

# HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCY OF CHARACTER ‘I’ IN TENNESSEE WILLIAM’S *MOISE AND THE WORLD OF REASON*

Murni Fidiyanti, State Institute for Islamic Studies Sunan Ampel Surabaya

**Abstract:** *Moise and the World of Reason* is one of William’s novels. It was published in 1975. This novel tells about character ‘I’ who is identified as a homosexual (a person who is involved in sexual desire with the same sex). There are some factors in supporting this tendency. The first is social background. It consists of the family background where he grew up. He was separated from his parents. Then, he had experiences when he was young. The second factor is his relation to the other men characters. The aim of this analysis is to know how Tennessee Williams describes character ‘I’ and his experiences in *Moise and the World of Reason*.

**Keywords:** homosexual, tendency and character.

## Introduction

Literature has relation to the real life since the source of literary works is obtained from human life experiences and events which happen in the society. This relation affects the theme of the literature. The theme of literature can be identified by reading literary work. Mostly, it is dominated by human dreams, sympathy, success, failure, love, sadness, and happiness.

The social phenomena in the society can be reflected in literature because it is the mirror of human life. Taylor (1981:1) says that ‘literature, like other arts, is essentially an imaginative act, that is an act of writer’s imagination in selecting, ordering, and interpreting life experience. Literature is a written imagination that presents information and valued as a work of art. Its purpose not only entertains but also gives the readers some information and valuable experiences about human's life. Literature is generally embodied in three types: poetry, drama, and prose. Prose can be a novel, short story, novelette and romance. As the most dominant kind of prose-novel is noticed by James( 1965:53) as a living thing. He compares it with any other organisms which have reciprocal correlation with each other. Then without the appearance of the unity of

the elements of fiction such as characters, theme, plot, setting, style, conflict and point of view, it is impossible to form a high quality story.

The character for example, is one of the important elements in the story. Kenney (1966: 26) states that ‘character must be considered as part of the story’s internal structure’. It means that the relation among the characters, as well as the elements of literature influence each other.. Characters interact with one another to manifest their aims in life.

In conclusion, the existence of characters in the novel has fundamental role and will complete one another since they have great influence to the sequence of the story. By the analyzing the characters, it will help the reader to know how the characters play role and related to others to compose the fascinating story. In additions, the reader will apprehend the substance of the novel, while without the characters it will be misleading.

This writing will discuss about the main character in one of Tennessee Williams’s works (Moise and the World of Reason). Williams becomes quite famous because of his sensational works. Most of his works are about psychological and sexual deviation, based on his own experience.

### **Biography of Tennessee Williams**

Tennessee Williams, whose original name was Thomas Lanier Williams was born on March 26, 1911 in Episcopal Rectory of the Columbus Mississippi. His mother Edwina Estella Dakin was the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman and william's father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, was a traveling salesman for a shoe company who loved books very much but was not interested in sport.

Williams was the second child from his parents. He had a sister, Rose and a brother Dankin. In early childhood he was sickly and did not seem a happy boy because of the serious disease, diphtheria. It made him develop a hyphochondria that had followed him the rest of his life. When a younger brother, Dankin was born, Williams spent several months with his grandparents in Charsdale Mississippi. Williams grew up in his grandparents' home where his parent lived. When he was eleven, his mother bought him an old typewriter. He began writing poems and stories. His interest in reading lots of books from his grandparent's library made him familiar with literary world and he very much loved Dicken's and shakespeare’s works.

In January, 1929 after graduating from the high school in St. Louis, he attended the University of Missouri and during that time he began his career as a playwright and became the first man in the university who was given an honour in dramatic arts contest. During this period he became aware that he had a homosexual tendency. He confessed that he had his first consumed homosexual love affair at the age of 28.

Unfortunately, his father took Williams out of university and got a job for him at the international shoe company as a clerk. This caused him a great depression misery since he detested routine job. His wage was only sixty five dollars a month. The situation at his work was boring him, so he spent his nights writing stories in his room. He worked there for two years. His routine life in the warehouse contributed to a nervous breakdown and he returned to the Memphis to live with his grandparents to recover his strength. Meanwhile, his sister, Rose was hospitalized for several times in the hospital. She had a mental depression because of her father.

In 1936- 1937, he enrolled to Washington University and he got acquaintance with Willard Holland, director of the mummerys, and experimental theater in St Louis, who taught him production techniques and produced some of his plays. He shared ambitions with Clark Mill MC Burney who introduced Williams to the poetry of Hart Crane, Rainer Maria Rilke and the French symbolists (Falk, 1961;22). He got his bachelor's degree at university of Iowa in 1939.

In 1939, he started out for California. Here he became the winner of citation with one hundred dollar for his one act play entitled *The American Blues*, which was the work under the name of Tennessee Williams, his pen name. In this year, he also met the poet Donald Windham with whom he wrote a play based on Lawrence's short story, *You Touch Me*.

He received a grant for playwriting from the Rockefeller foundation in New York. He received this announcement in St. Louis, because he just convalesced from the surgery of cataract on his left eye. This announcement made Williams and his mother happy. This happy news was followed by the next one when he received a scholarship to an advanced play writing seminar at the new school in New York beginning in February, 1940. The conductors were Theresa Helburn and John Gassner from the theater Guild. At the end of the semester, he wrote his first draft of a full-length play entitled *Battle of Angels*. This play was performed in Boston on December 30, 1940 but it failed. The failure of his play had caused him to be a rootless, wandering writer. Soon after the failure, he went to Florida where he landed a job as a teletype

operator for engineers in Jacksonville. He wrote several one-act plays during his time in Jacksonville one of them was *Twenty Seven Wagons Full of Cotton*.

Because Williams had a definite idea of what theater should be, he had experimented with many devices and theatrical techniques to enhance the dramatic impact of his plays (Falk, 1961;161). The Glass Menagerie was a successful play, it portrayed about his family's life. Besides, Williams's sympathy with sexual abnormality in later years has given way to a compulsion to tell all about himself and his world (Falk, 1961;15), such as *Moise and the World of Reason* (1975), *Night of the Iguana* and *Two on a Party* (1962), *Small Craft Warnings* (1973), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), *Quentin of Small Craft Warnings* (1973).

The other works of Williams's were *Camino Real* (1953), *The Winter of Cities* (1956), *Small Craft Warning* (1973), *Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed* (1974), *The Red Devil Battery Sign* (1976), *vieux Carre* (1977), etc. His final Play was *A House Noty Meant to stand* (1982). He passed away at the age of seventy two in New York on February 25, 1983.

### **The Synopsis of *Moise and the World of Reason***

*Moise and the World of Reason* portrays Tennessee William's own life as the writer of the novel. It tells about character "I" a Southerner and sensualist. He had been involved in love affairs with the same sex since he was a teenager. He had committed his life to Lance. At that time, his age was only fifteen years old. He met Lance, a light-skinned black, and skater by profession who referred to himself as 'the riving Niger on ice' in an old bar. It was Moise who introduced him to Lance. She also offered him to stay in her own place. The character 'I' escaped from his house because his father treated him rudely and drove him out from his house. He never went home although his mother persuaded him to go back in her letter.

From this meeting character "I" began to fall in love with Lance. They committed their life as lovers. Unfortunately, their togetherness was not long. Lance was killed in an accident. After Lance's death, he did not have a lover anymore. He continued his own life and kept on writing in his Blue Jay notebook about his own experience. He shared his room with Charlie. They lived in an abandoned warehouse. Character 'I' felt comfortable with Charlie because they have same hobby, make writing.

One day, character "I" and Charlie attended a Moise,s party. Moise (a famous actress at that time) said that things had become untenable in her world and she added that her world was

not their world at all and her world was relatively a world that contained some reasons. This party made character 'I' more anxious and wanted to be close to her. The relation between Moise and character 'I' seemed like when Lance still existed between them.

Character "I" retold that he ever slept with Moise one night after Lance's death. He felt that it was not sexually but just for accompanying her although he was deeply attracted to Moise. Character 'I' always shares to Moise. He told that actually he had female incubus. It could be proved when he was thirteen. He had sexual intercourse with a little girl playmate but he could not love her. He said it was just playing. It made him have an inner conflict because he was a sexual abnormal person.

Later one day he received the second letter from his mother. In this letter his mother said that he had to come home. He had to continue his schooling and developed his talent. Besides, his mother also said that his father was not like in the past when he was always drunk and angry, but now he could not live alone, he needed someone to accompany him. Moise, as a friend, tried to give comment that he had to come back to his mother but he rejected the idea

In one occasion, character 'I' was interviewed by a student of a psychiatric who knew him as a sexually deviant. In his Blue Jay notebooks character 'I' wrote his own experiences when he was a boy in Thelma, Alabama and he was about thirteen years old. Four strange men in a limousine pick him up. They intended to seduce him. Fortunately one of them felt pity on him and protected him. Finally, they decided to return him on the way home. Another his experience is the meeting of character 'I' with a man in a bar. The man kisses character "I" on the mouth spontaneously. It makes character 'I' cry because he feels shocked and afraid. All of about his life is written by character "I" on his Blue Jay Notebooks.

### **The Background of Character 'I' in Supporting Homosexual Tendency of Character 'I'**

#### **▪ The Family Background of Character 'I'**

In examining homosexual of character "I", the writer will deal with his family background, which was formed since he was a child. The family background is one of the important factors in supporting his homosexual tendency.

Before beginning the further discussion, it is better to check what the influence of family relationship on a child is. In Child Development Hurlock states, 'The child's attitudes and behavior are markedly influenced by the family into which he was born and in which he grows

up, because the home is the child's first environment. It sets the pattern for his attitudes toward people, things and life in general (Hurlock, 1956: 481). Therefore, family is the first step for a child in getting education and experiences. The condition and situations of the family have great influence for the child development until he or she is adult.

Character 'I' was born from his parents who had broken home and low class Family. His father is a rough and bad-tempered man. Character 'I' is a victim of his own father. The bad habit of his father makes him sad He often finds his father angry at home when he is drunk. His father wants character 'I' to separate from his mother, while his mother cannot do anything because she is afraid of her husband.

The condition of character "I's family has persisted for a long time. Character 'I' still stays with his family because he takes pity on his mother. Year by year he lives in that condition, until he is fifteen. One night when his father came home, he was angry with him and drove him out from his home. Being a teen-age, he had great emotion toward his father's words.

Then he goes away from his home. He is confused because he does not have any purposes where he will go. He never goes anywhere before. He thinks that he is like a bird, flying freely without purposes (Williams,1975: 8). After he goes from his house, he feels lonely and needs someone to protect him. This condition makes him became a weak person but he tries to survive in order to get a better life. In New York, he meets Moise, the beautiful girl who offers him to stay in her house and introduces him to Lance.

A few days later he receives a letter from his mother. His mother wants him to come back. She is anxious of the condition of character" I". She knows that New York is a modern city where the free life and crime may happen. It will give a negative effect to her son. The deep anxiety and the negative thinking make her depressed. It is something natural for a mother to her son, exceedingly her son has weak physic.

Character 'I' has conflict with himself because he wants to come back to his mother but on the other hand he feels so afraid of his father. The problem of his family makes him confused to choose his way of life. Actually, he needs a father when he grows up because he needs someone who can give him education, supports his condition and he needs male model to imitate. But the fact is his father drove him out from his house. Because of this condition, he needs a figure of a father.

On the other hand character "I" is a person who was always sick when he was a child. His bad physical condition will give some effects to his mental development. The health of a child not only influences the child's behavior at the moment, but it has long-term effects on his personality (Hurlock, 1956: 549). As for the condition of character 'I', he is a weak person and does not have self-confidence because of his disease. He considers himself as a woman who needs someone to protect him.

- **The Experiences of Character 'I'**

Experience is something unforgettable. In child development, Hurlock states that, since social and unsocial patterns of behavior are established during the formative childhood years, early social experiences largely determine what sort of adult a child will become" (Hurlock, 1898.225). Therefore, experience is something important to build the behavior of a person.

Besides, one of the data indicates that the factors leading to homosexual behavior are his first sexual experience with a person of the same sex and the conditioning effects of experience (Kinsey, 1953: 447). The first sexual experience of character 'I' is when he was young. He meets four strange young men in Thelma.

This incident happens when his first symptom of puberty was appearing. A strange limousine arrives in the city containing four strange young men. No one knows where they stay. One night, one of them called out to character "I" softly like a dove's voice, character "I" is attracted by the soft voice. Character "I" receives their offer. He sits between the Blond and the Dark. Character "I" is not suspicious to them because he feels that they will see him off to his house. They make a private joke among them and laugh loudly. Character "I" wants to get out, because he is disgusted with their words. After he knows that the limousine is not toward going to his house, he shouts to get out, but all the strange young men do not take care of and pick him up to their limousine.

“By this time I was scared crazy, for the limousine and the mysterious four were out into dark moonless country and the hands of each beside me had advanced from my knees to upper thighs and were rhythmically squeezing as woman shoppers do melons to see if they're ripe" (Williams, 1925:118-119)

The Blond is one of the four strange men who forces character "I" to satisfy his desire. After the Blond get him, then the Dark do the same bad action. Character "I" can not feel that what he has done is sexual pleasure. He just feels the large erection of the Dark. Then limousine lurches to

the Peach and Cherry Street, his house. After this tragedy, one of the four strange young men is longed by him, he cannot forget this tragedy.

Another experience is the meeting of character 'I' with a man in a bar. Actually, he does not know that man, but considers him as his friend.

"Then he went over to the box, deposited a quarter and punched one number three times" He came back to the table and simultaneously two things happened of the automatic nature. He kissed me on the mouth and I started to cry. (Williams. 1975: 40).

His friend takes an enjoyable position in the room of the bar. He shows to character 'I' that he feels so happy. It can be seen when he kisses character "I" on the mouth spontaneously. It makes character 'I' cry because he feels shocked and afraid, but his friend just says "Baby, I didn't mean to do that, it was just automatic" (Williams, 1975: 41). Based on the experiences of Character "I" and its effect can be concluded that the first sexual experience has great influences of his mental development. It is one of the factors that support the homosexual tendency of Character "I".

### **The Love Affair Homosexual Tendency of Character 'I'**

#### **▪ The Love Affair between Character "I" and Lance**

Character 'I' is a person who is still young when he meets with his lover. In fifteen he met Lance. Character "I" and Lance have a very good relationship. Lance is the first lover of character 'I'. He is older than Character "I". They make a commitment of love in their life.

"Of course as one grows older, and I am now more than twice the age at which I met my first love, there is a tendency to put on some materialism, probably through exposure to it in others. At the age of fifteen, when I met my first love, Lance, and committed my life to his, I was already a sensualist but material things were of little consequence to me, and I do not believe that expressed any surprise when he introduced me to his living quarters, astonishing as they were" (Williams, 1975:2)

In his inner conflict, Character "I" usually shares his problem with his beloved, Lance. His hope to be a normal person is lack within his life. He wishes to reveal a sexual intercourse with a woman but what he hopes is disappeared because he still feels only Lance that can give satisfaction of his sexual desire.

Unfortunately, Character "I" and Lance are not as happy as in the past. They are quarreling each other. Character "I" does not like with the life-style of Lance, who always drunk in the bar, become a rough man and plays skating on ice.

‘Don’t sit there talking to me like a library queen”

‘Don’t lie there talking to me like a hustler that gives it away for residence in this godforsaken pad’

‘if you don't like my life-style”

‘Do you?’

‘A man life-style should fit his future more than his present, and in my future I want be a star of the ice show, I will not be the living nigger on ice forever, baby, but I will be a junkie and this pad here will be appropriate to my condition then (Williams, 1975:124).

Their togetherness is not long because they have different principle. So, Character ‘I’ begins to have a bravery against Lance. Character "I" says that Lance has ruined his life. He will leave Lance if Lance is still a rough man. Lance is angry when he hears that character "I" will leave him. Then he forces Character ‘I’ to make love with him. Character "I" feels that it happens not for love but for revenge. Lance says that it is the last of their communion. After it happens, Character ‘I’ separates from Lance and he never sees him again until one day he hears that Lance has died because of an accident.

#### ▪ **The Love Affair between Character "I" and Charlie.**

After the ending of his relationship with Lance, character "I" has relationship with Charlie. This happens, when character "I" often goes to the bar and Charlie is also a man who always goes to the bar. They have the same hobby, so they decide to be a couple. Charlie is younger than character "I". He has good personality to support the condition of character "I". Character "I" feels secure beside him.

Character ‘I’ loves Charlie very much. Character "I" wants to say something to Charlie before their relationship getting deeper. He explains that he is older than Charlie. He is afraid if Charlie will leave him because of difference age. Fortunately, Charlie never makes problems out of their different age.

Character "I" once thinks that after Lance's death in an accident, he will elect no second lover except Moise (his girlfriend) but he cannot do it. Charlie comes to him when he needs someone to accompany him. Then he cannot refuse him. Character ‘I’ does not blame himself because he thinks that his love to Charlie comes naturally.

The existence of Charlie is very significant for Character "I" because after Lance's death, there is no man who can fulfill Character" I's need. After few days Charlie leaves him, character"

I" begins yearning for Charlie. He assumes that Charlie will come to him. He is like a woman who is the first time meets with her boyfriend.

Naturally I assumed that it was Charlie returning. My heart did things in my chest like a waking bird. I leaned very close to the bit of mirror to see if my face could be suitably prepared to face my wayward lover, but what I saw was a face that suggested that of a character in a silent film revival, frothing and spitting with rage... " (Williams, I9A75 : 1 3 2-I 33 ) .

Character 'I' is happy, because he will meet his lover. But, in fact, Charlie comes without a greeting to him. He just keeps silent. Character "I" tries to make the situation more heated. He does not know what happens with Charlie. Unusually, Charlie becomes a cool man. Character "I" is more to be anxious to Charlie and he wants Charlie to say something to him. Then, Charlie asks Character 'I' and to give him recognition about the gossip that he hears from his friend. He hears that Character "I" is a playboy who is easily to change his partner.

He feels that he is a fugitive of Character "I" after Lance's death. His negative thinking appears as he becomes second lover of character "I". It is not for love but only to satisfy the Character 'I's sexual desire. Besides, Charlie is also jealous to Big Lot who always drinks together with character "I" in the bar. He thinks that character "I" betrays him. Character "I" tries to give him long explanation about his relations with Big lot. He says that Big lot is just a friend for him. Charlie does not believe the explanation of Character "I". He is very angry with character "I". Character 'I' still keeps silent and takes it patiently. After he know that Charlie a stubborn man, he becomes emotional person.

In the end, they separate because there is no longer harmony between them. Love affair between Character "I" and his lover, Lance and Charlie is amore love. It is love that appears because of sexual desire. The social intercourse is an important factor that supports homosexual tendency ( Ninda,2005:152). It means that without the existence of his lover or his partner of the homosexual, it is impossible to satisfy his sexual desire.

### **The Significance of Moise in Relation with the Homosexuality of Character 'I'**

Moise is a young beautiful painter. She is the first person who helps character 'I' when character "I" is expelled from his house by his father. She is also a woman who knows and understands about the problems of character "I". She always accompanies him, when he has problems in his life. She has some reasons to accept character 'I's condition. It happens because

she thinks that she comes from a broken family background as character "I". After Lance's death, character "I" ever says that he will elect no lover but her. The strange thing is he cannot love her, although he is very close to her.

One day character "I" goes to Moise's house. They talk about their life. Moise says that her world is different at all with the world of the other person. She does not know the person's life, so it is impossible for the other person to know about her life. She also says that the life of character 'I', is the life that contains some reasons.

“You see my world is not your world at all. It would be an observation of insufferable banality for me to observe that each of us is the sole occupant of his own world. And so I don't know your world and you don't know my world of course it appears to me, it appears quite evident to me, that your world is relatively a world that contains some reasons,”(Williams, 1975: 18).

Character "I" is anxious with Moise's statement. He thinks that he has the same world or the same experiences like Moise. Some experiences that he had are a part of his past and his past is a part of life with its reason. Then he connects Moise's statement with her past. Who has a broken family and has a principle that love is demolition in life. The difference between them is Character "I" is a person who has extrovert, while Moise is introvert.

Then Character "I" and Moise go to bed. Moise gives herself up to Character "I". Character "I" feels that it is not sexual but just for companionship (Williams, 1975: 14). Character "I" loves Moise very much. Love that appears between them is philia love. It means that love appears because of friendship. The existence of Moise to Character "I" is the proof that Character "I" still becomes a homosexual because he cannot love Moise as a partner of his life.

## **Conclusion**

Moise and the world of reason is one of William's works. It tells about the life of character "I", the main character of the novel that undergoes the abnormal sexual relationship. Moise and the world of reason are showing the picture of a person who gets tendency to be a homosexual. Character "I" being a homosexual, has bad experiences in his past that becomes his reason to get abnormal sexual relationship. This deviant sex happens because of many tendencies. They are family background, the environment of the society, and the experiences of the person.

Family background is the important thing for Character "I" to build his abnormality. The lack of father's model and sex-role in the family are the cause of Character "I" to do wrong doing in the process of his maturity to be a normal person. Becoming a homosexual is the result of the disharmony of a family.

Environment of the society is also the important point to support a homosexual of Character "I". The environment has great influence for Character "I" to make his behavior to be abnormal person. A wrong of social interaction makes misbehavior of the person. The last of causal factors of homosexual tendency of Character "I" is the experiences of his past. His first sexual experiences with some persons of the same sex are the factor leading to his homosexuality.

From the content of this novel, we can found some messages that first, the role of the parents is very important in the growth and the education of the child; second, the environment of the society has great influence to the behavior of someone and the last, someone can not realize his bad behavior without any consideration that makes him change his bad behavior. Nobody can influence this consideration. In addition, this novel proves that sexual matter is not a taboo to discuss, because this matter is also the social fact which commonly happens in the society.

## **Bibliography**

- Carpenter, Jack and Niemeyer, Peter. 1947. *The Element of Fiction*. New York: Mcraw Hill Book Company
- Corsiny, Raymond J. 1984. *Encyclopedia of psychology*. U SA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Di Yanni, Robert. 1975. *Reading Fiction, poetry, Drama and the Essay*. New york: Mc. Graw Hill Inc.
- Falk, Signi. 1961. *Tennessee William*. Boston: Twayne Publisher.
- Hornby, A.S.2000. Oxford Advanced Learner,s Dictionary. London. Oxford Unity Press.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth. B. 1956. *Child Development*, 3<sup>rd</sup>,Edition. Tokyo: Mc. Graw Hill. Kogakusha, Ltd.
- James, Henry. 1965. *Selected Literary Criticism*. New york: Mc Graw Hill Book Company.
- Karpman, Ronald and Rosen, Ephraim. 1972. *Abnormal Psychology*. USA:W.B. Saunder Company
- Kenney, William. 1966. *How to Analyze Fiction*. New York: Monach Press
- Kinsey, Alfred. C. at al. 1948. *Sexual Behavior in Human Male*. Phidelphia: W.B.Saunders Company

Kluckhohn, Norman. 1964. *The Universal Experiences of Adolescence*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc.

Moskowitz, Merli J and Orgel, Arthur R. 1969. *General Psychology: a Core Text in Human Behavior*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Williams, Tennessee. 1975. *Moose and the World of Reason*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc.