
The Gender Stereotypes In The Play A Streetcar Named Desire And Film All About Eve

Subsequent to the great depression, America's economy quickly collapsed and many lives were taken during the time. This led to many individuals being left homeless with little to no money on hand. Today the great depression is remembered as a big mistake and downfall of America which claimed many lives. Many authors have portrayed the events after this moment including Tennessee Williams. Through the play, "A Streetcar Named Desire", Williams shows that all female characters fall prey to society's expectations that restrict them. The play tells the story of a school teacher Blanche DuBois losing Belle Reeves and moving into New Orleans with her sister, Stella and her husband Stanley. Blanche's fantasy leads to even greater family tension to Stella and Stanley who already have a strained relationship.. The piece "All About Eve" portrays the same issue of all female characters being victims of social values but in a less direct manner. Although the film shows the same issue, it is not set during/after the times of the great depression. The director Joseph L. Mankiewicz walks the audience through the story of Eve who lives and tells a life of lies to achieve her dreams whilst breaking other characters' ambitions. Both these texts consist of many similarities and differences on this topic.

The issue of female characters falling victim to social values is illustrated very similarly between both the texts "All About Eve" and "A Streetcar Named Desire". The play and the film both show this issue with the men being superior and violent to women. The play, "A Streetcar Named Desire" directly shows this issue through Stanley showing violence to Stella and Blanche. We see Blanche turn on the radio to a romantic song for her and Mitch, but Stanley "stalks fiercely" to the room immediately, grabs "the small white radio" and "snatches it off the table". Stanley, "with a shouted oath" then goes ahead to "[toss] the instrument out the window". He then goes further on to "advance" to Stella and in the heat of the moment, Stanley retaliates at his wife. Stella then rushes off and Stanley then screams "STELLL-AHHHHH!" with "heaven-splitting violence". Firstly Stanley's disregard for the radio reflects the overwhelming nature of violence and his uncontrollable anger on women after he snatched it from Blanche. Then the abuse to his wife shows the conflict between men and women in the play. Yet not only does he aggressively condemn his wife, he is much more violent in his desire to get her back. When Stanley screams Stella's name the stage direction gives an insight into the intensity of his desire, which reveals their volatile relationship. In this instance we see both female characters, Blanche and Stella, fall victim to the social values of the times in which men have more control over women and their possessions. The distinct film depicts the topic in a less direct manner, but instead in subtle moments. When Addison finds out about Eve's lies he forces her to comply with his demands or be exposed as a liar and lose the acting career she desires above all. He physically abuses her to get the truths out of her mouth. In a particular shot we see Addison standing up violating Eve as she lays on the bed frightened. This medium shot symbolises how the man, Addison, has more power than the vulnerable female character Eve. Although Eve is seen as a dark, deception character we still see her fall victim to the same social values as in the text of which men have more power over women.

The female characters living a life of a 'fairy tale' and a 'fantasy' to fulfil others' desires are another link in the mediums that show feminine characters falling victim to the demands of society. In the play we mainly see this topic through Blanche talking with Mitch. Not only does

she lie about her age and her childhood when she first meets Mitch, later in the play she admits that she wants to live a life of “magic”. Blanche talks to Mitch who no longer seeks to impress her as Stanley informed him previously about Blanche’s previous actions. He forces Blanche to confess her lies and let him have a “real good look “ at her. Blanche then confesses that she “doesn’t want realism” but rather she wants “magic”. She admits she “misrepresent things” to people and “[doesn’t] tell the truth”. From this we can tell that Blanche falls victim to social values because she attempts to cover her face and age in darkness so others, in this case Mitch, still like her. Blanche knows that if she exposes her previous actions and her real age no one would like her, as she exceeds the social expectations/values of women. The 1950 film, “All About Eve” shows that women who seek to pursue success and fame at those times are faced with multiple problems. Because of this they turn their life to fantasies by covering themselves to society to meet social expectations. We hear this issue mainly from Margo as she struggles to meet the social expectations. In the film, we see that Margo’s age is evidently deteriorating, and has to wear a mask to cover it up. Margo later admits that her life has always been a “fairy tale” and she feels as if she is playing the final act(her inevitable demise). She later does lose all her fame after Eve replaces her in the play. This is one of the more obvious examples of a female falling target to society's expectations. During the 1950s society’s expectations for a woman to perform in a theater were that the woman had to be talented, young and beautiful. Although Margo was talented and “so many people [knew her]”, she was getting old and because of that she was also losing her beauty and at the end she ultimately could not be accepted to society's values.

However, a significant difference between the play and the film is how the topic was portrayed. In the play, “A Streetcar Named Desire” Williams makes it really clear that female characters are victims of social values while the play by Mankiewicz, “All About Eve” only has subtle moments on this issue. The play not only distinctly shows this when Stella gets physically abused from Stanley but also when Blanche gets raped by him. We see this later in the play when Stanley considers to “interfere with” Blanche. Although Williams doesn’t describe the scene, he makes it very clear that Blanche did get raped by Stanley and she fell prey to society's values of men empowering women. The film, on the other hand, does not make the topic clear. The film firstly did not consist of many examples of females falling prey to society’s values that restrict them, and the only main two were when Eve gets abused by Addison and when Margo tries to live a fairy tale so she can keep performing in the theatre. In addition, both these moments were hard to notice and were very subtle so most people casually watching the movie probably will not notice these social values on women.

Overall the two pieces both show how social expectations characterise female characters. Both the play and the film also have similarities on this topic including the theme of violence(men more powerful than women) and societal expectation of meeting others needs. Although both the play and the film have many similarities in which female characters fall victim to social values, the play shows this and the examples very clearly whereas the film only uses subtle moments to portray this. “All About Eve” and “A Streetcar Named Desire” both show similar society’s expectations of women but both were set at different times and at different events.