



A Streetcar Named Desire (Critical Insights)

Tennessee Williams

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This work includes in-depth discussions of Tennessee Williams' great drama. *A Streetcar Named Desire* quickly became an international sensation when it premiered on "Broadway" in 1947. The play ran an impressive 855 performances and won a Pulitzer Prize before theatres in cities as far flung as Tokyo, Paris, Mexico City, and Melbourne began staging their own productions. When the play was adapted to film four years after its premiere, its reputation as one of the most compelling American dramas of the twentieth century was cemented. Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski became iconic characters, and Marlon Brando, a largely unknown actor before "Streetcar", was rocketed to stardom by his compelling performance. This volume in the "Critical Insights" series, edited and with an introduction by Brenda Murphy, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Connecticut, brings together a variety of new and classic essays on Williams' famous play. Murphy's introduction sets the stage for critical investigations of the play in its description of the delicate negotiations that played out between Williams and Elia Kazan, the play's and film's director, as the two finalized the stage script and, later, the screenplay. A brief biography of Williams and a new essay by "Paris Review" contributor Catherine Steindler discussing Williams' penchant for extreme, nearly mad characters provide further introductory material to Williams' achievement. For readers new to Williams' play, a quartet of original essays provide valuable context. Camille-Yvette Welsch examines the play in light of post-war American culture and censorship and Kenneth Elliott compares Williams' treatment of tragedy with Arthur Miller's in his equally iconic play of the same period, "Death of a Salesman". Neil Heims, in turn, considers how repression drives the play's action, while Janyce Marson reviews a selection of "Streetcar" criticism. Nine previously published essays are also collected here to deepen readers' understanding of the play and its critics. Verna Foster and Britton J. Harwood examine Williams' unique adaptation of the tragedy and tragicomedy to suit the strictures of modern drama and the tastes of contemporary audiences. John S. Bak, Dan Isaac and Anne Fleche offer interpretations of Blanche's rape, while Dean Shackelford discusses the homosexual subtexts of Williams' works. Finally, Linda Costanzo Cahir, Keith Dorwick, and Nancy M. Tischler all examine various "Streetcar" adaptations, from the 1951 film to the 1995 opera. Rounding out the volume are a chronology of Williams' life as well as a complete list of Williams' dramatic, poetic, fiction, and nonfiction works and a lengthy bibliography of critical works for readers desiring to study Williams in greater depth.

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