

Name:

Instructor:

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Female Characters' Dependence on Men in *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee
Williams

Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* describes one of the most problematic issues of post-war American society: gender stereotyping. Williams captures a patriarchal society in which a woman's life purpose is to serve a man, a phenomenon which can be explained by both upbringing and personal aspirations.

Blanche and Stella were "raised as Southern belles" (O'Connor 45). For them, man is a breadwinner (Quinn 116), someone who feeds, protects, and only demands obedience in return. The play symbolically begins with Stanley throwing meat at Stella; therefore, choosing not to obey means a violation of both morals and common sense. Either woman believes that, but each in her own way: while Blanche has to abandon her romantic ideas to find a mate in the real world, Stella's problem is in the lack of these ideas, which turn her into a victim who readily accepts any abuse for the sake of physical intimacy. Eunice's words "life has got to go on" (Williams 193) become the epitome of adjustment through denial of basic human rights.

The personal aspirations of Williams' women are perfectly summarized in Blanche's tragic personality. Having escaped the old world, she has trouble finding happiness. She tells tales about her past in order to seem dignified. Sadly enough, it does not win her any favors with men. She cannot even find peace in sisterly affection because blood ties between them

have diminished. Even so, she still seeks that seemingly non-existent “kindness of strangers” (Williams 142) which loudly proclaims her undying need to be accepted and cherished.

Williams’ women are characterized by their inability to live without love and, as a result, heavy dependence on (mostly neglectful) men, which makes their tragedy one of Pascal’s “thinking reeds” that can only feel the imperfections of this world but have no means to correct them.

Works Cited

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