stigmatizes failure (Foster 199). Jasmine, who serves as a modernized counterpart to Blanche, exhibits striking similarities to her literary predecessor. However, Allen reimagines Blanche not as a relic of the declining Southern aristocracy but as a figure firmly embedded in a contemporary culture of consumerism, marked by an obsession with luxury goods and social status. Through the recontextualization of Blanche’s struggles, Allen enhances the narrative’s relevance to the contemporary audience, especially within a cultural landscape characterized by materialism and the commodification of identity.

Much like Blanche, Jasmine endeavors to obscure her authentic identity, seeking refuge in a constructed fantasy world (Foster 188). Her experiences of “mental illness” and her difficulties securing employment stem from her compulsion to cultivate “an idealised sense of self through the pursuit of luxury goods” (Marston 86). This parallels Blanche’s dependence on illusions, but Jasmine’s fixation on consumer goods situates her within a distinctly contemporary critique of capitalist values. For Jasmine, confronting the realities of her existence would necessitate the abandonment of the self-deceptive illusions she has cultivated over time (Waddell 89). Her decision to rename herself reflects her belief that “Jeannette” fails to convey the sophistication and status she aspires to project (00:06:46). As Waddell observes,

Jasmine is a product/creation of a world where an overwhelming number of industries ensure that image trumps substance. The appearance of beauty/health, achievement/confidence and, more recently, ‘happiness’ are promoted as key to the actual attainment of those qualities – so that one might be seduced into thinking that the outer reflects an inner solidity. (89)

This critique of consumerism, while sharply defined, must be contextualized within a broader framework. The portrayal of Jasmine’s dependency on material wealth aligns with a capitalist ethos that equates self-worth with external status symbols. However, such dependency is not exclusive to capitalism. Similar patterns are evident in non-capitalist societies, where women’s roles have historically been circumscribed by ideological or state-imposed expectations. Works such as von Donnersmarck’s *The Lives of Others* (2006) or Agnieszka Holland’s *Mr. Jones* (2019) reveal how socialist and communist regimes perpetuated patriarchal structures through systemic control over women’s autonomy. In these contexts, consumerist self-fashioning is replaced by ideological conformity, demonstrating the adaptability of patriarchal norms across socio-economic systems.

Allen’s adaptation, like many contemporary recreations, critiques its own cultural milieu while exposing the universality of certain struggles. Jasmine’s reliance on patriarchal systems mirrors these societal constraints, emphasizing the persistence of gendered oppression despite differing economic structures. For instance, the surveillance-driven societal expectations of women in *The Lives of Others* highlight similar restrictions on autonomy. Such narratives

expose the adaptability of patriarchal norms, revealing that the oppression of women persists across diverse socio-economic systems.

The evolution of adaptations thus reflects the ongoing tension between societal values and individual identity, as exemplified by Jasmine's struggle in *Blue Jasmine*. Through her character, Allen underscores the complexities of navigating a culture that emphasizes external appearances over inner truths, urging viewers to confront the persistent challenges of self-invention and authenticity in a changing world. However, this analysis gains depth when juxtaposed with non-capitalist contexts, where women's struggles, though shaped by different forces, similarly revolve around constraints on autonomy. By situating Jasmine's consumer-driven identity alongside examples from other contexts, it becomes clear that adaptations like *Blue Jasmine* serve as lenses through which to interrogate the broader dynamics of gendered oppression. This comparative perspective enriches the critique of capitalist consumerism, revealing how entrenched patriarchal structures adapt and persist across systems.

Like Blanche, Jasmine's passion for clothing is central to her character. Allen further emphasizes her consumerism in the film. As Marston explains,

The film's exploration of contemporary American femininity must be situated in the context of a recessionary media culture that Negra and Tasker argue engages in a public gendering of the roles of production and consumption ..., with the postfeminist consumer operating increasingly as a figure of excess as well as of admiration (4). Postfeminist culture's key preoccupations, which include an emphasis on female affluence and self-fashioning, are, they state, enabled by economic positivity, opportunity, and health (1). Jasmine French operates as an extreme caricature of this normalised, consumer-driven sensibility, which calls on women to engage in self-management practices to appear younger, thinner and more fashionable and, importantly, to compete with one another for personal gain. (92–93)

Jasmine meticulously curates her appearance through the selection of high-end clothing and jewelry from prestigious brands (Williams 40; Allen 00:15:23, 00:16:16), constructing an identity deeply associated with wealth and social prestige. Her predilection for shopping is a recurring motif in the film (00:16:18, 00:12:37). Notably, Jasmine is drawn to Hal's affections when he gifts her an expensive bracelet (00:19:05), which she later displays prominently at a social gathering (00:20:55). She hosts opulent parties (00:06:21, 00:20:47) and expresses admiration for Hal's acquisition of an extravagant penthouse (00:05:44). Her lifestyle also encompasses activities emblematic of affluence, such as yoga and Pilates (00:18:48), as well as frequent alcohol consumption (00:06:47, 00:10:42, 00:24:17, 00:26:09). In this respect, Jasmine reflects what Foster describes as "a harder fashionable edge than Williams's Blanche" (189), placing her within the consumerist ethos of contemporary society. These actions also illustrate how Jasmine equates material goods with emotional security, an aspect of the film that critiques the conflation of external wealth and internal stability in modern society.

Jasmine's interpersonal relationships further reinforce traditional gender dynamics. Her attraction to Dwight is predicated on his wealth (Allen 00:56:23), while her disdain for Augie, Chili, and their social milieu is rooted in their perceived "commonness" (00:33:12), mirroring Blanche's derogatory assessment of Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Williams 80). Despite her precarious financial circumstances, Jasmine adheres to a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption, as evidenced by her refusal to wear inexpensive clothing (Allen 00:56:01), her ownership of Vuitton luggage (00:11:25), her preference for first-class travel (00:10:50), and her habit of extravagant tipping, which she justifies by stating, "I splurge from habit" (00:11:20). These markers of excess reinforce her alignment with consumerist values, even as they exacerbate her economic vulnerability.

Jasmine's financial dependency renders her a passive consumer reliant first on Hal and later on Ginger and Dwight. Even her attempts to secure employment (00:47:10, 00:33:45) are unsuccessful, further showcasing the entrenchment of her consumerist tendencies. As Waddell observes, Jasmine's reliance on Hal for "wealth and financial security" (88) indicates her dependence on patriarchal structures, perpetuating traditional gender roles within a modern framework. In this way, Jasmine's character critiques the illusion of empowerment

associated with consumerism, revealing its capacity to reinforce rather than dismantle gendered constraints.

Unlike Blanche, who pursued financial independence through her career as an English teacher, Jasmine remains wholly dependent on others, embodying the ethos of consumerism in the twenty-first century. Her narrative parallels the life of Ruth Madoff, as noted by Foster, who highlights the centrality of wealth in both stories (189; see also Palmer 91). However, the film's critique of Jasmine's consumerist lifestyle is tempered by its simultaneous reinforcement of conventional gender roles. This duality aligns with Warner and Savigny's argument that, despite increased visibility of women in media, representations often fail to challenge entrenched norms (113). Jasmine's passivity and reliance on others starkly contrast with contemporary ideals of women's agency, illustrating the tension between moments of gender role deconstruction and their reinforcement.

The contrast between Jasmine and Ginger further illustrates the thematic tension between dependence and independence, offering a broader commentary on the evolving roles of women. Although the two women share the same adoptive parents (Allen 00:12:00), their divergent approaches to life and consumption highlight the ideological shift from traditional to modern conceptions of femininity. Ginger actively seeks employment to support herself (01:13:35) and her children, rejecting the allure of luxury goods and instead prioritizing practical, sustainable choices. Her occasional indulgence in opulent experiences, such as driving luxury cars or attending luxurious events, occurs primarily in the company of Hal and Jasmine (00:13:19, 00:19:40, 00:21:56, 00:54:08). These situational indulgences emphasize Ginger's rootedness in economic pragmatism, which stands in stark contrast to Jasmine's compulsive spending and dependence.

While Ginger's pragmatism invites comparisons to Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, her narrative trajectory represents a significant departure. Unlike Stella, who remains financially dependent on her partner and, by extension, constrained by traditional gender norms, Ginger embodies a contemporary ideal of economic independence. Through her resilience and self-reliance, Ginger not only supports her livelihood but also challenges the archetype of women as inherently reliant on male providers. This divergence signals a broader shift in societal expectations regarding women's agency and autonomy, particularly in comparison to the mid-twentieth century context of Williams's original play.

While Ginger and Stella find resolution within their respective narratives, Blanche and Jasmine ultimately fail, illustrating how adaptations reframe female characters to engage with shifting societal norms. In Williams's times, women's economic dependence on men was a pervasive reality (Fang 104). By contrast, contemporary norms demand that women contribute to household incomes, particularly as single mothers (Gauntlett 62). The expectation for women to achieve parity in professional spheres mirrors broader transformations in gender roles, a reality that Ginger navigates successfully, while Jasmine struggles to reconcile.

This dynamic aligns with Hutcheon's assertion that adaptations serve as "transformations of previous works in new contexts" (150), enabling narratives to evolve and resonate within contemporary temporal and cultural frameworks (176). In this way, *Blue Jasmine* operates as both a critique and an extension of Williams's narrative, reflecting the evolving discourses on gender and societal values. Yet, the film embodies a paradox: while it critiques the materialism and consumerist values of contemporary society, it simultaneously perpetuates traditional gender roles through Jasmine's portrayal, reflecting the inherent contradictions and complexities of adaptation. As Sanders also explains,

On the surface, all screen versions of novels are transpositions in the sense that they take a text from one genre and deliver it to new audiences by means of the aesthetic conventions of an entirely different generic process (here novel into film). But many adaptations, of novels and other generic forms, contain further layers of transposition, relocating their source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographical and temporal terms. ... Genette would describe this as a 'movement of proximation' ..., and it is extremely common in screen adaptations of classic novels. (20)

This dynamic underlines the ability of adaptations to engage with “the audience’s frame of reference in temporal, geographic, or social terms” (21), thereby fostering a profound connection between the source material and its reimagined context. By anchoring themselves within the sociocultural and historical conditions of their production, adaptations possess the capacity to interrogate and critique “the politics of the source text,” with the degree of audience comprehension often dependent on their familiarity with the original work (22). In this manner, adaptations serve as a lens to illuminate “changes in politics,” particularly concerning issues such as race and gender, while simultaneously revealing the “historical and political moments of their production” (Springer 1). Consequently, each adaptation not only revisits its source material but also recontextualizes it, offering unique insights shaped by the specific temporal and cultural frameworks of its creation.

Through Jasmine and Ginger’s juxtaposition, Allen’s adaptation interrogates the persistence of patriarchal norms within consumerist frameworks, advancing a nuanced critique of gendered dynamics. Jasmine’s inability to transcend her dependence exemplifies the entrenchment of traditional roles in contemporary contexts, while Ginger’s agency highlights the evolving possibilities for female autonomy. In this juxtaposition, *Blue Jasmine* extends its critique beyond the materialism of capitalist culture, offering a layered exploration of gender, class, and societal expectation through the lens of adaptation.

3.3. NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITY OF FEMININITY

Finally, the consideration of women’s status as the Other within male-dominated societies (see Beauvoir 23–39) remains crucial. Feminists have consistently denounced the disparity between women and men. A pivotal moment in assessing the status of feminism occurred in 1998, when *Time* magazine wondered whether “feminism was ‘dead’” (Gauntlett 3), reflecting on advancements in women’s positions and the decline of patriarchal dominance in contemporary society. Furthermore, there is a growing acknowledgment of equality between men and women, both in societal roles and “within the sphere of personal relationships” (4), which have experienced recent “democratization” (Antony Giddens qtd. in Gauntlett 4).

In *Blue Jasmine*, we encounter independent women who assert control over their lives and reject violence (00:02:38). Ginger sustains her livelihood by working in a grocery store (00:43:35) and is not reliant on men for financial support. She confronts Augie, defending her sister when he disparages her as “phony” (00:07:35). Jasmine actively participates in discussions about her husband’s business dealings (00:46:20), and crucial life decisions are made jointly, without dominance from either party (00:14:47). Notably, this depiction challenges traditional portrayals of women in crisis, emphasizing their resilience even when faced with hardship. Jasmine often holds more sway in conversations than Hal, exemplified by her frequent commentary and decision-making (see, for example, 00:14:12, 00:17:41, 00:37:30).

Jasmine exhibits the same courage as Blanche in challenging and confronting Hal/Allen for his betrayal (00:52:20, 01:25:13; Williams 109). Following his admission of guilt, he is compelled to leave their home (Allen 01:27:35), with Jasmine ultimately alerting the authorities, leading to the exposure of his fraud (01:28:08), a turn of events that precipitates his downfall (00:29:30; see also Allan’s suicide in Act 6). This act reflects her attempt to reclaim a sense of power in a system that often marginalizes women. Similarly, Dwight treats her with a measure of respect and dignity. These instances collectively depict women in *Blue Jasmine* as equal to men, relatively strong, and at times even dominant, a stark departure from the portrayal of women in Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where they are depicted as weak, oppressed, and inferior to men.

Moreover, mirroring the tumultuous dynamics between Stanley and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the characters of Jasmine, Chili, and Augie grapple with their own relational challenges in Woody Allen’s adaptation. Notably, while conflicts arise, the portrayal of violence between genders in the film is notably subdued compared to Williams’s original play. The friction begins as Chili delves into Jasmine’s personal affairs, causing her discomfort (00:26:39), and escalates when she perceives him as inferior on account of his penury (01:23:46). Tensions intensify further when Ginger embarks on a romance with Al, a development that Chili finds unsettling. However, what distinguishes these confrontations is the assertiveness of the female

characters. Ginger emphatically rejects Chili's efforts to exert control over her, asserting her autonomy and firmly denying any implication of being regarded as an object or possession (01:01:43, 01:01:51). This shift marks a significant evolution in the portrayal of women's independence, contrasting starkly with the passivity often observed in Blanche's interactions with Stanley. Consequently, Allen's adaptation underscores women's agency in challenging societal norms and constructing their own identities, frequently by subverting established structures of male dominance.

A pivotal moment echoing Tennessee Williams's thematic exploration occurs when Chili impulsively hurls a phone out the window (01:03:00), reminiscent of Stanley's destruction of the radio in the original play (Williams 62). However, the motivations behind these actions diverge significantly. While Stanley's violence towards Blanche stems from malice and a desire for retribution, Chili's outburst is driven by his fear of losing Ginger, an expression of his deep affection. This nuanced portrayal reveals how masculinity has evolved in contemporary narratives to include vulnerability, suggesting that male dominance is no longer as monolithic as in earlier works. Moreover, the fact that Ginger retaliates by physically assaulting Chili and ejecting him from their home (Allen 01:03:07) highlights a departure from Stanley's brute force. Unlike Stanley, who exerts dominance through physical aggression, Chili exhibits vulnerability and emotional fragility, evident in his tearful pleas for reconciliation. His public display of affection, by which he openly reveals his love and inability to forget Ginger (01:14:00), portrays him as a more emotionally transparent and romantically inclined character, contrasting with Stanley's often brutish demeanor. Gauntlett's argument explains Chili's behavior:

Men in Hollywood films today tend not to be the seamlessly hard-masculine heroes which we saw in the 1980s; they more often combine the toughness required of an action hero with a more sensitive, thoughtful or caring side, typically revealed at certain (often quite brief) points in the movie. Meanwhile, female roles have definitely become tougher... (75)

Thus, while reminiscences from *A Streetcar Named Desire* are evident in Woody Allen's adaptation, the nuanced differences in character motivations and behaviors offer deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of gender and power within the narrative.

Despite the apparent strides toward gender equality depicted in the film, subtle dualities persist, revealing lingering societal norms and power imbalances. A notable instance occurs when Hal presents Jasmine with a birthday gift, dripping with sarcasm: "Here, for doing your duty, Happy Birthday" (Allen 00:19:07). He thus undermines her autonomy and reinforces traditional gender roles. Furthermore, the pivotal moment when Augie, a male character, inadvertently sabotages Jasmine's relationship with Dwight, leading to her homelessness (01:20:18), mirrors Stanley's role in Blanche's downfall. This parallel demonstrates that, despite outward appearances of equality, women's autonomy can still be undermined by male actions, revealing persistent gendered dynamics in both narratives, a fact supported by Gauntlett's assertion that "traditional ways of thinking are still present in modern society" (12).

The construction of femininity within Jasmine's character further reflects these entrenched norms. While her wealth exempts her from traditional domestic duties, she still conforms to societal expectations by striving to please her husband, complying with his requests without question (Allen 00:08:54), and engaging in activities such as yoga (00:18:45) and bodybuilding exercises (00:30:24) to enhance her appeal. These moments reveal the enduring pressure on women to follow the patriarchal standards of attractiveness, even when they appear to wield power. Gauntlett's concept of adding a "dash of femininity" to one's gender identity helps to elucidate this performance (12). However, after losing Hal, Jasmine's motivations and financial means to uphold these practices dissipate. She subsequently descends into a state of hysteria reminiscent of Blanche's unraveling in Williams's play. Her physical manifestations of distress—red eyes, trembling hands, and erratic behavior—alongside her reliance on drugs and alcohol, starkly contrast with her earlier efforts to embody femininity. This transformation illustrates not only her loss of Hal but also a crisis of identity, suggesting that in *Blue Jasmine* women's identities remain intricately entwined with those of men.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines critically the evolving representations of women in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and Woody Allen's contemporary film, *Blue Jasmine* (2013), with particular attention to the transformation of gender dynamics and female agency across distinct cultural and temporal contexts. In Williams's original play, the character of Stella embodies a resigned acceptance of patriarchal norms, as evidenced by her decision to remain with her husband, Stanley, despite his violent actions toward her sister, Blanche. By contrast, Allen's cinematic reimagining depicts women as more autonomous figures, notably through their decision to leave unsatisfactory marriages, signaling a departure from the passive compliance that characterizes Williams's portrayal of female roles.

A significant shift in the portrayal of female identity emerges in *Blue Jasmine*, where consumerism and materialism supplant traditional notions of sexuality. Unlike Williams's representation of women as the "Other" within a patriarchal framework, Allen's film presents female characters as active participants in society, empowered to challenge and confront male dominance. The adaptation deconstructs conventional gender stereotypes, notably by presenting male characters in a more subservient light, which disrupts traditional power structures and positions women as assertive protagonists.


Nonetheless, paradoxical moments in *Blue Jasmine* reveal the continued existence of gendered prejudices in a male-dominated society, underscoring the limitations of women's agency within contemporary cultural norms. These tensions reflect the ongoing challenges faced by feminist movements, which, despite considerable progress, still contend with persistent barriers to achieving full gender equality. As such, while *Blue Jasmine*—a reinterpretation of Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*—strives to subvert traditional gender roles and offers a more egalitarian depiction of gender dynamics in comparison to the play, it simultaneously betrays a non-utopian narrative that acknowledges the complexities and areas requiring continued feminist intervention.

Ultimately, *Blue Jasmine* functions as a significant cultural critique, reflecting both the advancements and limitations of contemporary feminist endeavors. By juxtaposing the patriarchal and passive depictions in *A Streetcar Named Desire* with the more nuanced, yet imperfect, portrayals in *Blue Jasmine*, the analysis highlights the ongoing need for vigilance in addressing gender inequalities. In this sense, the film offers a compelling commentary on the broader evolution of gender relations, urging a sustained commitment to fostering an environment in which true equality may be realized.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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