
Theme Of Social Expectations in A Streetcar Named Desire

Tennessee Williams was a profound author of the play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He portrayed a realistic outlook on the standard New Orleans life, in which both gender roles and social expectations defined the way world functions. With the everchanging roles that one has, the position one is in will never be the same as the one that they last stood in. This can be vividly shown through one character named Stella, whom struggles between decisions that she is forced to choose. She is a classic representation of what modern society identifies as a power struggle against both gender and social standing. This is since Stella is a married woman, to someone who aggressively finds that masculinity is a constant necessity, leading to the downfall of Stella due to Stanley's eventual lead up to toxic masculinity. The change of Stella throughout the play is shown to be a power struggle through the choices defined by the social expectations and gender stereotypes, which are measurable through the relationships she has had.

Stanley is an extremely dear person to Stella, he is someone whom she is deeply in love with and forgiving with. Due to the intimacy Stella has with Stanley, it twists the reality she is trying to grasp understanding of. Not only does Stanley attempt to do this through countless berates on especially Blanche, but he also uses these berates as reasons to push the point that he strongly sees. Granted that Stella must listen to these berates constantly, it is no surprise that she feels the need that Stanley must "tell" her "quietly what" he thinks he "found out about" her "sister." (Williams, 119). Given her plea, was a sign of her inner consciousness taking the side of someone she loves more. After all, Stella's relationship with Stanley is far more intimate than the relationship Stella has with Blanche. Therefore, it is no surprise if her inner consciousness takes the side of the most loved one.

At the same time, it shows the effect of the social expectations on gender roles, where females are supposed to listen and follow what the males say and do. This is vividly shown in Stella through the fact that she cannot maintain an idea of her own without being influenced with a male perspective. After all, she would have continued viewing Blanche as she was if it were not for Stanley's input on how he views of Blanche.

The idea of male influence is heavily regarded through the relationship Stella has with Stanley, especially in the cases where Stanley influences many of Stella's decisions. Subsequently leading to the controlment of Stella's life and the choices she makes. However, it is not only the male's fault for continuing with these gender standings that are created for a portrayal of power. It is important to realize that Eunice too, a woman of Stella's age, implies that it is foolish to believe a woman that says the unordinary. After all, we should never "ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens..." (Williams, 183). "It" being the sayings a woman has regarding a gender related issue, an issue that clashes with the relationships between men and women. Explicitly, Eunice tells Stella that she shouldn't "believe it" because Blanche is defined as crazy for saying that she was raped, which rape was not commonly spoken of in the mid 1940's. To enumerate, Eunice shows that woman have no place to question male authority as wrong. This can be shown through Eunice saying that Stella should not believe Blanche, implying that Stella shouldn't question the actions of her loved one; heavily implying that Stanley's sayings is the one she should believe the most. The struggle of gender roles was not only fought through Blanche, but it was also heavily fought by Eunice whom is a woman of

Stella's age. Ultimately, there is no escape from the gender roles that are pushed upon Stella; it is only to be broken through progression within society; explaining why Blanche got heavily berated in the first place.

Gender role in this story is heavily defined through the characters, which lets readers investigate the play with the Feminist lens. However, class divisions were also heavily implied through the play, commonly measured through the Marxist lens. After all, both Stella and Blanche came from a wealthy background, which explains the way Blanche dresses. To Blanche, the marriage between both Stella and Stanley is viewed as disgusting and out of the ordinary. For instance, Blanche regards Stanley as "common" (Williams, 71). This demonstrates that Blanche, whom is a representation of the higher class, finds distaste within the relationship between Stella and Stanley; whom Stella being a former citizen of the higher class while Stanley being a commoner. Although Blanche is the one who portrays this idea, it is also implied that Stella used to follow this idea until a certain time in her life; possibly changed through her first interactions with Stanley. This all goes to show that those of the higher class should never mix with commoners, because it will either end with the higher class suffering through the financial discomfort or the higher class supporting their common lover through their own money. This heavily shows that higher class should never mix with those of the lower class, because it may disrupt the power of balance that is defined through the social classes of wealth. This especially, is a measurable instance through the Marxist lens.

Stella has been in a constant battle as to what she should think, and how she should think; especially since she has a specified role that is defined through the social expectations on gender roles in a relationship. Her taking sides with Stanley truly shows the power she has within the relationship, which is almost desolate. Many of her decisions were defined under the influence of Stanley, hence the removal of Blanche. Until the removal of Blanche, Stella then realizes the wrong she has done. Stella vigorously mentioned "What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?" (Williams, 176). This illustrates the realization of Stella that it was truly not Blanche's fault, but it was her fault for being under the influence of the social expectations pushed down from others. Especially since Eunice portrayed the ideas that heavily aided male dominance in a relationship, subsequently leading to Stella taking in the abuse given by Stanley. It truly shows that Stella has no place in the relationship, no place to be dominant. Stella is what we refer to as a vessel, someone who absorbs the thoughts of what others think to finally make a decision which subsequently aids the one who is controlling the vessel, in this case being Stanley. Stanley controlling Stella helped him get the things that he wanted, and it let him do the things that he wanted to freely do; without any repercussions. This truly shows how Stella was a clear portrayal of these social expectations, vividly shown through the power struggles she has.

The play showed no mercy in putting Stella in a place of a power struggle, truly representing how social expectations on gender roles give no care about how the person feels. It will always be there to haunt someone's decision until they decide to break free from these social expectations. Unfortunately, Stella was incapable of breaking out of this relentless cycle of men being a defined dominance in society, truly showing how it is something we are born in rather than something we choose to be in. It is especially a power struggle since Stella had to sacrifice her relationship with Blanche in order to maintain the relationship she currently has with Stanley, further showing that everything is done in regards for Stanley's happiness rather than her own. Social expectations should never be a definition as to how society functions, it must be, and will be broken one day; to be progressed whether society is ready or not.

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